

Bolt

359th Signal Brigade

Spring 2009



Bolt

The 359th Signal Brigade Magazine

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Bolt is produced in the interest of the Soldiers serving in and under the 359th Signal Brigade.

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Bolt is published by the 359th Signal Brigade headquarters located at 719th 15th Street, Building 14401, Fort Gordon, Ga. 30905.

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Photo by Capt. Michelle Lunato

Cover:
Sgt. Mario Cotom, information systems operator, Charlie Company, 392nd Expeditionary Battalion, double checks his map after reading his compass before heading out to a point on the land navigation course during the battalion's Best Warrior competition.

Partnership can help with employment search

Fellow Army Reserve Soldiers:

It's important for you to know the progress we've made since the Employer Partnership Initiative launched in April 2008, and the advancements we've made to help you achieve your goals in both your military and civilian careers.

In less than a year, more than 175 businesses and agencies across the country have joined with us in meaningful and collaborative relationships that benefit them and, most importantly, you and your Families.

My vision is that corporate America will consider the Army Reserve the number one source of professional, well-trained and experienced people.

The companies and organizations who've joined me in this joint venture tell me they recognize the value Army Reserve Soldiers bring to their workplace, and not surprisingly, they are eager to consider them for employment if they have the right skills for their positions. This realization in itself gives you an edge when competing with other job seekers.

We're continually looking for new partners. I know that many of the best recommendations for future employer partners come from you, so if you know of an employer that you think might be interested in participating in a partnership with the Army Reserve, we welcome your input. Please e-mail the EPI Staff at ARCareers@usar.army.mil if you believe your employer would make a great partner.

At present, more than 40,000 Army Reserve Soldiers have registered with EPI, and are connecting with patriotic Employer Partners. If you haven't already and you are considering a change in careers or you are in need of a job, I encourage you to consider doing the same at www.ArmYReserve.Army.mil.

The EPI staff has also created for you an Employer Partnership Initiative Facebook page and an EPI blog (www.MyArmyReserve.blogspot.com) where you can network with fellow Army Reserve Soldiers, share successes, offer recommendations, and tell us about your experiences as you advance your civilian career through the Employer Partnership Initiative.

For employers, we've created an Employer Partnership



Reserve Command

Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz

Initiative LinkedIn group (www.Linkedin.com). Through this online forum, many can share their expertise and collaborate with us on workforce development topics and solutions that benefit our shared employees.

In addition, we've ramped up our outreach to employers across the nation and have deployed a corps of experienced EPI reps in the field who are eager to assist and support those who take advantage of the benefits offered through EPI.

You'll find the list of Employer Partnership Initiative representatives and their contact information on the EPI Web site. Consider contacting them today. We know that many of you face tough economic times. The EPI staff is here to assist you. Get in touch with them if you need help (ARCareers@usar.army.mil).

I appreciate your service in the Army Reserve and the steady support of your Families. The fact that you've volunteered to serve with me during this time in our nation's history speaks volumes about your dedication and character.

Thank you for helping ensure the 21st century Army Reserve is a strong and formidable operational force on which the Army and our fellow citizens can depend.

Sincerely,

Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz
Chief, Army Reserve
Commander, US Army Reserve Command



Pfc. Nicholas "Nick" Parker

In memorium: Soldier dies from crash

Staff Reports

Pfc. Nicholas James Parker, a 20-year-old with 324th Integrated Theater Signal Battalion, died May 4 following a single-vehicle collision near Easley, S.C.

Parker, who was driving from his Army Reserve training, lost control of his vehicle the evening of Saturday, May 3 and struck a tree, authorities said. The memorial service was held on May 5 with full honors performed by the Fort Gordon Honor Guard.

His unit noted Parker earned two army commendation awards and was a distinguished honor graduate from

Advanced Individual Training at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, Maryland, and the Warrior Leadership Course in Eastover, S.C.

He was a wheeled vehicle mechanic with Alpha Company and a student at Clemson University.

Parker was originally from Odessa, Fla. and graduated Cume Laude from Mitchell High School in Pasco County, Fla. He was also an Eagle Scout.

He is survived by his parents, Melinda and Mike Parker, as well as his brother, Stephen Parker.

Condolences may be expressed online at www.robinsonfuneralhomes.com.



Sgt. 1st Class Neil McCoy, platoon leader, Alpha Company, and Sgt. 1st Class Michael Irvin, the training NCO of Charlie Company, both from the 392nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion go over network management tools.

Sharpening the communications edge

By Spc. Bryan Randolph
300th MPAD

FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Penn.—In February, the 392nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion became the first Army Reserve unit to receive the Warfighter Information Network – Tactical, a backbone of high-speed communications.

“We are under the spotlight, and guinea pigs too, since this is the first time for a Reserve unit,” said 1st Lt. Michael L. Thompson, systems engineer.

The unit, which is preparing for a possible deployment next year, conducted 11 weeks of training on the new equipment.

“The instructors have been making sure we comprehend it,” said Sgt. Christopher Cymek, a Joint Network Node operator-maintainer with Charlie Company.

“They are not just going through the motions.”

The high-capacity equipment, which

“What you are seeing is a commercial system in a tactical environment.”

provides a variety of voice and data communications services, focuses on moving information to support commanders, staffs, units and capabilities-based formations.

WIN-T enables commanders to plan, prepare, and execute multiple missions and tasks simultaneously.

It handles secure Internet networks as well as battlefield video teleconferencing.

“What you are seeing is a commercial system in a tactical environment,” said Brig. Gen. Geoff Freeman, commanding general of the 359th Signal Brigade. “Iraq is being developed everyday and what you do helps all the leaders communicate.”

The \$74 million WIN-T equipment includes Humvees, Light Medium Tactical Vehicles and satellite equipment.

The equipment will make the unit



Capt. Michelle Lunato

Tod Hanibach, the lead instructor for General Dynamics explains the new equipment to Brig. Gen. Geoff Freeman, commanding general, 359th Signal Brigade.

fully capable of providing communications systems for reliable, secure, and seamless video, data, imagery, and voice services that will enable decisive combat actions, Thompson said.



School assistance available to all Reserve Soldiers

By Spec. Maria Reynolds
300th MPAD

When you have a degree and a huge debt to go with it, there is a way you can ease your financial obligations and still pay for gas.

The Student Loan Repayment Program is an Army incentive program that can pay up to either \$10,000 or \$20,000 towards college loans.

These loans can include federal, state or parent loans taken by a Reserve Soldier as long as the loans were used for educational purposes, said Sgt. 1st Class David W. Odell, the program manager of the student loan repayment program and the Montgomery GI Bill for the Army Reserve, St. Louis, Mo.

A Soldier must request the SLRP in their enlistment or reenlistment contract, said Odell. The contract will determine how much each Soldier is permitted to use. The amount usually depends on the Soldiers enlistment military occupational specialty or unit. While Active Duty soldiers cannot use the SLRP and the Montgomery GI Bill at the same time, Reserve Soldiers can, said Odell.

The SLRP works by making annual payments to the institute where the loan originated based on the amount owed. This also depends on how much the Soldier was awarded for the incentive program. For Soldiers who

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Troops to decide if benefits are best fit

By Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs began accepting sign-ups May 1 for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and officials encourage anyone considering enrolling to ensure it's right for them.

"Starting tomorrow, people can start applying for the new benefit," Keith Wilson, director of education service for the Veterans Benefits Administration, said on April 29. "We're excited."

The Post-9/11 Bill that takes effect Aug. 1 has generated a lot of buzz. In addition to broader educational benefits, it includes a popular provision that will enable enrollees to transfer their benefits to immediate family members.

But before electing to shift to the new program from the Montgomery GI Bill or another VA-sponsored education program -- an irrevocable decision -- Wilson recommended they get the facts to make sure it's the best move for them.

"It's a great program, and it's going to be beneficial for a lot of veterans," he said of the Post-9/11 benefit. But jumping too quickly to sign up without fully evaluating it ultimately could shortchange some people, he said.

Defense Department officials emphasized applicants must be on active duty or in the Selected Reserve on Aug. 1 to qualify for transferability provisions under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

As the VA works to get word out about the Post-9/11 GI Bill, it has also geared up a big education campaign about what it does and doesn't deliver.

"The important thing to remember is that this is one of several programs we administer, all of which have different eligibility criteria," Wilson said. "The program that is best for the individual veteran is not always going to be the Post-9/11 GI Bill."

Among questions Wilson encourages people to consider when making the decision are:

- Which benefit will pay more? This needs to factor in, not just what VA pays, but also the impact on any other educational assistance the person receives. For example, if the student attends school in one of the many states that offers veterans free tuition or receives another form of state or campus aid, will switching to the Post-9/11 benefit change that?
- What tier of benefit are they eligible for under the Post-9/11 GI Bill? The program includes three payments: tuition and fees, a living allowance, and a book and supply stipend. But current active-duty members can't receive the living allowance.
- What type of training do they want to pursue? Not all training covered by the Montgomery GI Bill, for example, is covered by the Post-9/11 bill. The new benefit, for example, doesn't cover technical school training.
- How long do you expect to take to use the benefit? The Post-9/11 GI Bill pays out benefits for 15 years, five years longer than the Montgomery GI Bill benefit.
- Do you plan to attend school less than full-time? It will affect whether you receive the housing allowance under the Post-9/11 benefit.
- Do you plan to transfer your unused benefits to an immediate family member? Only the Post-9/11 benefit offers that option.

"There are a series of things, both monetary and nonmonetary, that in-

"There are a series of things, both monetary and nonmonetary, that individuals need to consider."

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Dishing it out



Capt. Michelle Lumato

Soldiers from Bravo Company, 324th Integrated Theater Signal Battalion set up their Joint Network Node equipment during a Communications Exercise in February. Testing all the gear is essential, said many of the Soldiers.

Training schedules take planning and hard work

By **Spc. Daniel Haun**
300th MPAD

Training has changed throughout the years, but it remains a demanding task, especially when you have to plan it.

"Once they tell me certain training needs to happen, I do the footwork in trying to get certain training aids," said Sgt. Nicholas A. Jordan, training NCO for the 324th Integrated Theater Signal Battalion.

The job is not easy, he said. "As a training NCO, you are pulled in all directions. You have to go four ways at one time."

Training methods and tools have adjusted over time said Sgt. Maj. Andrew J. Scheuermann, head of operations and training for the 359th Theater Tactical Signal Brigade.

"Training tools and methods have changed a lot in the last 20 years," he said. "Today we have a lot of computer-based training and simulations online

where it used to be you had to go to an Army installation to receive training. Case in point, the first time I had to pick up ammo I was in a reserve unit near Ft Bragg, N.C. and at that time I had to go to a two-day ammo handler's course. Now it is all done online."

The most important task as a training NCO is to adapt and overcome; making sure they keep the commander in line with any regulations dealing

with training, said Sgt. 1st Class John J. Albert, former training NCO with the 842nd Signal Company in Milton, Florida.

Staff Sergeant Gilbert Fernandez, his successor and current training NCO for the unit agreed.

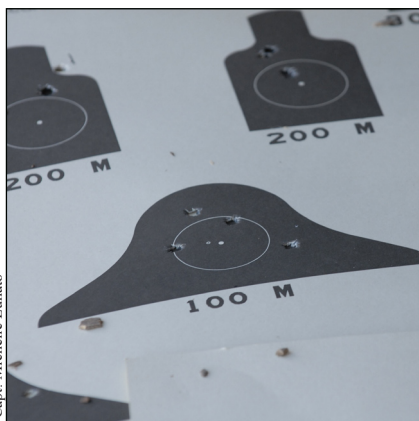
"The best thing is to get fully acquainted with commander's reporting requirements, handed down from brigade to battalion to company," he said.

However, Fernandez felt reluctant when it comes to changes in training schedules.

"A lot of times the schedule is done three to four months in advance; you have the resources allocated," he said. "When it doesn't occur there are a lot of reallocating resources."

No matter the obstacles, Fernandez remains grateful for the personnel he's been assigned. "I'm lucky in the fact I have a good staff; I have a lot of good NCOs," he said.

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Capt. Michelle Lumato

Paper can weigh heavily at promotion board

By Pfc. Charles Thompson
300th MPAD

First impressions are important, and with promotion packets there might be no second introductions.

Soldiers ranking specialist through command sergeant major all face putting together a promotion packet or going before a board themselves.

"These packets are the first and only impression the board has of the Soldier," Staff Sgt. Jerrie Gomez, staff administrative technician of the 324th Integrated Theater Signal Battalion said. She noted Soldiers should always have a promotion packet ready to submit.

"I find it common that Soldiers do not think to prepare their packet in advance, they wait until the last minute," she said.

Command Sgt. Major Jennifer Dehorty, 359th Signal Brigade, who has served on eight promotion boards in a row, said Soldiers can best prepare for a board by not going in blind and instead seeking advice from others who have already been there.

The panels consist of five members and one recorder. There may be more than one panel depending on how many packets are being reviewed.

"It is important that Soldiers spend time putting their packets together," says Dehorty. "Packets usually get reviewed for one to two minutes, and coffee stains don't look very professional."

Depending on the number of packets being reviewed, most board members only spend a very short amount of time per packet, she said. This means all the paperwork needs to be clean, crisp and in the proper order.



Photo illustration

Gomez said Soldiers need to strive to do their best in everything they do. If they have failed three PT tests and passed the last one, it looks like they passed it only for promotion.

Boards look at physical fitness scores, military training and education, as well as civilian education. Some units have checklists available that make it easier for Soldiers to organize and prepare their packets, says Gomez.

DA Form 3355 is the worksheet used to calculate the number of points earned by the Soldier. This form can be accessed online and can be used to prepare for a board.

The form has sections for military training, duty performance evaluation and administrative points. Soldiers are also awarded a maximum of 150 points by the board.

"Soldiers should strive to have enough points before their packet

is submitted so they do not have to worry about the board points," Gomez said.

Senior enlisted promotion boards differ slightly from the junior enlisted boards.

"Photos are required in the senior enlisted packet," Dehorty said. Some NCOs recommend junior enlisted Soldiers also have a DA photo in their packet.

Senior enlisted promotions are also more difficult because there have to be positions available for Soldiers to be promoted into. Therefore, boards are not held until there are positions available for those Soldiers.

Dehorty advised Soldiers to have electronic and hard copies of all their paperwork going into the packet and to keep records updated – also, once the Soldier is promoted to begin preparing the packet for the next board.

Tough jobs and a clean record can equal officer success

By Pfc. Charles Thompson
300th MPAD

While commissioned Army officers are also subject to promotion boards, the process is different than that of enlisted Soldiers.

The officer boards can be easier or harder based on the needs of the Army, said Col. J. Tim Williams, G-7 at the US Army Reserve Command at the Office of the Chief Army Reserve at the Pentagon.

For example, there is a shortage of officers between the ranks of major and lieutenant colonel, he said. Therefore, it would be easier for officers in these ranks to be promoted, while it would be harder for colonels.

Similar to the enlisted promotion boards, officers must prepare and submit a packet. There are promotion boards for every grade every year. The lowest ranking member of this board has to be at least one grade above the officer being promoted.

"One important thing to do to prepare for a board is to be the best qualified officer you can be," Williams said.

This means to do the tough jobs, and do them well, he noted. Other items consid-

ered in the process are deployments, military education and how well the officer is doing their job.

"Officers are in the Army to provide moral, ethical and legal support," Williams said. "Avoid fatal errors; no officer should have UCMJ action against them."

The Army has many tools available for officers to research and prepare for promotion boards, including Army Knowledge Online. Officers are their own best career manager, Williams said.

"One important thing to do to prepare for a board is to be the best qualified officer you can be."



Capt. Michelle Lunato

Soldiers take their best shot

Spc. Candid S. Surry, information technology specialist, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 359th Signal Brigade, attempts to enter a vein on her "patient," Sgt. Natanisha Hershberger, supply shop sergeant, during a combat lifesaver course in January at Fort Pickett, Va.

Benefits

Continued from Page 5

dividuals need to consider," Wilson said.

Wilson encourages anyone eyeing the new Post-9/11 program to read up about it on the VA Web site.

Those who need additional assistance can click on a link on the site to e-mail VA officials with a question, or can talk with a VA benefits counselor by calling 1-888-GI-BILL-1 toll-free, he said.

"We're emphasizing education so people understand the full range of our educational programs," Wilson said. "We really want to be sure we tailor the best program to the individual."

Meanwhile, a disabled Iraqi war veteran now serving as a top VA official is going to some unprecedented lengths to ensure servicemembers and veterans understand the opportunities available to them.

Tammy Duckworth, who was confirmed recently as VA's assistant secretary for public and intergovernmental

affairs, taped a YouTube video to encourage those who qualify for the benefit to check it out.

Although the new benefit doesn't take effect until Aug. 1, Duckworth said, it's time to get busy so people can decide about enrolling in the program in time to use it to cover educational costs during the upcoming fall semester.

"Right now is when students are getting their acceptance letters from universities and trying to decide what school they are going to," she said.

Similarly, she said, current servicemembers may be making decisions about whether they will re-enlist in the military, and whether they can afford college.

Duckworth is busy tapping into just about any communications vehicle available – from the VA Web site to newsletters to veterans service groups and community outreach – to help get word out about the new benefit.

She's also hoping the YouTube video will help. "It's to put a face of another [Operation Iraqi Freedom] veteran out

there telling other OIF vets, 'You have earned these benefits, this is going to start in August,' and encouraging them to get more information so they can decide if this is right for them."

Duckworth understands her audience. A member of the Illinois Army National Guard, she was deployed to Iraq in 2004 when militants attacked the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter she was piloting.

The rocket-propelled grenade cost Duckworth both legs and severely damaged her right arm.

Now, as she reaches out to fellow veterans of operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, Duckworth emphasized that she's not "selling" the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

"There are three different GI bills that they can choose from," she said, echoing Wilson. "Just because this is the newest doesn't mean this is the most appropriate for the veteran. They have to get good information so they can make the best decision as to whether or not the Post-9/11 GI Bill is the right one for them."

Soldiers stay sharp through skills competition

By Capt. Michelle Lunato
359th Signal Brigade PAO

BALTIMORE, Md. — A half-dozen Soldiers from the 392nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion competed in a six-category, three-day Best Warrior competition in February.

The contest came down to two winners: Spc. Matthew Hazzard, Charlie Company, who achieved the Soldier-level Best Warrior title for the battalion, and Staff Sgt. Lucas Crumbacker, Bravo Company, who attained the NCO-level Best Warrior title.

To find the best overall Soldier, the contest integrated a wide range of skills: firing a weapon; physical fitness; a military board interview; land navigation; and warrior task training events like using a tactical radio, evaluating a casualty, and identifying an unidentified explosive device.

To keep the Soldiers on their toes, the sixth competitive category was a surprise — a 500-word essay explaining what the American flag meant to them.

The multiple facets of the competition are essential to finding the best overall Soldier, said Command Sgt. Maj. Richard C. Clowser, 392nd ESB command sergeant major.

“The different parts of the competition evaluate the total warrior. A board only measures a Soldier’s knowledge or in some cases, the ability to memorize. The other events help evaluate the Soldier and NCO’s ability to perform leadership and warrior tasks under pressure.”

“The best warrior must display that he or she is overall superior to their peers as someone they should emulate,” Clowser said. “There again: Building on esprit de corps and pride in service.”

A Reserve Soldier has to be not only the best Soldier they can be, but also the best civilian. These dual roles can make a great package, but it is also challenging to bal-



Capt. Michelle Lunato

Spc. Matthew Hazzard, network systems operator/maintainer, C Company, performs the Warrior Task Training skill of putting on a nuclear biological chemical mask within nine seconds of hearing an alarm.



Capt. Michelle Lunato

Spc. Matthew Hazzard low crawls as part of the three-day Best Warrior Competition.

ance two professions, said Sgt. 1st Class Efrain Acevedo, plans and operations NCO, Headquarters and Headquarters

Company.

“This is another job for them,” he said of the competitors.

The job of Soldiering is taken seriously though, even if they don’t do it every day, said Acevedo. Once they get to the competition, their military training takes over and you “see the Soldiers do what they are trained to do,” he said.

Vying for the Best Warrior title impacts more than just the competitors though, said Clowser.

The competition assists the whole battalion in maintaining Soldier readiness, motivation and even a friendly rivalry be-

“A board only measures a Soldiers’ knowledge ... The other events help evaluate the ... ability to perform leadership and warrior tasks under pressure.”

tween the companies.

Before the six opponents could even compete at the battalion Best Warrior Competition, they had to win their spot at their company-level competition first.

And to make that happen, all the Soldiers had to train, set up the company-level competitions and then mentor the winners at the next level.

The whole process helps Soldiers learn, said Hazzard, a network systems operator and Soldier-level Best Warrior for the battalion.

“I learned a lot when I had to look things up and study,” he said.

Preparation and training are key to being the best in any profession. Soldiering is no different, said Crumbacker, a satellite communications NCO with the NCO-level Best Warrior title for the battalion.

All the repetition and testing of tasks goes along with the Army motto, “Train as you fight,” said Hazzard.

“It just stresses the point that you must always be prepared,”

he added.

Staying ready, fit and trained is a full-time responsibility of every Soldier, said Dehorty, noting the Best Warrior Competition is a highlight of what all Soldiers should strive to be.

“It is more than ‘move, shoot and communicate’; it’s all of that and more,” Dehorty said.

“It is ethical decision making, it is compassion for your fellow Soldier, and it is a greater understanding of the world around us and our role as citizen-Soldiers.”

As the battalion winners, Hazzard and Crumbacker represented the 392nd ESB at the command-level competition in May.



Capt. Michelle Lunato

Sgt. Mario Cotom, information systems operator, Charlie Company, 392nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion, listens to last-minute advice from his sponsor before seeking his points on the land navigation portion of the battalion’s Best Warrior Competition.



Capt. Michelle Lunato

Sgt. Michael Burdette, radio operator, Alpha Company, 392nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion, plots his points before going out to the land navigation portion of his battalion’s Best Warrior competition, which included other skills like using a tactical radio, doing a SALUTE report and reacting to indirect fire.

Soldiers should study educational benefits

I want to thank you all for the words of encouragement for my cat, Murphy Brown, and her writing career. She is taking this issue off to work on her tan. She believes that lying in the window, absorbing heat will help.

So, I begin again with Murphy, for her, education is either from the school of hard knocks or through osmosis. Since her mastery of the spoken language is somewhat limited, I will proceed with a short history lesson of the Army Reserve Educational benefits from 1981 to present.

I will begin in 1981, the year that I joined the Army Reserve. (And yes, I did once walk five miles to school in three feet of snow.) There was not a GI Bill for the Army Reserve Soldiers, nor was there a Student Loan Repayment Program.

In 1981, we didn't receive our drill pay until approximately four months after we drilled. (Look, you can't make this stuff up.) I almost forgot -- there was also no Tuition Assistance for Army Reserve Soldiers either.

In 1984, Congressman "Sonny" Montgomery from Mississippi proposed revamping the GI Bill; that passed and we know it as The Montgomery GI Bill - Selected Reserve.

This was seen as a major recruiting and retention tool after it became law well into early 1990's. I understand that some of you weren't born until after Desert Shield/Desert Storm, but trust me, it was a big deal.

In 1985 after graduating from college, I went on an Active Guard Reserve tour. I worked in the Strength Management Office of the 91st Division. In 1987, one of my responsibilities was to process the NOBE - Notice of Basic Eligibility.

At this point the time from when one became eligible (completing Advanced Individual Training or reenlisting for six years) was taking an average of 400 days to actually get the benefits approved.

My biggest achievement while on tour was to get the processing time down to 42 days, the best in Forces Command. If you had Student Loan Repayment Program, that was a bigger nightmare. And only your unit administrator could submit it. Now it is submitted online and the processing time is mere days compared to months, sometimes years.



From the CSM

Command Sgt. Maj. Jennifer Dehorty

We didn't see many changes in the Montgomery GI Bill - Selected Reserve until October 2004. At this point, another law was passed giving members of the Selected Reserve (who were mobilized in support of a contingency operation) the option of continuing with MGIB-SR or electing to switch to the Reserve Education Assistance Program (Chapter 1607).

Personally, this option increased my benefits from about \$290 a month to close to \$890 a month. The benefits were retroactive back to Dec 2001, depending on when you were mobilized.

Additionally, Army Reserve Soldiers were allowed to use both GI Bill and Tuition Assistance at the same time as long as classes were considered half-time or more.

While my Master's degree still cost me out of pocket, that cost was dramatically

decreased by these changes.

The point to this history lesson is that the opportunities that you have today, your parents and grandparents probably didn't have. The Army Reserve is one of the few places you can not only get (paid) on-the-job training but also get paid to further your civilian education as well. In August 2009, we will see another change in the benefits, the Post - 9/11 GI Bill. For more information on your GI Bill benefits, visit www.gibill.va.gov.

I highly recommend you, at a minimum, review all the educational and training benefits available to you. Having worked in the corporate world for years, I find the educational benefits from the Army Reserve are still the best.

You don't have to work towards a college degree; there are many technical programs that are also available at little or no cost as well. A number of you may aspire to sit in my chair in a couple of years (and I want you to). You don't get to the 'chair' or the position in front of the formation by waiting for things to happen. Take charge and use every benefit you can.

You are only limited by how you limit yourself.

Citizen First, Warrior Always.

**Having worked in
the corporate world
for years, I find the
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Capt. Michelle Lunato

Bravo Company, 324th Integrated Theater Signal Battalion Commex site.

Army, brigade become fans of social networking

By Spc. Daniel Haun
300th MPAD

In April, the Army launched an official blog portal, a fan page on Facebook and a Twitter service for status updates.

Online and Social Media Division Chief of Army Public Affairs Lt. Col. Kevin Arata said he was excited about reaching a large audience.

"I don't think we're targeting just one demographic," said Arata. "I think there are a lot of older folks out there savvy to this type of communication."

The 359th Signal Brigade has also joined the world of social networking. The Brigade's new Facebook page features event listings such as the dates and times of each month's battle assembly, photo albums featuring past events such as the combat lifesavers course, physical fitness test, field training exercise, family day and promotions.

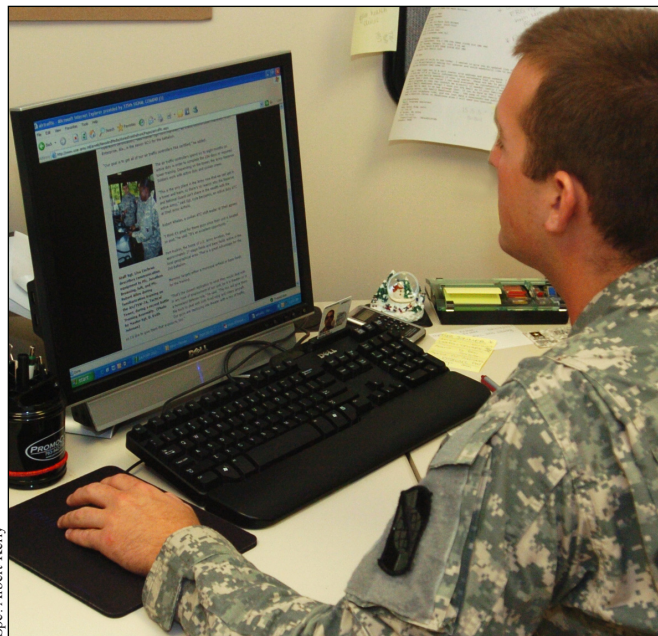
The fan page has a comment wall where users may post photos and other profile story comments, phone numbers, a discussion forum, office information, as well as the brigade's mission.

It even includes links to pertinent Web sites such as the 359th publications page on the digital video and imagery distribution system hub.

The U.S. Army's official fan page on Facebook features recent news stories, videos, photos and podcasts. A discussion forum on the fan page features such topics as "What made you join the Army?" and "Remembering our Fallen men and women that have made the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq and Afghanistan" that Facebook users may respond to.

The Army is now also using Twitter, a free service that lets users keep in touch through quick, frequent status updates. Users may receive news, images, video about Soldiers around the world.

Gary Sheftick of Army News Service contributed to this article.



Spc. Albert Kelly

The new Army Reserve Web site offers new features for both Soldiers and civilians.

Reserve Web site refurbished

By Spc. Bryan Randolph
300th MPAD

The Army Reserve recently developed a revamped Web site to give better access to the public, the media, and Soldiers and their families.

Lt. Col. Gerald Ostlund, Army Reserve webmaster, said comparing the old site to the new one is like comparing a Model T with a new Maserati.

"This is the place where we can tell the American people what good things we are doing around the world," Ostlund said in an interview.

The updated Web site will be at the same address: www.armyreserve.army.mil. Also, each unit will have a unique site of their own, for example, www.armyreserve.army.mil/359signal.

"The Army Reserve has a responsi-

bility to inform and educate the public. Our public site helps us deliver against that responsibility. In addition, it allows for the media to see great Soldiers and units doing great things, which we hope will facilitate coverage," Ostlund said.

"[Army Knowledge Online] is good for file sharing, and for communicating 'inside the tent' with Soldiers, families, and affiliated individuals, but if you are trying to also engage the public, AKO isn't the place."

With the new public site, commanders can help ensure that their Soldiers and units are recognized for their work. This will be achieved through extensive use of photography, video, audio and printed stories. Eventually, units will also have the capability of adding blogs, chats, and podcasts to their sites, Ostlund said.

Safety center has new online look

FORT RUCKER, Ala. – In order to better serve Army leaders, Soldiers, families, and civilians, the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center has completed a comprehensive redesign of its Web site.

The site, www.safety.army.mil, has a new look and feel, making it easier for users to find information and tools necessary to help keep the Army safe.

In addition to the new layout and improved main menu, the site features an in-depth contact and feedback page designed to provide users a quick link to program managers and to gain user feedback for site improvements.

The conveniences allow, with a

single click, users to bookmark a new page or send the link to a friend or colleague.

Changes to the Web page were based on direct customer feedback and several user focus groups, officials said.

The U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center supports the Army by collecting, analyzing and disseminating actionable information to assist leaders, Soldiers, families, and civilians in preserving and protecting combat resources.

The new Web site can also be previewed from the current USACRC/Safety Center.

Watch your lane



Soldiers from the 359th Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 324th Signal Battalion, 300th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, and other units of the 359th Signal Brigade qualify with their M-16's at a range on Fort Gordon, Ga. on Feb. 7. Above, Sgt. Chelsea Helsley, 359th HHC, prepares to go on the firing line. At right, First Sgt. Bobby Hickson, 359th HHC, calls out the latest round of marksmanship scores for a group of Soldiers.

Photos by Pvt. 1st Class Charles Thompson

Joint military education can help careers

Training important to Army Reserve officers, future military operations

By Lt. Col. John H. Phillips
Commander, 324th

The Army Reserve today is not your parent's Army Reserve; it has transformed into an operational reserve. The weekend a month, two weeks in the summer, days are long gone. The Army Reserve today is, as many have stated, your second full time job.

It is characteristic of a Reserve force that is constantly deployed and integrated with the active component. The security challenges of the Global War on Terror and other emerging 21st century threats demand that the capability of the reserve and active force be seamless.

Never will the Army – or any other service for that matter – fight independently.

All future operations will use more than one service. Reserve officers and senior NCOs will increasingly be assigned to billets on joint staffs and understanding the sister services and joint doctrine will be a critical performance metric.

Lt. Gen. Richard A. Chilcoat, former president of the National Defense University said, "Providing more Reserve officers with greater access to Joint Professional Military Education will enhance their integration with the Active Components."

The demand for Army Reserve officers with joint education or training becomes more critical. Increasing the availability of formal education will provide the bedrock for future successful joint operations.

Joint education is defined by three phases:

Phase I: Included in the curricula and earned upon graduation from resident and non-resident Intermediate Service Colleges. For the Army this is Intermediate Level Education or its predecessor, Command and General Staff College.

Phase II: Included in the curricula and earned upon graduation from RESIDENT National Defense University schools (National War College, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and the Joint Forces Staff College) and

RESIDENT Senior Service Colleges.

Phase III: The Capstone course for flag and general officers.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 directed the Reserve components be afforded joint training and education. Title 10 USC, section 666 further states: "The Secretary of Defense shall establish personnel policies emphasizing education and experience in joint matters for Reserve officers not on the active duty list. Such policies shall, to the extent practicable for the reserve components, be similar to the policies provided by this chapter."

Phase II JPME is further defined by the Goldwater-Nichols act as meeting the following requirements: Oversight by the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, a joint faculty, a joint curriculum, a joint student body and a resident program of not less than three months

Reserve officers have little difficulty completing Joint Professional Military Training phase I programs in either resident or non-resident status. Phase II requires a resident education and very few Reserve officers are afforded the opportunity at attending the 10-month resident War College; most of-

icers attend War College in a distance learning environment where phase II credit is not earned.

It took until 1999 for the Joint Staff to develop such an opportunity for Reserve officers.

The segue for reserve officers to meet the requirement of the resident curricula is the phase II level Advanced Joint Professional Military Education

course taught at the Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia.

Advanced Joint Professional Military Education provides a new opportunity for JPME phase I qualified reserve component officers. Graduates

of the program are designated joint educationally qualified, combine that with joint experience (billet assignment and completion) and a reserve officer now receives joint qualification. The first graduation occurred in September 2003.

Advanced Joint Professional Military Education is a 40 week course open to officers in the grade of O-4, O-5 and O-6, who are phase I graduates. Weeks 1-12 are distant learning with online classes and readings followed

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The Reserve component is fully considering weighing promotion criteria for those officers who are joint educated and qualified.

New rules for salute during anthem



Special

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 recently. 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. 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. For the latest news releases and other information, visit VA on the Internet: va.gov/opa.

Gates: Past points our way forward

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

NEWPORT, R.I. – As the U.S. military winds down from Iraq and Afghanistan in the future, leaders must learn the lessons of past drawdowns, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said here April 17.

Gates spoke to the class and staff of the Naval War College. He said leaders must understand that as conflicts end, the United States cannot unilaterally disarm.

Gates said one of his favorite sayings from his 43 years of federal service is, "Experience is the ability to remember a mistake when you make it again."

"And one of the things that has happened to this country repeatedly in the 20th century," he added, "is that at the end of a conflict or a war, we unilaterally disarmed."

The United States eviscerated the armed forces at the end of World War I and World War II, he said. At the end of the Korean and Vietnam wars, he said, military capabilities dropped again.

"And we did it at the end of the Cold War," he said. The Army is 40 percent smaller today, he told the students, than it was when he stepped down as director of central intelligence in 1993.

"So every time we have come to the end of a conflict, somehow we have persuaded ourselves that the nature of mankind and the nature of the world has changed on an enduring basis, and so we have dismantled both our military and intelligence capabilities," he said.

He said that as the United States draws down in Iraq and contemplates the right level of forces in Afghanistan, leaders must not make that same mistake.

"My hope ... is that we not forget the basic nature of humankind has not changed, and there will always be people out there who want to try and take our liberty away or the liberty of our friends and our partners," he said.

The United States must sustain a level of investment in national security capabilities that allows the country to deal with the range of threats, the secretary added.

Gates fielded a question on the Air Force's effort to update its aging tanker fleet, and said he favors one company getting the mammoth contract. Many have suggested splitting the contract and giving pieces of it to both competitors. "First of all," he said, "I would



Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates

look at it from the other perspective, and that is, what are the consequences and costs of having two tankers?"

Development costs would double from the current \$7 billion estimate to \$14 billion, he said. A split contract also means the government gets no benefit from competition.

"Any leverage that we might have in terms of cost control disappears," said he explained.

The competition is in three segments. The first buy – the KC-X – is for 179 tankers. It will be followed by the KC-Y and the KC-Z, he said. "If ... we encounter problems with those, it seems to me you're in a position to reopen the competition and go forward from there."

Finally, the secretary talked about what he called the "miracle" of being able to study the fiscal 2010 defense budget request and make recommendations without anyone leaking the discussions. This was important to him, he said, and all involved signed nondisclosure agreements.

"It seemed to me what was critically important as we considered dramatic changes in the way we were going to procure things and programmatic changes to specific programs was that we be able to have those deliberations among the senior military and the senior civilians in the department without the newspapers printing, every single day, the results of our deliberations the preceding day," he said.

The decisions were not made in a closed circle, he said, but rather in-

involved multiple meetings with senior civilians, service chiefs, the Joint Chiefs and the combatant commanders.

"I felt it was very important for us to have a collaborative effort where people could be honest with one another across the table and not feel

defensive," he said.

"I also thought it was important for the service chiefs each to see that they were not being singled out -- that we were looking at the programs of all the services."

The nondisclosure policy allowed leaders to concentrate. The participants were not "looking over our shoulder at contractors and Congress and everybody else, and trying pre-emptively to see how we would get around their objections," Gates said.

The secretary said he discussed the process with President Barack Obama when he started the exercise.

"My goal is to present to [the president] a budget independent of political considerations that focuses on what is in the best national security interest of the United States," he said. "We'll get into the political tradeoffs once the Congress starts looking at this budget."

The group was large enough to study the recommendations, but not so large as to make it impossible to tell who leaked if information got out, Gates said.

"And I will tell you, a miracle happened," he added. "In three months, there wasn't a single leak of any of our deliberations."

"There will always be people out there who want to try and take our liberty away ..."

Training

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Not only must training NCOs implement Missions Essential Task Lists and Army universal task lists to standard, but also remain flexible as the types and means of training evolve.

"There's a new change every week, something new you have to learn. It makes it easier but also time consuming," said Jordan. The biggest recent change involves field manuals regarding training for full spectrum operations, he noted.

Scheuermann also noted that leaders set the standard for good effectual training.

"It is hard to force or instill a combat mindset into Soldiers. All that we as leaders can do is to ensure that the training is conducted to standard and for it to be as real as possible," he said.

"By now all of us in the Army Reserves know the reality of the current conflict and the likelihood of us being called to active duty to support the current combat operations ... that alone should be the motivation to train as hard and as often as we can. But it is up to each individual Soldier to establish their own mindset/attitude/motivation."

Joint training

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by an essay test; week 13 is in residence; weeks 14-38 are, again, distant learning but have group interaction via web based applications and two more tests; the final two weeks are in residence culminating with a capstone joint exercise.

There is an additional requirement of a research paper. These three weeks of residence blended with 25 weeks of continual Web interaction with classmates from each service meets the resident program requirements for phase II.

Each class will have slots for each Reserve component: Army Reserve, Army National Guard, Air Force Reserve, Air Guard, Navy Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, and Coast Guard Reserve.

The goal is to annually educate 1,224 Reserve officers with 500 graduating from the Advanced Joint Professional Military Education course, according to the Joint Forces Staff College.

Education is half the battle. In "Recommendations of the Commission on

the National Guard and Reserves," the Secretary of Defense wrote that for both active and reserve component officers, criteria for granting joint duty experience credit should be flexible enough to allow for a qualitative assessment of proficiency based on knowledge, skills, and abilities in joint matters, not on inflexible time-based requirements.

Additionally, the recommendations said the Department of Defense and military services should develop a program that enables reserve component members to become fully joint qualified after rotating through the following assignments: serving over a period of years in a drilling status, serving on active duty for training in select joint billets, completing JPME either in residence or by distance learning and serving a year on active duty in a joint designated billet.

The Reserve component is fully considering weighing promotion criteria for those officers who are joint educated and qualified.

It recommended to make joint qualification a criterion for promotion to flag and general officer rank and

that Congress should mandate that the services develop an action plan, milestones and report regularly to Congress on progress made service Secretaries.

Additionally, services, should charge their reserve promotion boards selecting officers for the rank of Colonel or Navy Captain in the reserves to assign additional promotion weight to those officers who have achieved full joint education, have served in joint duty assignments, or are recognized as joint qualified.

These recommendations will likely go into effect in the next ten years — the time to act is now. That aside, each officer needs to show a willingness to meet leadership challenges that are required in the 21st Century. The ability for reserve officers to have the competence and transparency to stand alongside their active component brethren in a joint environment is paramount to the future success and professionalism of our Armed Forces.

Obtain further information about AJPME at its Web site: www.jfsc.ndu.edu/schools_programs/rc_jpme/overview.asp



No one is more professional

The newly promoted Sgt. Major Penelope Johnson, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 324th Integrated Theater Signal Battalion, Fort Gordon, Ga., speaks to Soldiers about the true meaning of being an NCO as Brig. Gen. Geoff Freeman listens close by. The promotion ceremony took place in December.

Training allows us to accomplish the mission

In the year leading up to my 2007 deployment, my co-workers often asked, “do you want to go to war?” I think my answer often surprised them when I explained that it wasn’t a matter of whether or not I wanted to go, but rather it was what I had been trained to do.

I would usually add something like “after 28 years of training to do something, I’d really like the chance to get to do it for real.” We train to be prepared to act; and acting in time of war is what we do.

When we train we’re not just biding time or trying to fill a weekend’s four Multiple Unit Training Assemblies. We train so that when we are asked to perform in combat we can.

I’ve often explained to my peers that training in communications, unlike training in many other Army specialties, requires that we actually perform our mission – not just practice it.

We don’t get to “simulate” our communications like an Infantryman gets to simulate an attack and kill a pretend enemy. Don’t misunderstand my point. I’m not degrading Infantry training.

I am pointing out that we Signaleers, along with perhaps only the Medical Corps and the Military Police Corps, actually do in training exactly what we will do in combat. So the phrase “train as you fight” has special meaning for us.

Training exercise or not, we feel the pressure to “get the message through” from our customers. I guess we may need to update that motto now to “get the email and PowerPoint through,” but that’s a future topic.

So we set up our communications shelters, establish communications links, and we get the message through. But that’s only part of our training task. It does us no good to be able to communicate if we can’t survive on the battlefield. In today’s non-linear, full-spectrum conflicts, the challenge to survive is often greater than that of our primary mission.

As an example, look at the time, effort, and training we’ve dedicated to countering the improvised explosive device. Not only have we devised special convoy tactics



Commander’s Corner

Brig. Gen. Geoff A. Freeman

and weapons systems, we’ve modified our vehicles (up-armored Humvees) and even created a completely new series of vehicles designed to counter this threat (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle or MRAP). These systems concentrate on survivability while allowing mission accomplishment. The two cannot be separated.

With this being “The Year of the NCO,” I think it appropriate that we concentrate on Soldier training, and that is what noncommissioned officers do best. Our units require Soldiers of exceptional mental capacity who can master complex communications systems and networks.

Obviously you must be Military Occupational Specialty qualified, but you must also master complex concepts while still being able to survive on the battlefield. That’s why we stress Warrior Leadership Course, Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course, Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course, Intermediate-Level Education and other schooling so heavily; they get you qualified and help you get promoted.

We conduct Best Warrior competitions so that our junior Soldiers and NCOs can practice their basic Soldiering skills. We go to the range and qualify with our weapons so we are confident we can defend ourselves when the time comes in combat.

All our Soldiers, enlisted, NCOs and officers need to be trained and qualified if we are to successfully accomplish our mission. NCOs must lead the way in these areas if we are to be relevant to our Army.

My 28 years of training prepared me for my deployment with U.S. Army Central. Can you say the same of your training? Both technical and tactical skills were performed daily, and our ongoing mission in Southwest Asia continued to be accomplished.

Sometimes we all fail to realize that virtually everything we do as a Soldier helps us be trained for our mission. But without proper, supervised, mission-oriented training we can fall short of mission accomplishment. And our country counts on us daily to ensure that never happens.

Training is indeed what we do, and must continue to do if we are to win.
ARMY STRONG!



Capt. Michelle Lumato

Spc. Kevin Sims, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 392nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion, practices his shooting at a simulation range.

Tuition assist

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received \$10,000 in loan repayment, the amount paid each year is 15 percent, with a maximum payment of \$1500. For Soldiers who received \$20,000 in loan repayment, the amount is 30 percent, not to exceed \$30,000.

The payments begin one year after a Soldier has signed the SLRP addendum with the enlistment contract and the payments are made on or after this date each year. Loans must be at least one year old.

If the amount paid does not cover the amount due for a year, Soldiers can request a forbearance through the loan agency until the next annual payment is made, said Odell. Soldiers can also continue to make payments with the loan agency.

Soldiers can now use the Web-Enabled Education Benefit System to submit the Annual Loan Repayment Application, said Odell. The WEBS site can be found by going to www.rcms.ocar.army.pentagon.mil and clicking on the WEBS icon. This site can also be used to check the status of payments, ask questions and add new loans. To login, an Army Knowledge Online account is required.

"Soldiers can take care of everything for their loan repayments through WEBS," said Odell. "It makes it easy enough for anyone to do."

It is the Soldiers responsibility to maintain their SLRP, said Odell. Soldiers should keep copies of everything. The WEBS site will post a message if the annual loan repayment application is due. Reserve Soldiers should also maintain contact with their loan institution to make sure that the payments are applied correctly.

"The student loan repayment program is an incentive program and can be taken away," said Odell. If the SLRP is attached to a specific military occupational specialty or a specific unit, a Soldier can lose this incentive by changing either the unit or MOS before the end of their contract. Deployments will not affect the SLRP but going active duty would, he said.

Some myths about the SLRP only make the processing stage more difficult, said Odell. Soldiers do not receive checks for the program, he said. Payments are made directly to the loan agency.



Seasonal celebrations with family



Above, 1st Lt. Derrick Barker, a platoon leader with Bravo Company, 324th Integrated Theater Signal Battalion, smiles after hitting commander Lt. Col. John Phillips in the face with a pie as part of a Family Readiness Group fundraiser. The event was held during the 359th Signal Brigade's holiday celebration in December. At right, Acting Santa Chief Warrant Officer John R Beekley, the brigade automotive maintenance officer waves with one of his visitors. Below, other children wait for their turn to visit Santa.



Lt. Col. Scott Wisneski

Payments also cannot be made on zero-balance accounts or to the Soldier for payments that he or she made, said Odell.

Any Reserve Soldier who does not choose to use the program in their original enlistment contract can elect to

use it in their reenlistment contract.

The Human Resources Command Web site located at www.hrc.army.mil is for Soldiers to use for information, said Odell. If a Reserve Soldier has any more questions, they should contact their unit.

