



# PELICAN DISPATCH

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR THE LOUISIANA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

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for a  
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*"Mouth  
of the  
Dragon"*

FALL 2008

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Louisiana National Guard Black Hawk pilots fill their Bambi Bucket at a dip site in Susanville, California, approximately 30 miles away from their drop location while responding to another small fire north of the Yosemite Telegraph fires in July.

Courtesy Photo: Marty Bicek/The Modesto Bee

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# From the Front



"It is an honor and privilege to be selected as the Senior Enlisted Advisor for the great state of Louisiana. I would like for each and every one of you to know that I am 100 percent committed to this job.

My goal as your Senior Enlisted Advisor is to maintain the exceptional standard of professionalism in the NCO Corps that has been developed by Senior Enlisted Advisors before me.

With 25 years experience in Law Enforcement and 24 years in the Louisiana Army National Guard, I have handled many emergency situations and have been a part of every emergency task force since September 11, 2008. I feel that, with your help, we are prepared to conquer whatever obstacle is thrown our way.

I want every Soldier to know that the National Guard family is here to assist with just about anything that life sends your way. I have never heard of a problem that a Soldier encounters that the Guard can not help fix, whether it is helping with a job, an assistance program, or simply lending an ear.

I hope that each of you learn the benefits of not just the Guard, but the Guard family, and know that there is always someone here to help you.

Together we make the Guard family, and together we can overpower the barrier of a deployment, hurricane, or even personal dilemma.

I hope that during my time as your Senior Enlisted Advisor, I will have the opportunity to spend time with each of you and that we strengthen the foundation that has been laid down so profoundly by our forefathers."

Senior Enlisted Advisor  
Command Sgt. Maj. Tommy Caillier



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# Arguing for a living

## LOUISIANA GUARD COMMISSIONS FIRST FEMALE JAG

By Sgt. Rebekah L. Malone  
225th Engineer Battalion Unit Public Affairs Representative

Arguing runs in the family for 1st Lt. Katherine M. Pugh. Growing up, she always knew she wanted to go into the legal field, she just didn't know she wanted to pursue a military legal career as well.

Pugh is the only female on a team of 20 Judge Advocate Generals presently serving in the Louisiana Guard, and the very first female JAG in LANG's history.

"I've always wanted to be an attorney. My grandfather was an attorney, my father is an attorney, my uncle is an attorney, and my sister is an attorney," Pugh explained. "I have a family full of lawyers, so I think I've always had an interest in the law, if only by necessity."



As the youngest of three daughters, Pugh learned early on she had to effectively argue her case to win disagreements with her sisters. "Growing up in a house full of girls, you have to learn how to win that argument!" she said.

Pugh is a third-generation attorney and Soldier after being sworn into the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 225th Engineer Brigade, in Pineville, La., as a commissioned Judge Advocate General officer in April.

"I was surprised to learn I am the first female JAG, since there are so many females in the military today. I guess I thought there would have been one before me. Knowing that I'm the first, I am very honored," expressed Pugh. "I plan to fulfill the position to the best of my abilities."

One person who knew the LANG had never had a female JAG was the State Judge Advocate, Col. John B. Dunlap, III of Baton Rouge, La. "It was well known we'd never had a female JAG. I personally have been trying to recruit female JAG's to the Louisiana Guard for 15 years so being able to recruit Lt. Pugh at a time of deployments and our nation being at war is a big deal," he said.

Dunlap explained that the JAG Corps dates back to 1775 when Gen. George Washington appointed Gen. William Tudor as the first Judge Advocate General. Today, there are approximately 800 JAG officers in the entire National Guard.

"It is important the JAG Corps looks like the rest of the National Guard. In order to fully accomplish our mission, we need to be balanced," said Dunlap. "Lt. Pugh brings not only strong legal skills and experience as a civilian attorney representing the city of Jackson, but also a gender balance to our branch of the National Guard."

He continued, "We are all very excited to have her join the JAG Corps."

Pugh graduated from the University of Mississippi with a degree in international business in 2000 before attending law school, also at Ole Miss. Her employment as a clerk for the Mississippi Court of Appeals sparked her interest in criminal law and led her to become a prosecutor for the District Attorney's Office, in Hinds County, for three years.

*Continued on page 18*



Katherine M. Pugh stands in a courtroom in Jackson, Miss. As a civilian, Pugh works for the Office of the City Attorney as a deputy city attorney. One weekend a month, Pugh puts on a uniform and provides legal services to Soldiers in the Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 225th Engineer Brigade, headquartered in Pineville, La. Pugh is the first ever female Judge Advocate General officer for Louisiana National Guard.

1st Lt. Katherine M. Pugh of Jackson, Miss., recently made history by becoming the first ever female Judge Advocate General officer for the Louisiana National Guard. Pugh follows in her father and grandfather's footsteps both as an attorney and Soldier. (Courtesy Photos)

# Father-son duo launch fighter jets, share history

The Downings carry on family tradition

By Staff Sgt. Kristi Moon  
159th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Specialist

The Louisiana Air National Guard is rich in tradition; and father and son, Command Chief Master Sgt. James Downing Sr. and Senior Airman James Downing Jr. share their family traditions with the 159th Fighter Wing's Bayou Militia.

The duo recently celebrated a milestone few other father and son teams could ever dream of, launching an F-15 fighter jet together.

"It was a pretty cool experience that not too many people get to do," the younger Downing said. He returned from Fighter Aircraft Maintenance training in April and has been in the Guard for a little more than a year.

The elder Downing, now in charge of the Wing's overall morale and well-being as the command chief, joined his crew chief son on the flight line June 6 to send off one of the unit's jets for a training flight.

"It was a blast," Downing Sr. said of working with his son. "It was definitely the highlight of my career."

It had been more than two years since Downing Sr. had launched a jet in his former role as crew chief. "I was a little rusty, that's for sure," he said.

"I had to bring my dad up to date on some new parts," Downing Jr. said. Some things had changed since his dad launched planes on a regular basis.

However, for someone with as much experience launching as Downing Sr., the basics can never be forgotten. Downing Sr. crewed jets for 17 years, worked in quality assurance, and served as the maintenance superintendent over several sections including weapons, crew chiefs, avionics, alert and C-130s.

The elder Downing is understandably proud of his four children, all of whom his wife, Kim, homeschooled, including Melissa, 20; James Jr., 18; Stephanie, 16; and Jonathan, 14.

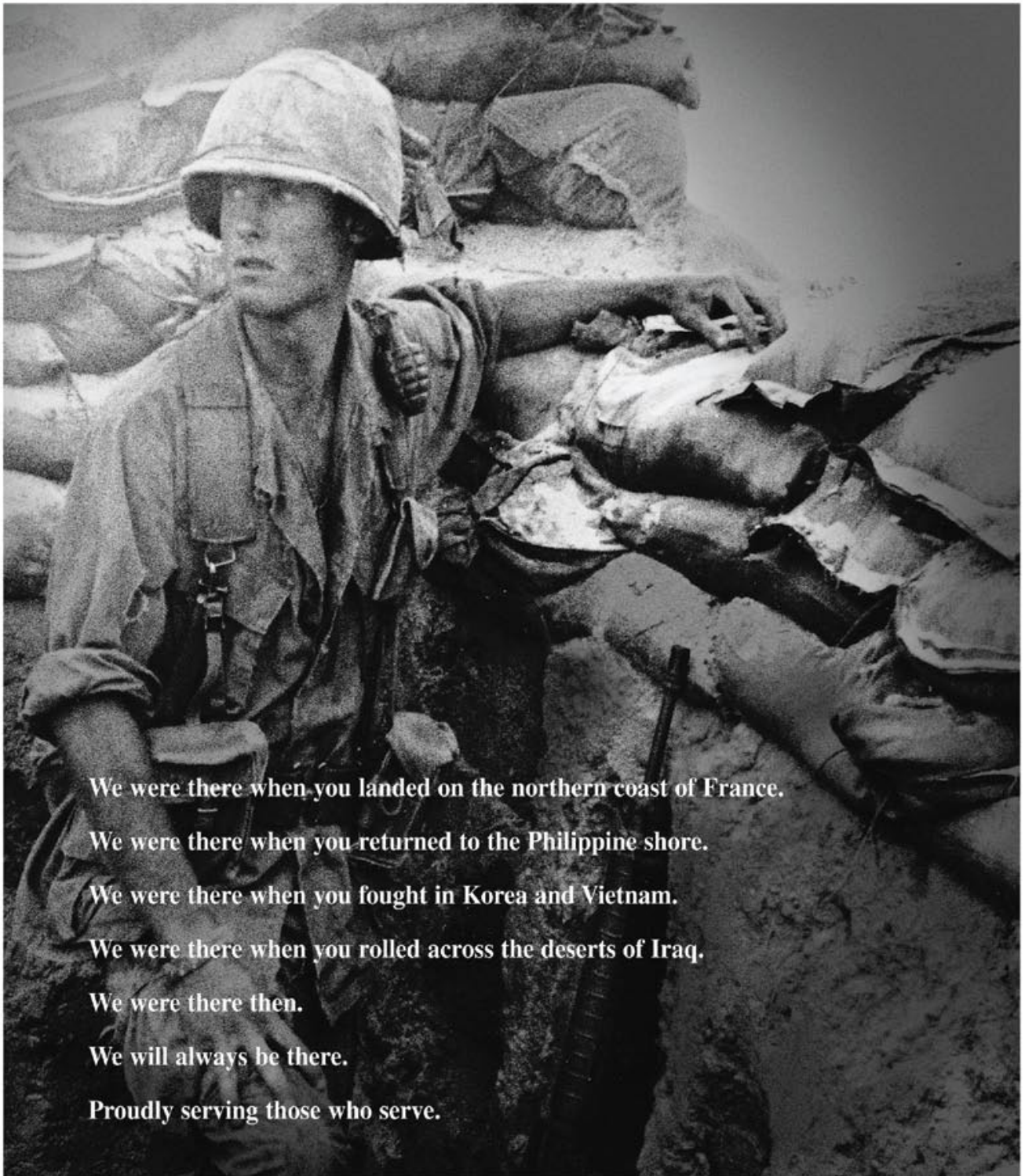


Senior Airman James Downing Jr. explains to his father, Command Chief Master Sgt. James Downing Sr., the changes that have taken place in launching F-15 fighter jets since he last served as a crew chief more than two years ago in the 159th Fighter Wing of the Louisiana Air National Guard. The father/son team launched a jet together June 6, 2008, soon after the younger Downing returned from Fighter Aircraft Maintenance training at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas. Photo: Master Sgt. Dan Farrell, 159th Fighter Wing Multi Media Manager

"My goal is to be here when both of my sons are in the unit," Downing Sr. said.

By the time the youngest son joins the 159th Fighter Wing, Downing Jr. will be close to graduating from college and entering the active duty Air Force, with plans to fly fighter jets. Before he goes, he hopes to repeat this launch experience with his dad and younger brother, too.

Going back even further, their father and grandfather, Senior Master Sgt. John Downing, retired in 1994 with 20 years of service with the 159th Weather Flight, beginning the Downing family tradition with the Bayou Militia. ■



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# 199th Leadership Regiment achieves perfection

**Both Louisiana Guard Soldier, NCO of Year from same unit**

*By Sgt. Rebekah L. Malone  
225th Engineer Brigade Public Affairs Representative*

**T**en-thousand to One! Those are the approximate odds of winning Soldier or Noncommissioned Officer of the Year in the Louisiana National Guard.

But for two stand-out Guardsmen in the 199th Leadership Regiment, months of preparation have paid off with the receipt of this year's coveted title.

Sgt. Brett D. Johnston won Soldier of the Year for the Louisiana National Guard on April 19 at the state competition held at Camp Cook, and Staff Sgt. J. Kevin Savoy won NCO of the Year.

After winning at the state level, Johnston and Savoy moved on to the regional competition held in Bastrop, Texas, May 1-3 against the winners from five other states: Texas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Missouri and Arkansas.

Johnston, of Tioga, La., works full-time for the Guard as a supply sergeant for the 199th. He is also a light wheeled vehicle mechanic who deployed to Afghanistan with the 527th Engineer Battalion in 2003 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"I love the people I work with. My job is making sure Soldiers have what they need," Johnston remarked. "I enjoy helping people."

Johnston, who has 11 years in the military, placed fourth at the state competition last year, which motivated him to study harder in preparation for this year's competition.

"It's an honor to be asked. You don't want to turn down the opportunity," explained Johnston. "A very select few get asked to represent their unit; if your leadership deems you worthy, it's a tremendous honor."

Johnston's first line supervisor, Sgt. 1st Class Dale W. Lonidier, spoke highly of the motivated Soldier by saying he was someone that completes any job to the fullest.

"Give him a job and he will accomplish it. You don't have to follow up," explained Lonidier. "He is a model Soldier who takes his job seriously."

Recently promoted, Johnston is the son of deceased Air Force Sgt. Brett Johnston and Barbara Corley of Tioga. He is married to the former Amanda Davenport and a graduate of Tioga High School.

The NCO of the year, Staff Sgt. John Kevin Savoy of Kinder, La., was almost expected to win the title.

As a small group leader for the Warrior Leader Course taught at Camp Cook, part of the Noncommissioned Officer Education System, Savoy had a considerable advantage on common tasks and regulation knowledge.

Savoy's full-time job not only prepared him for the

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*Staff Sgt. J. Kevin Savoy expertly navigates the obstacle accurately named "The Tough One" during regional competition for the Noncommissioned Officer of the Year held in Bastrop, Texas. Savoy placed fourth out of 10 competitors and was the oldest participant in the competition.*

*U.S. Army Photo: Sgt. 1st Class Marrion LaSonde, Texas Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

*Sgt. Brett Johnston of Tioga, La., loads ammo boxes into a Humvee in front of the supply shop for the 199th Leadership Regiment. Johnston recently won Soldier of the Year for the Louisiana National Guard and represented the state at the regional competition in Bastrop, Texas.*

*U.S. Army Photo: Sgt. Rebekah Malone, 225th Engineer Brigade Public Affairs Representative*

**CAMP BEAUREGARD** – HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY OF THE 225TH ENGINEER BRIGADE RECEIVED MOBILIZATION ORDERS FOR DEPLOYMENT TO IRAQ IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. THEY ARE SCHEDULED TO BEGIN THEIR YEAR-LONG DEPLOYMENT WITH TRAINING AT FT. HOOD, TEXAS, IN DECEMBER 2008 BEFORE MOBILIZING TO BAGHDAD.

HHC WILL PROVIDE COMMAND AND CONTROL OF AN ENGINEER BRIGADE AS THE COMMAND ELEMENT OF TWO SUBORDINATE BATTALIONS. ONE BATTALION WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL CONSTRUCTION, AND THE OTHER IS A BATTALION OF SAPPERS THAT WILL PROVIDE ROUTE-CLEARANCE.

**PINEVILLE** – CAMP BEAUREGARD AND THE MOTORCYCLE SAFETY FOUNDATION TEAMED UP AND CREATED A LOCAL MOTORCYCLE SAFETY COURSE TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR MOTORCYCLISTS TO GET THE REQUIRED TRAINING. SOLDIERS AND DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE EMPLOYEES ARE REQUIRED TO TAKE A SAFETY COURSE BEFORE DRIVING A MOTORCYCLE ONTO A MILITARY INSTALLATION. BEFORE THIS INITIATIVE, THE ONLY LOCATION TO RECEIVE THIS CERTIFICATION WAS AT FORT POLK, LA., AND ONLY HELD OCCASIONALLY.

THOUGH THIS IS THE FIRST PROGRAM IN THE STATE AND ONLY THE THIRD PROGRAM IN THE NATION TO GET STARTED THROUGH THE GUARD, LT. COL. JOHN B. FROST, THE STATE SAFETY MANAGER, SAID THERE IS TALK OF STARTING THIS ON MILITARY INSTALLATIONS THROUGHOUT LOUISIANA BECAUSE OF THE IMPORTANCE AND DEMAND.

**ALEXANDRIA** – THE 199TH BRIGADE SUPPORT BATTALION OF THE 256TH IBCT PARTNERED WITH UNITED WAY TO RAISE MONEY FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT CENTRAL LOUISIANA ON JUNE 21. INSTEAD OF THEIR USUAL ROAD MARCH, THE SOLDIERS PARTICIPATED IN THE 5K CHARITY MARCH AND GATHERED DONATIONS FOR THE UNITED WAY.

AT THE END OF THE MARCH, THE SOLDIERS HAD JAMBALAYA, MADE BY SGT. GATESON CELESTINE FROM C COMPANY IN SAINT MARTINVILLE, WHICH WAS SOLD AS PART OF THE FUND RAISING EFFORTS. UNITED WAY IS AN ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING SEVERAL AGENCIES SUCH AS THE SALVATION ARMY, TURNING POINT SHELTER FOR BATTERED WOMEN, FAMILY COUNSELING AGENCY, LITERACY AGENCIES AND MANY MORE IN CENTRAL LOUISIANA.

**JONESVILLE** – SOLDIERS FROM THE RUSTON-BASED 527TH ENGINEER BATTALION, 225TH ENGINEER BRIGADE DELIVERED PALLETS OF WATER TO THE TOWN OF JONESVILLE FROM CAMP BEAUREGARD WHERE THEY WERE CONDUCTING ANNUAL TRAINING. A STATE OF EMERGENCY WAS DECLARED IN THE TOWN OF APPROXIMATELY 3,000 PEOPLE WHEN A FAILED WATER PUMP LEFT THE SMALL CATAHOULA PARISH COMMUNITY WITH NO RUNNING WATER.

"THEY HAVE REALLY STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE. IF I NEED THEM TO FILL UP A SANDBAG, THEY ARE THERE. IF I NEED THEM TO WORK A WRECK, THEY ARE THERE. MY HEART GOES OUT TO THEM FOR EVERYTHING THEY DO FOR OUR COUNTRY," REMARKED DEBRA RENDA, THE OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY DIRECTOR FOR CATAHOULA PARISH.

**BOSSIER CITY** – THE 156TH ARMY BAND FROM BOSSIER CITY PERFORMED ITS ANNUAL CONCERT AT THE STRAND THEATRE IN SHREVEPORT, AS WELL AS AN IMPROMPTU PERFORMANCE AT THE ALEXANDRIA AMPHITHEATER DURING ANNUAL TRAINING IN JUNE. THIS WAS THE INAUGURAL YEAR FOR "GRAVY TRAIN," THE UNIT'S NEW ROCK BAND, HEADED BY LEAD SINGER SGT. CHRISTOPHER M. DARNELL OF ARLINGTON, TEXAS. "WE DO THIS EVERY YEAR TO SHOW OUR PRIDE AND PATRIOTISM AND GIVE A LITTLE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY," SAYS STAFF SGT. KENNY D. THOMAS, 13-YEAR BAND MEMBER AND SHREVEPORT NATIVE. "WE ALSO SHOW ANOTHER ASPECT OF THE LOUISIANA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD THROUGH MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT."

**ABBEVILLE** – SOLDIERS FROM THE 2ND BATTALION, 156TH INFANTRY REGIMENT OF THE 256TH IBCT SPENT THREE WEEKS IN AUGUST TRAINING IN GERMANY. THE LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS ACTED AS THE OPPOSING FORCE, CITIZENSON THE BATTLEFIELD AND IRAQI SECURITY FORCES IN ORDER TO TRAIN THE 172ND INFANTRY BRIGADE, HEADQUARTERED IN GERMANY, IN CONDUCTING COMBAT OPERATIONS IN IRAQ.

# AROUND THE STATE



**HAMMOND** – FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE LATE 1990'S, THE LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD STATE AVIATION COMMAND IN HAMMOND RECEIVED TWO NEW-MODEL HELICOPTERS, THE UH-72A LAKOTA, ON JULY 2. THE LAKOTA IS A COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT MODIFIED FOR THE MILITARY TO CONDUCT GENERAL SUPPORT TASKS IN NON-COMBAT ENVIRONMENTS.

"THIS STATE OF THE ART HELICOPTER WILL HAVE A GREAT IMPACT ON THE UNIT," SAID MAJ. ROBERT D. JONES OF PINEVILLE, DEPUTY COUNTER-DRUG COORDINATOR. "IT WILL BE USED FOR COMMAND AND CONTROL MISSIONS SUCH AS AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE, COUNTER-DRUG OPERATIONS AND WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION AND HURRICANE EMERGENCIES.

IT INFLUENCES THE MOST MODERN AND PROVEN TECHNOLOGY TO DELIVER SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE, OUTSTANDING OPERATIONAL RELIABILITY, EXCELLENT MAINTAINABILITY AND SAFETY.

**BATON ROUGE** – HEADQUARTERS SUPPORT AND FORWARD SUPPORT COMPANIES OF THE 769TH ENGINEER BATTALION, 225TH ENGINEER BRIGADE RETURNED FROM A YEAR-LONG DEPLOYMENT ON JULY 14. THE 175 SOLDIERS WERE DEPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM. THEY SERVED AS HEADQUARTERS FOR OTHER ENGINEER UNITS ASSIGNED TO SUPPORT VARIOUS MISSIONS INCLUDING GENERAL ENGINEERING OPERATIONS, FORCE PROTECTION IMPROVEMENTS AND MANEUVER ENHANCEMENT TO COALITION FORCES.

GOV. BOBBY JINDAL, BATON ROUGE MAYOR KIP HOLDEN AND LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY HEAD COACH LES MILES WERE AMONG THE FIRST TO SHAKE THE SOLDIERS' HANDS WHEN THEY STEPPED OFF OF THE PLANE.

**CARVILLE** – SOLDIERS OF THE 241ST MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT, JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS AND THE EMBEDDED TACTICAL TEAM #2 CELEBRATED THEIR RETURN FROM GUANTANAMO BAY AND AFGHANISTAN, RESPECTIVELY, AT A CEREMONY ON JULY 27. SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS WERE AWARDED THE FREEDOM SALUTE AWARD TO COMMEMORATE THEIR OVERSEAS SERVICE.

THE AWARD RECOGNIZES SOLDIERS' SERVICE DURING OPERATIONS NOBLE EAGLE, ENDURING FREEDOM AND IRAQI FREEDOM, AND ALSO THANKS THEIR SPOUSES, CHILDREN AND EMPLOYERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT.

WHILE DEPLOYED TO GUANTANAMO BAY, THE 241ST SERVED AS THE MAIN BODY OF THE PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE FOR JOINT TASK FORCE-GUANTANAMO. THE EMBEDDED TACTICAL TEAM # 2 HAD A UNIQUE MISSION TO TRAIN AND MENTOR THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY AND POLICE.

**NEW ROADS** – COMBAT ENGINEERS FROM A COMPANY, 256TH BRIGADE SPECIAL TROOPS BATTALION OF THE 256TH IBCT IN NEW ROADS, TRAINED ON DETONATING VARIOUS EXPLOSIVES DURING THEIR ANNUAL TRAINING AT FORT POLK THIS DIFFERENT TYPES OF BLASTS FROM BLOWING A DOOR OFF OF ITS HINGES DURING URBAN BREACHING, TO BLOWING UP PART OF A ROAD, WHICH WOULD CAUSE ENEMY TRAFFIC TO DETOUR AND BE BETTER CONTROLLED. MANY OF THE ENGINEERS ARE COMBAT VETERANS WHO DEPLOYED IN SUPPORT OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM, BUT A LARGE PERCENTAGE OF THEM RECENTLY ENLISTED AND HAVE NOT PARTICIPATED IN THIS TYPE OF EXERCISE BEFORE. THEY ARE NEW TROOPS WHO HAVE ONLY ATTENDED ADVANCED INDIVIDUAL TRAINING WHICH IS THE OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING COMPLETED AFTER BASIC COMBAT TRAINING.

**NEW ORLEANS** – SINCE THE FORMATION OF TASK FORCE GATOR, A CONTINGENCY OF LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN WHO CONDUCT OPERATIONS IN SUPPORT OF THE NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT, MANY RESIDENTS FEEL THEY HAVE A NEW FOUND FRIEND. THROUGHOUT THEIR SHIFTS, THE SOLDIERS TAKE TIME TO WALK THE STREETS AND TALK WITH RESIDENTS.

ALTHOUGH THE RESIDENTS ENJOY HAVING THE NATIONAL GUARD AS A PART OF THEIR CITY, THEY ARE BRACING FOR THEIR EVENTUAL DEPARTURE. "I WISH THEY COULD STAY FOREVER," SAID 9TH WARD RESIDENT GERTRUDE LEBLANC. MANY OF THE RESIDENTS, THROUGHOUT THE CITY, ECHO THOSE WORDS AND FEEL THAT THEY WILL LOSE THE SECURITY BLANKET THAT IS HELPING KEEP THE CITY SAFE.

**CARVILLE** – THE 139TH EXPEDITIONARY SIGNAL COMPANY OF THE 139TH REGIONAL SUPPORT GROUP WAS RECENTLY INTRODUCED INTO THE LOUISIANA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD WITH A MISSION OF SUPPORTING THE GUARD'S COMMUNICATION NEEDS. THE CARVILLE-BASED UNIT GIVES CURRENT AND POTENTIAL SOLDIERS NEW JOB OPPORTUNITIES, INCLUDING COMPUTER PROGRAMMING, COMPUTER NETWORKING AND SWITCHBOARD OPERATIONS.

COMMUNICATION IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT TO THE GUARD AND TO SOLDIERS, ESPECIALLY DURING TIMES OF STATE EMERGENCIES SUCH AS TERRORISTS' ATTACKS, HURRICANES AND FLOODS.

"LOUISIANA IS A TARGET FOR EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS DUE TO ITS LOCATION ON THE GULF," SAID SGT. 1ST CLASS CHAD S. GOYNES, THE OPERATIONS NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER FOR THE 139TH ESC. "THE BETTER AND MORE EFFICIENT THE COMMUNICATION IS THE MORE RESPONSIVE AND INFORMED THE OTHER UNITS WILL BE TO DO THEIR MISSIONS AND REACT TO EMERGENCIES."

**BELLE CHASE** – RECENTLY TWO MEMBERS OF THE 159TH FIGHTER WING MISSION SUPPORT FLIGHT DREW RECOGNITION FOR THE LOUISIANA AIR NATIONAL GUARD WITH THEIR EXEMPLARY VOLUNTEERISM WHILE DEPLOYED TO IRAQ FOR AN AIR EXPEDITIONARY FORCE ROTATION.

STAFF SGT. RASIA L. SMITH AND SENIOR AIRMAN SASHA S. LEECH SERVED AS MEMBERS OF PERSONNEL SUPPORT FOR CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS WHILE DEPLOYED TO BALAD AIR BASE, IRAQ, FROM MAY TO JULY. BOTH AIRMEN WERE COMMENDED FOR THEIR WORK ETHIC AND FOR THEIR VOLUNTEER WORK AT THE IRAQI HOSPITAL. SMITH WORKED IN THE INTENSIVE CARE WARD, AND LEECH WORKED AT THE HELICOPTER PAD ASSISTING INJURED MEMBERS OFF OF HELICOPTERS.

THE DEPLOYMENT WAS VOLUNTARY AND A FIRST FOR BOTH AIRMEN. THE AIRMEN EARNED VARIOUS AWARDS THROUGHOUT THEIR DEPLOYMENT. SMITH WAS SELECTED AS TUSKEGEE "NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER PERFORMER OF THE WEEK." LEECH WAS THE 332ND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE SUPPORT SQUADRON AIRMAN OF THE MONTH, TUSKEGEE AIRMAN OF THE WEEK AND PERSCO PERFORMER OF THE WEEK.

**COVINGTON** – THE LOUISIANA NATIONAL GUARD OFFICIALLY OPENED ITS NEW 30,000 SQUARE FOOT STATE-OF-THE-ART READINESS CENTER IN COVINGTON ON JULY 30. THE CENTER IS HOME TO THE 1021ST ENGINEER COMPANY AND DETACHMENT 1, 843RD ENGINEER COMPANY OF THE 225TH ENGINEER BRIGADE. THE CENTER CAN ALSO BE USED AS A STAGING AREA IN THE EVENT OF DISASTERS.

THE BUILDING CONTAINS A RECRUITING OFFICE, A FAMILY SUPPORT OFFICE, AS WELL AS A SUPPLY ROOM WITH WEAPONS VAULT. ADDITIONALLY, THE SOLDIERS WILL HAVE THE USE OF TWO CLASSROOMS, AN INDUSTRIAL SIZE KITCHEN, A FULLY FUNCTIONAL SHOWER AND LOCKER ROOM AND A FULL-SIZE PHYSICAL FITNESS ROOM, COMPLETE WITH TREADMILLS, CYCLES AND WEIGHTS.

IN ADDITION TO THE MAIN BUILDING, THERE ARE SEVERAL SUPPORT STRUCTURES. THESE INCLUDE A WASH RACK, LOADING RAMP, FLAMMABLE STORAGE BUILDING, FUEL POINT AND A STORAGE BUILDING FOR HAZARDOUS MATERIALS.

**POLLACK** – SOLDIERS FROM THE 225TH ENGINEER BRIGADE'S 528TH ENGINEER BATTALION IN MONROE PERFORMED THEIR ANNUAL TRAINING AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS THROUGHOUT THE STATE IN JUNE. THEY WORKED ON VARIOUS PROJECTS INCLUDING DIGGING UP A ONE-AND-A-HALF ACRE POND AT CAMP GRANT WALKER IN POLLACK TO BENEFIT THE CHILDREN OF THE COMMUNITY.

"THE NEW POND WILL BE VERY LARGE WITH A DEPTH OF SIX FEET," SAID LT. JASON W. HAYS OF MINDEN, 921ST DETACHMENT COMMANDER. "THIS WILL PROVIDE THE OPPORTUNITY FOR CANOE TRAINING AND FISHING FOR THE KIDS WHO VISIT THE CAMP."

CAMP WALKER, WHICH WAS ORIGINALLY OPENED IN 1922 AS A 4-H CAMP, IS OPEN THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER TO STUDENTS, FOURTH THROUGH EIGHTH GRADE. APPROXIMATELY 4,000 CAMPERS VISIT THE FACILITY EACH SUMMER.

# Guard Aviation Flies into

# 'Mouth of the Dragon'

'Looked like a war zone out there'

*By Sgt. Rebekah L. Malone and Staff Sgt. Stephanie J. Cross  
Louisiana National Guard Public Affairs Representatives*

**Louisiana National Guard's State Aviation Command recently responded to California's call for help by flying into the mouth of the dragon to help fight some of the worst fires the state has ever experienced.**

Two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and 10 Soldiers deployed from Army Aviation Support Facility No. 2 in Pineville, La., on Jul. 13 en route to Calif., a trip that would take more than 13 hours. Their mission would be to help aid the weary flight and ground crews battle the Yosemite Telegraph fire near Mariposa, Calif., and the Butte Lightning Complex near Sacramento, Calif.

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*Louisiana National Guardsmen helped fight West Coast wildfires in July, flying to the region in two Black Hawk helicopters. Both aircrews logged more than 120 flight hours and dumped more than 172,000 gallons of water on the blazes that burned 1.4 million acres upon the end of their rotation that would take them 21 days to complete.  
(Courtesy photo)*

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For 10 crew members, three weeks of aerial fire fighting proved to be an invaluable experience.

The last time Louisiana Guard aviators performed real world fire fighting missions was during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, where they helped extinguish land fires.

Maj. Joseph M. Brocato, of Alexandria, La., a pilot of 16 years, learned you can teach an old dog new tricks, as he experienced some of the most challenging flying he had ever encountered.

Brocato, commander of the 812th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), explained that the pilots battled factors they were unaccustomed to dealing with as they navigated the difficult mountain terrain with poor visibility from the thick smoke; and also operated in close proximity to several aircraft in very tight air space.

To complicate matters, the pilot's aircraft had to maneuver 660-gallon Bambi Buckets on the end of a 30-foot rope to and from the dip site. After filling the bucket, the aircraft would then make a steep ascent up the narrow canyon to the top of the mountain with barely 20 feet of clearance off the tips of the rotor blades.

"Visibility was bad. We had multiple aircraft fighting the same fire and there were times when it was pretty tough. We're not used to operating in the mountains because of where we're from," said Brocato. "So with these conditions, there were times when it was pretty intense."

To increase the visibility of the helicopters, the birds were painted fluorescent pink on the body and rotors

Louisiana National Guard Soldier and 812th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) crew chief of Black Hawk helicopter 944, Sgt. 1st Class Mike W. Gunnels of Marksville, La., guides the pilots into the dip site with the 660 gallon Bambi Bucket to draw water as they work vigorously to suppress the Telegraph fire near Yosemite during the California wildfires in July. (above) Courtesy Photo

Louisiana National Guard Black Hawk crew members (from left) Maj. Joseph M. Brocato of Pineville, La., Pvt. 1st Class Chris A. Sauber of Ruston, La., Spc. Minas Filosoglou of New Orleans, Sgt. Dewayne D. Phelps (top) of Pineville, La., Spc. William R. LaCour (bottom) of Pollock, La., Sgt. 1st Class Mike W. Gunnels of Marksville, La., Pvt. 1st Class Patrick S. Fuerst of Houma, La., 1st Lt. Michael P. Bonney of Pineville, La., Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael R. Weathers (bottom) and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Jack W. Mucha of Pollock, La., teamed with Department of Forestry and Fire protection to fight fires in Butte County and the Midpines area near the entrance to Yosemite National Park. The crews logged more than 120 flight hours and dropped more than 160, 000 gallons of water. (below)

U.S. Army Photo: Sgt. Rebekah L. Malone, 225th Engineer Brigade Unit Public Affairs Representative

and had operations numbers painted on their tails. This aided in identifying the camouflaged military helicopters in the dense smoke.

Each mission averaged five to seven hours in length and consisted of

three crew members plus a civilian aircraft manager that instructed the pilots where to drop the water.

"When you're flying that much, you get mentally and physically tired," Brocato said.

Flying in the adverse conditions was challenging for even a veteran pi-

lot like Brocato, but he was impressed with the 25-year-old pilot, 1st Lt. Michael D. Bonney of Lake Charles, La., who just graduated from flight school only four months ago.

Continued on page 20



# Fighter pilots conduct combat training in Hungary



## Historical deployment for the Guard and Hungary Air Force

By Master Sgt. Suzanne Chaillot  
Louisiana Air National Guard State Public Affairs Office

The Louisiana Air National Guard's 159th Fighter Wing deployed to Kecskemet, Hungary, for an Air Combat Training exercise June 12-29.

The two-week deployment consisted of more than 170 fighter wing personnel. The mission was to train for combat against aircraft by flying U.S. Air Force F-15 Eagles against the Hungarian air force MiG-29 Fulcrums and JAS-39 Gripens. The trip was dedicated to not only practicing

and sharing skills, but to building relationships between the two countries.

Up to 14 aircraft, or "sorties," were flown daily as both U.S. and Hungary Air Force pilots switched roles in teaching and practicing skills during the flights.

Staff Sgt. Mark Lutz with the wings electric shop, was amazed to see the Hungarians perform an array of turns and loops during an aerial display.

Louisiana Air National Guardsman Michael J. Lopinto, 159th Fighter Wing, and Brig. Gen. Istvan Peto, of the 59th Tactical Fighter Wing, Hungarian Air Force, tour flight operations during a recent Air Combat Training exercise. Photo: Courtesy of Lt. Col. Toperczer Istva'n, Hungarian air force



Louisiana Air National Guard F-15 jets and two Hungarian MiG-29 jets fly a combat training mission during recent Air Combat Training exercise in Kecskemet, Hungary. Photo: Courtesy of Lt. Col. Toperczer Istva'n, Hungarian air force

"This is so great! I am impressed with the durability of the MiG!" said Lutz.

Col. Michael Lopinto, a fighter pilot and commander of the 159th Fighter Wing said the experience with the Hungarians was a great learning opportunity for the wing.

Lt. Col Scott Tyler, also a fighter pilot and vice commander of the 159th Fighter Wing, flew in the back seat of the JAS-39 Gripen for hands-on teaching. "My first dogfight against a MiG-29 was the greatest sortie of my life. We fought as warriors but debriefed as friends," said Tyler.

Locals welcomed the Americans and Hungarian military with kindness and left a strong economic impact on Kecskemet, a town of less than 100,000.

Several members of the Louisiana contingency met with American Ambassador to Hungary April H. Foley on a trip to the American Embassy in Budapest. She said she was pleased to see the interaction between Louisiana Air National Guard and the Hungarian air force.

"Learning to interact with the Hungarians despite language barriers was the best. It is good to know there are other nations that have a common interest with ours," said Senior Airman Josh Latiolias, of the 159th Weapons.

The knowledge gained from the deployment was evident on both sides. Sgt. Balaz Luki Lukacs, the



Louisiana Guardsman Col. Michael J. Lopinto, 159th Fighter Wing commander, prepares for a training flight with his crew chief Senior Master Sgt. Gary Trauth. Photo: Technical Sgt. David Miller, 159th Fighter Wing

Hungary air force engine airframe technician, said, "I have a very good impression about Louisiana people now that we have experience working together."

"In the course of two weeks, the Hungary air force have become more than just North Atlantic Treaty Organization allies; they have become our Hungarian friends," said Lopinto. ■

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**BUFFALO SOLDIERS OF YESTERDAY AND TODAY**

*By Spc. Qualan M. Jefferson  
2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment Unit Public Affairs Representative*

**W**ool-like hair and a dark, sun-beaten complexion are the traits of men who were called Buffalo Soldiers. These prominent black men performed with courage, honor and distinction in a field that was dominated by whites, earning a name that would demand respect and gratitude. When all was said and done, it wasn't their looks that those they served with would remember most.

Today, there aren't any all-black regiments in the United States military; however, most African-American Soldiers serving in a Cavalry or Infantry regiment remember the legacy of the original Buffalo Soldiers, what they stood for, and the way they paved for future generations.

Sgt. Jason D. Robinson a native of Shreveport, La., serves in the 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment as a Cavalry Scout. This 24-year-old black male takes pride in his affiliation to the military and in being considered a modern day Buffalo Soldier.

"I consider it an honor and a privilege not only to wear the uniform of the greatest military in the world, but also to carry on an important part of African-American history by serving in a combat position," Robinson said.

The name Buffalo Soldier was given by the Native Americans only partly due to wooly hair and black skin. Later, more emphasis was placed on the fierceness they displayed during battle, similar to the aggressiveness the buffalo displays when cornered – often times with little provocation, waiting for the right opportunity to charge fearlessly.

Battling elements such as the blazing sun in the Southwest region and the bitter cold of the Northwest region, the Soldiers fought relentlessly. In total, 23 Buffalo Soldiers received the Medal of Honor, the

*Continued on page 16*



*Lt. Col. William T. Rachal, squadron commander of the 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry presents Sgt. Jason D. Robinson of Shreveport, his Order of the Spur Certificate after successfully completing the 2nd Annual Spur Ride during Annual Training 2008. Robinson is one of the few African-American Soldiers who serve in combat positions and remembers the legacy of the original Buffalo Soldiers.*

*U.S. Army Photo: Spc. Qualan M. Jefferson 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment Unit Public Affairs Representative*

*Sgt. Ryan J. Robinson of Shreveport leads his squad on the obstacle course at Camp Minden during Annual Training 2008. Robinson is the only African-American infantry qualified noncommissioned officer in Troop C, 2nd Squadron 108th Cavalry located in Coushatta, La.*

*U.S. Army Photo: Spc. Qualan M. Jefferson 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment Unit Public Affairs Representative*





For your information

# Education Benefits



## FAQS FOR INCENTIVES

**Q: Does my bonus payment stop when I get mobilized?**

A: No it does not, your anniversary payments continue as normal.

**Q: Can I get my re-enlistment bonus TAX FREE?**

A: Yes, if you are in your 12-month window while serving in a combat zone and you extend and sign your contract while in country or in a month you served at least one day in a combat zone, you receive your bonus tax free.

**Q: When do I get my tax-free bonus?**

A: If you extend while serving in a tax exempt area, your bonus is not payable until that contract starts, after your ETS. For example if you extend and your ETS is 10 months from now, you will receive your bonus 10 months after your contract is effective.

**Q: Can AGRs and MIL Technicians receive a bonus?**

A: Yes they can, provided they meet all the requirements according to the policy in place at the time and they sign their contract while in Iraq, Kuwait or Afghanistan

**Q: Can CPTs and W2s receive a bonus?**

A: Yes they can, provided they meet all the requirements according to the policy in place at the time and they sign their contract while in Iraq, Kuwait or Afghanistan

## FAQS FOR STUDENT TUITION EXEMPTION PROGRAM

**Q: Can I continue to use STEP while on deployment?**

A: A service member can; however, the school would have to be a state-funded public school and offer a distance learning program.

**Q: If I'm deployed in the middle of a school semester what do I need to do?**

A: Go to your academic adviser or your school's administrator, let them know your situation, provide them with a copy of your mobilization orders, and ask them what your best option is.

**Q: If I ETS during or right after my deployment, and I did not use all my exemption, do I lose my remaining semesters?**

A: No. The Guard will give you back what you missed. If you missed three semesters of school because you were deployed, when you return, even if you're in ING status you will get those three semesters back.

**Q: Will I be charged with a Semester/Quarter of STEP usage if I am deployed in the middle of the Semester/Quarter?**

A: No. Contact the STEP Manager at (504) 278-8304 and explain your situation. You will also need to provide the STEP Manager and the school with a copy of your MOB order so this term does not count against you.

**Q: What do I need to do when I get back from deployment to continue my education?**

A: Contact your Education office at (504) 278-8304, to let them know you want to return to school, and follow the instructions the office gives.

## FAQS FOR STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM

**Q. What do I tell my Loan Company about my deployment?**

A. Inform your Loan Company that you are being deployed. Inform them that you are familiar with "The Sailors Act," and that you are interested in getting a Forbearance. A Forbearance is like a grace period without payments being demanded. However, this may not block interest from accruing. Do not deploy without contacting your Loan Company because if they don't know you are deployed, they will assume that you are voluntarily not enrolled in school, and then payments will be expected.

**Q. How do I make payments to my Loan Company while deployed?**

A. You can do an electronic withdrawal using online banking with your bank. This way you can start and stop the payments yourself. If this is uncomfortable for you, Finance can do an allotment for you. Just keep in mind that thousands of Soldiers are deployed at the same time and it can take a while for the allotment to start, as well as to be stopped. Last but not least, you can have the Loan Company set-up electronic payments. This one I don't recommend because once you give them access to your bank account, they may not stop the drafts until the loans are finally paid off.

**Q. Why are my loans not being paid on when I'm in the SLRP program?**

A. The main reason is that this office does not have an Annual Application Release Agreement submitted by the Soldier. Without this release form, The National Guard cannot obtain the information needed to make payments on the Soldier's behalf.

most of any United States military unit.

Maj. Ivory Irvin, senior Army instructor at Fair Park High School Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and a black officer in a predominately black school in Caddo Parish, heavily influenced Robinson's decision to join the military and served as one of his first role models.

"I had obtained the highest rank possible in JROTC, Caddo Parish cadet commander, and Maj. Irvin showed me that if I could accomplish this, I could go into the Army and do the same thing with hard work and determination."

Hard work and determination is exactly what it took for the first Buffalo Soldiers to show what they were made of regardless of the circumstance. With a salary of only \$13 per month, they fought to have a new life after slavery and prove their equality to other men.

One of their many and often death-defying missions was to escort miners and settlers and protect them from Native American tribes who weren't open to the idea of America expanding west. It was similar to the current convoy escorts in Iraq, making sure supplies and Soldiers get to destinations safely, as the War on Terrorism continues.

Command Sgt. Maj. Albert L. Vanzant of the 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment, among many others, is a testament to the changes the military has made and provides evidence that blacks can be successful in the military.

Robinson now has a new role model. "I have been in the military seven years and for the first time I have had



*Command Sgt. Maj. Albert L. Vanzant of the 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry proudly stands as the first African-American command sergeant major in the history of Fort Humbug. Fort Humbug is a key element in Shreveport's military history and is formerly known as 1st Battalion, 156th Armor.*

*U.S. Army Photo: Spc. Qualan M. Jefferson 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry Regiment Unit Public Affairs Representative*

a black sergeant major with the arrival of Command Sgt. Maj. Vanzant. His presence alone gives me aspirations for a future position that can be obtained by a black man," continued Robinson.

The desegregation of the armed forces by President Harry S. Truman in 1948 officially marked an end to the all-black regiments in the U.S. military. However, it didn't completely end the racial injustice, nor remedy the prejudice in the hearts and minds of a nation divided by color during this era.

Oftentimes given the worst assignments, the ever so vigilant Buffalo Soldiers always surpassed everyone's expectations. They often distinguished themselves in spite of being issued old horses, ammunition and faulty equipment. Their desertion and court marital rates were much lower than that of white Soldiers. During the period from 1880 to 1886, the 24th Infantry held the record for the lowest desertion rate in the entire United States Army.

Modern day Buffalo Soldiers are found throughout the state of Louisiana within the ranks of the 256th Infantry Brigade Team's 2nd Squadron, 108th Cavalry, 2nd and 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiments.

"I'm a young Soldier, but I want to remind others like myself or even younger to never give up no matter the situation, because those before us paved the way for us to succeed and not fail," concluded Robinson. ■

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# ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

**KNOWLEDGE IS POWER**

## STATUS

- ARNG Traditional Reservist Soldier (Title 10 and Title 32) AGR Soldier
- ADSW or ADT
- Member's Spouse
- Member's Dependent
- F&D DA Civilian/Mil Non-Dual Status Technician
- ARNG Employee/Dual Status Technician
- ARNG Employee — State Employee
- Contractor

	ARNG Traditional Reservist Soldier (Title 10 and Title 32) AGR Soldier	ADSW or ADT	Member's Spouse	Member's Dependent	F&D DA Civilian/Mil Non-Dual Status Technician	ARNG Employee/Dual Status Technician	ARNG Employee — State Employee	Contractor
<b>GI BILL</b>	<b>EDUCATION BENEFITS</b>							
	●	✓	●			●		
	✓	★	●			●		
	●	●	●			●		
	✓	★	●			★		
	✓	✓	✓			✓		
<b>ASSISTANCE</b>	✓	▲	✓			✓		
	✓	✓	✓	▲	▲	▲	▲	
		✓						
	✓		✓					
	✓		●					
	✓		●					
	✓		●					
<b>TESTING</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	✓	✓	✓			✓		
	✓	✓	✓			✓		
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
<b>OTHER PROGRAMS</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	✓	✓	✓			✓		
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	▲
	✓	✓	✓			●	●	●
	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	

- ✓ Usually Qualify For Benefits Pending Further Qualifications
- Retain Benefits If Previously Qualified
- ▲ In Select States or Special Circumstances
- ★ Suspended — Do Not Qualify Until Restored to Previous Eligible Status

**GO AHEAD... EMPOWER YOURSELF**



Pugh, who currently works as the deputy city attorney for the office of the city attorney in Jackson, Miss., assigned to the Jackson Police Department said, "I loved everything about being a prosecutor," Pugh reflected. "I love being in the courtroom, the excitement, the adrenaline ... being in front of a judge and talking to a group of 12 people and trying to argue your case."

Even though Pugh has only a few months of service in the Guard, she follows a long line of Soldiers and lawyers.

Pugh's grandfather, John F. Pugh served in World War II and her father, Col. John F. Pugh, Jr., retired from the National Guard in 2004 where he served in the JAG Corps for nine of his 22 years.

"I am of course delighted that Katherine joined the Louisiana Guard," said Lt. Pugh's father, Col. John Pugh, who currently works full-time as the executive counsel for the State Military Department. "I know first-hand the benefits and satisfaction gained from Guard membership, particularly in Louisiana."

Lt. Pugh's ambition goes all the way to the top of the Louisiana's JAG Corps. "I would love to be the State Judge Advocate and possibly a military judge. I feel both would be very rewarding," she said.

At 29 years old, Pugh no longer has to debate with her sisters to fulfill her love of arguing. Her passion for dispute is amply fed as a civilian attorney and as a National Guard Soldier. ■

# NATIONAL GUARD

## Recruiting Assistance Program



### What is G-Rap?

G-RAP is a contracted program designed for ARNG Traditional M-day Soldiers and Retirees who voluntarily apply on-line to serve as a Recruiting Assistant (RA).



### How do I sign up?

It takes 2 easy steps to complete your RA application and become a Guard Recruiting Assistant.

**Step 1:** Complete the G-RAP online application. You can access the application from the G-RAP homepage [www.guardrecruitingassistant.com](http://www.guardrecruitingassistant.com) by clicking the "Apply Now!" button.

**Step 2:** Log into your G-RAP account and complete the online training. It only takes 30 minutes, and once completed, you'll be a certified Recruiting Assistant.

### What are the benefits?

- Recruiting Assistants directly effect the quality of Soldiers in their unit
- \$2,000 for each verified Non-Prior Service accession and shipment to BCT
- \$2,000 for each verified Prior Service accession (GRAP-O)
- Up to \$8,500 for each verified Officer commission

Access to the Guard Mission Zone, an online store for free ARNG promotional items to assist in Recruiting Assistant duties



state competition, it also gives him tremendous satisfaction.

"I get to make an impact on future or new NCOs. For a lot of them, this is their first leadership position," Savoy said. "[The impact] goes beyond those people. I get to make a visible impact."

He explained the new NCOs might be about to deploy or take leadership positions, and their leadership abilities are a direct reflection on the training they received while at NCOES.

With nearly 16 years in the National Guard and six on active duty as a Marine, Savoy felt the pressure to represent the academy he works for.

"I feel like I was representing everyone I work with and to be honest, the guys I work with, it could've been any one of them; it just happened to be me," Savoy modestly explained. "They are all squared away and know what they are doing."

Savoy's other accomplishments include Instructor of the Quarter twice in 2007 and Instructor of the Year for 2008. They speak volumes for his attitude and abilities.

"Savoy was the oldest competitor at regions out of 10 qualifiers, and he placed fourth. That shows a lot of his character," said Master Sgt. Daniel Rachal of Pineville, branch chief of NCOES. "He is the face of the academy."

Savoy is the son of deceased J. Rayford Manuel of Oberlin and Cynthia N. Smith of Kinder. He is married to the former Ingrid E. Rice and has three children: Ryan, 12; Olivia, 9; and Jack, 7.



Staff Sgt. J. Kevin Savoy, member of the 199th Leadership Regiment unwinds after months of preparation for the Louisiana National Guard Noncommissioned Officer of the Year board with his wife, Ingrid and daughter, Olivia, 9. The win has made Olivia especially proud of her father, saying, "I told everyone at school and they are all excited!"

U.S. Army Photo: Sgt. Rebekah Malone, 225th Engineer Brigade Public Affairs Representative

Savoy is a graduate of Oberlin High School. He also has a degree from McNeese State University in criminal justice.

With the honor of winning Soldier and NCO of the Year comes a special invitation—Johnston and Savoy will attend the Louisiana Command Sergeants Major Banquet later this year as well as the national banquet held in Savannah, Ga. ■

# Officer Candidate School Graduates

NAME - UNIT	JOB TITLE
David Baise - 926 Mobility Aug Co (MAC)	Engineer
Jacob A. Behernes - 756 MED Co. (AREA SPT)	Medical Services
Johnathan E. Bogle - Co D, 2-156th Inf Bn	Infantry
James C. Chamblee - HHC 199 SPT BN	Ordnance
David Coleman - HHC 199 SPT BN	Transportation
Jeffery S. Courville - DET 1 Co A 2-156 INF BN	Infantry
Billy J. Crosby - Co F (-) 199 SPT BN	Ordnance
Justin Lee Delcambre - Co C 2-156 Inf. BN	Infantry
Michael T. Fagan - 756 MED Co. (AREA SPT)	Medical Services
Michael J. Gaudet - HHC 256th INF BDE	Infantry
Justin M. Guidry - HHC/ 199 BSB	Ordnance
Christopher G. Hardy - DET 1, 1022nd ENGR Co (VERT)	Engineer
Erica A. Haulard - DET 1, 922 HORIZONTAL EN CO	Engineer
Ryan M. Hicks - Co D 2-156 IN	Infantry
Kelly T. Hudson - 2225th PANEL BRIDGE CO.	Engineer
Lichia T. Johnson - FSC, 769th EN BN	Engineer
Troy L. Johnson - 199 SPT BN	Armor
Willis J. Johnson - 769th EN BN	Engineer
Benjamin D. Leger - C Co, 3-156 IN	Infantry
Ryan D. Martin DET 1, HHC 256 SPECIAL TRP BN	Infantry
Kenneth M. Matthews - CO A, 415TH MI BN (L)	Military Intelligence
Roderick B. McCoy - 928 EN CO (SAPPER)	Engineer
Jesse A. Nelson - DET 1, 2225TH MRBC	Engineer
James P. Novak - 239TH MP CO.	Military Police

NAME - UNIT	JOB TITLE
Gregory G. O'Brien - CO D 2-156 INF BN (IBCT)	Infantry
Larry L. Patterson - FSC, 205TH ENGR BN	Engineer
Cody L. Paulk - 1020th ENGR CO (VERT)	Engineer
Jason M. Person - 1083RD TRANS CO (DET 1)	Transportation
Ladetrick D. Provo - 769th HHD	Engineer
Andrea M. Reason - B CO 256 BSTB	Military Intelligence
Quentin Seals - 199TH SPT BN	Medical Services
Jose R. Torres - B BTRY 1-141ST FA BN	Field Artillery
Timothy W. Traylor - DET 1 CO A 415TH	Military Intelligence
Obie E. Ward - CO C 256 BSTB	Signal

## CLASS 49A

Tommy G. Allen - 1020TH ENGR CO (VERT)	Engineer
Eric S. Brewton - REAR DET/1-244TH AV BN	Aviation
Joseph G. Constant - REAR DET/1-244TH AV BN	Aviation
Samuel S. Dupas - DET 2, 1022ND ENGR CO (VERT)	Engineer
William A. Ingraham III - CO D 2-156TH IN	Infantry
Brian C. Jackson - HHT, 2-108TH CAV SQUADRON	Medical Services
Michael S. McKenzie - FSC 205TH EN BN	Transportation
Patrick S. Ray - 256th BSTB	Infantry
Jeremy Simoneaux - HHB 1-141st FA	Military Intelligence
Shaun M. Warren - 141 FA BN	Medical Services
Curtis Watson - 256th BSTB	Infantry
Jeremy W. Willis - CO C 2-156TH IN	Infantry



Louisiana National Guard Black Hawk pilots fill their Bambi Bucket at a dip site in Susanville, Calif., approximately 30 miles away from their drop location while responding to another small fire north of the Yosemite Telegraph fires in July. Courtesy Photo

"Lt. Bonney is a competent aviator even if he doesn't have years of experience. I never had a doubt in my mind we couldn't successfully complete each mission," explained Brocato. "As the days went on, I could tell he felt more comfortable with the challenging conditions, just as I did, and he became more proficient."

The atmosphere at times was overwhelming due to extreme temperatures and the magnitude of radio traffic the pilots had to endure and work around.

"As an aviator straight out of flight school, I couldn't have hoped for anything better, especially with the mountain flying and the conditions we flew in. It was a great learning experience," Bonney said. "I really enjoyed the opportunity and challenge."

The devastating fires left behind scenes that have permanently left an impression on the young pilot.

"It looked like a war zone out there, like someone dropped a bomb out there; trees were just gone," described Bonney. "It looked like the surface of the moon on the mountain."

The Soldiers received training on fire fighting, fire behavior, aerial tactics for combating fires and instructions on air space and radio calls before being allowed to fly in the dangerous conditions.

Both aircrews logged more than 120 flight hours and dumped an amazing 163,000 gallons on the blazes that burned 1.4 million acres upon completion of their rotation.

"We're not fire fighters, we're just helicopter pilots," Bonney humbly suggested. "I've never been trained on mountain flying in general. There's a lot of planning characteristics and overall capabilities of the helicopter that you have to take into consideration so you don't have problems."

While the 21 adrenaline-filled days of flying were exhilarating, the pilots and crew agreed they were glad to be home due to exhaustion and having to endure the long hours of intense concentration demanded by each mission.

The weary but proud crew of 10 returned home safely to Pineville, La., on Aug. 2, where they will again be true to their motto. *Always Ready... Always There...* ■

## HELPING FAMILIES IN NEED MILITARY ASSISTANCE FUND

2008 legislative session Senate Bill No. 686, by Senator Reggie Dupre, creates and establishes the Louisiana Military Family Assistance Board under the jurisdiction of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The Military Family Assistance Fund helps families defray the costs of such necessities as food, housing and medical services that become difficult to afford when a family member has temporarily left civilian employment to serve active military duty. The Fund provides a means by which Louisiana citizens and businesses can donate money that will be used to pay the needs-based claims of family members of activated military personnel.

**Who may apply for assistance?** Any Louisiana resident who is a member of a Reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces or the National Guard and who has served a minimum of 30 consecutive days of active duty since September 11, 2001. Immediate family members of eligible Soldiers/Airmen may apply on behalf of the Soldier.

**What will the fund pay for?** The fund will pay needs-based claims of family members for the costs of such necessities as food, housing and medical services that become difficult to afford when a wage-earner has temporarily left civilian employment to be placed on active military duty. All other resources, such as insurance, must be exhausted before the fund can be accessed.

**How often can someone apply to the fund?** Soldiers/Airmen may apply for one claim per active duty order in a twelve month period. In addition, in extenuating circumstances the fund will pay a lump sum award, not to exceed \$700, for a service-related death or injury resulting in a substantial residual disability.

To apply for assistance from the MFA fund, please submit a completed application to the Fund Administrator at the Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs. Applications are available at all Veterans Affairs parish service offices and can be found online at the following Web sites:

[www.vetaffairs.com](http://www.vetaffairs.com)

Once you have completed the form, please mail or fax it and the requested documentation to the MFA Administrator at the address below. You may fax your application, but you must follow-up by mailing the application with the original signature.



**Military Family Assistance Fund Administrator  
Louisiana Department of Veterans Affairs**

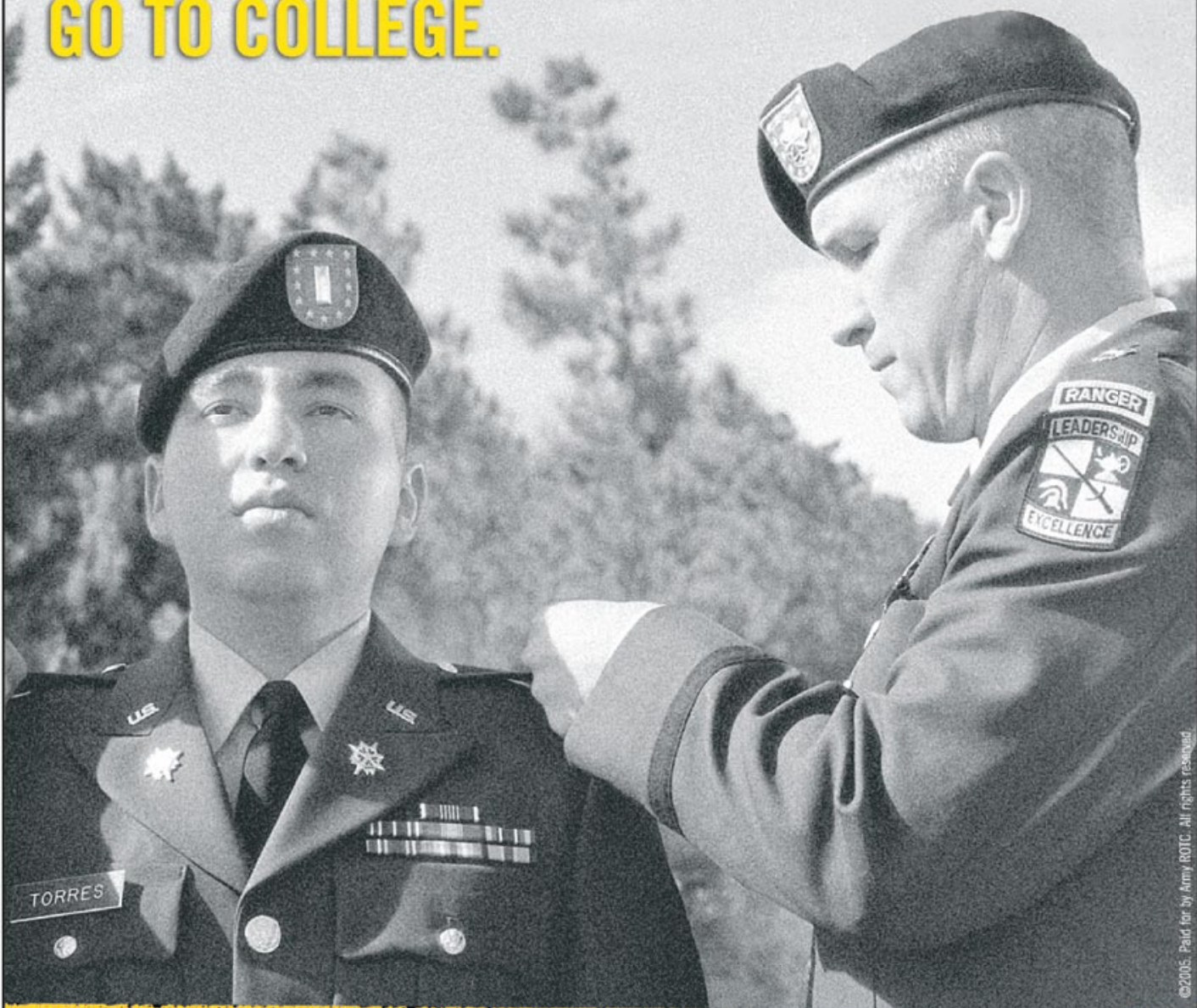
P.O. Box 94095 Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9005  
Phone: (225) 922-0500 Fax: (225) 922-0511

Donations can be mailed directly to the MFA fund or by checking the appropriate box on your individual or corporate state tax return. To donate directly to the fund, please make your check or money order payable to LA Military Family Assistance Fund and mail to:

LA Military Family Assistance Fund c/o Department of Veterans Affairs  
P.O. Box 94095 Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9095

Donations to the MFA fund are income tax deductible.

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