



Vol. I, Issue I

Ready In Need Gazette

September 1, 2009

TF Twister completes deployment training

Soldiers prepare for departure

By Staff Sgt. Karl Johnson

On a cool, late summer morning, on the wide open parade field of Fort McCoy, Wisc., the Soldiers of the 561st Regional Support Group, gathered to case their unit colors, marking the completion of several months of pre-deployment training.

That training included all the things you might expect a Soldier to get when preparing to go to a combat zone; including training on a variety of weapons systems, convoy operations, and base defense and operations just to name a few. Perhaps just as important though, were training scenarios designed to build teamwork and improve communication within the 561st RSG, designated Task Force Twister.

"We were brought together several months ago as individuals, called to duty in service of our nation," said Col. Arlan DeBlieck, TF Twister commander. "Now, as we prepare to depart and fulfill that duty, we have become a team with a common vision of what must be done."

What lies ahead of each TF Twister Soldier is a place in the history of two nations. In March, 2003, thousands of Soldiers, some of whom are in TF Twister



Photo by Staff Sgt. Karl Johnson

Col. Arlan DeBlieck and Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Ploeger case the Task Force Twister colors to mark the completion of deployment training Sept. 1, 2009, during a ceremony at Fort McCoy Wisc.

today, crossed the border into a foreign land and opened the door to Operation Iraqi Freedom. Six and a half years later, what remains is to close that door and return home with honor.

"Our most basic mission is a simple one," explains Command Sgt. Major Michael Ploeger. "We take care of Soldiers. It's a mission we should be proud of, and it's a mission we will complete."

As departure day draws near for TF

Twister, that sentiment throughout its ranks.

"The time for training and talking about our mission is over; the time for doing our mission is here," said Master Sgt. Jerry Chambers. "Every day Soldiers are going out and trying to make sure Iraq is ready for the day we go home. It's our job to make sure those Soldiers have what they need and are taken care of. We're ready for that job."

Spotlight On: Lt. Col. Colby Jewell

Born in rural Kansas and raised in a family that was always ready for the next move to a new part of the country, Lt. Col. Colby Jewell knows what it's like to get to know a group of new people. He says it's actually one of his greatest strengths.

"I've been successful by learning what the people around me are good at and using that for the good of the team."

It's a skill that he hopes will help him as the Chief of Staff for Task Force Twister, a position he's held for less than two weeks.

When he got the call to join up he was

preparing for evaluation during exercise Patriot Warrior at Fort McCoy, Wisc. He immediately left for home to give the news to his family and friends, a task with which most Army Reserve Soldiers are very familiar. Lt. Col. Jewell, however, had to put on hold his plans to get married.

"My fiancée was a little upset at first," he explained. "But she is a strong woman and has been very understanding."

Lt. Col. Jewell's 15 year old daughter Nicole also knows all too



well the realities of having a military parent. He was deployed in 2004 to Camp New York, Kuwait, and in 1989 he served in Panama supporting Operation Just Cause.

He served 12 years on active duty as an infantry officer before coming over to the Army Reserves. He strongly believes that the Army Reserve Soldier does an amazing job balancing two lives.

"When I was on active duty, I had one job to worry about,"

he said. "As an Army Reserve Soldier, I have countless things to balance while also trying to maintain my readiness for deployment."

He went on to say that catching up on the training for this deployment has been challenging, but he can already tell that Task Force Twister has a group of good people and he looks forward to completing his training and joining the group full time.

So if you run into Lt. Col. Jewell during one of his few breaks from training, send a few words of encouragement his way and welcome him to Task Force Twister.

The Ministry Message

The Four Chaplains

Presented by Sgt. Michael Heuert
Chaplain's Assistant, Task Force Twister

On the morning of Feb. 3, 1943, at 1 a.m., an Army transport ship named The Dorchester was on a voyage from Newfoundland to an American base in Greenland. Only 150 miles from its destination, in an area nicknamed "torpedo alley," The Dorchester was attacked by a German submarine. Three torpedoes were fired; one hit the midsection of the ship.

Once a luxury coast liner, the Dorchester was converted into an Army transport ship. Now, it was a deathtrap for more than 900 men. The hit destroyed the ship's power and radio capabilities. Capt. Hans Danielson gave the order to abandon ship. Scores of men poured onto the deck where they were greeted by Arctic air and the reality that death was imminent. They watched helplessly as overcrowded lifeboats capsized and unused life rafts drifted out of site.

The decks of the Dorchester were



Courtesy Photo

filled with confusion, but through all the chaos were four chaplains preaching hope. Father John Washington, Rabbi Alexander Goode, Reverend Clark Poling and Reverend George Fox were among the first on deck, calmly preaching light into the darkness while caring for wounded Soldiers. Together, they handed out life jackets, eventually giving their own to a group of frightened Soldiers. "It was the finest thing I have seen or hope to see this side of heaven," said John Ladd, who witnessed the chaplains' selfless act.

Eighteen minutes after the explosion, the Dorchester sank. Witnesses reported seeing the chaplains, arm-in-arm on the

hull of the ship, all praying to God as they descended to their death in the icy waters. Oil-smeared Soldiers fighting to stay alive, heard the chaplains continue to preach courage and hope for those who would live.

Nearly 700 Soldiers died in the frigid waters that early morning. The selfless service of the chaplains preaching hope, together with the rescue efforts of other ships, saved 230 lives. The Medal of Heroism, equal in precedence to the Medal of Honor, was created by Congress in 1961 and posthumously awarded to commemorate their sacrifice. The award was never to be given again.

The chaplains displayed the purest form of Selfless Service and Personal Courage. The Army Values fueled their actions. Those same Army Values can shape all of our decisions and actions.

As we prepare to deploy, I challenge every Task Force Twister Soldier to do something good – something great – for another person. After all, haven't great things been done for each of us?



Photo by Staff Sgt. Karl Johnson

Task Force Twister Soldiers pose for a unit photo before their departure ceremony Sept. 1, 2009 at Fort McCoy, Wisc. The task force is now prepared to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.



The Ready In Need Gazette is an authorized publication for members of Task Force Twister and the 561st Regional Support Group. Contents of this publication are not necessarily the official views of or endorsed by the U.S. Government or the DOD. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the Public Affairs Office of Task Force Twister.

The Ready In Need Gazette welcomes commentary from our readers and is always looking for ways to better serve Task Force Twister. If you have questions, comments or story ideas, send them to the editorial staff at karl.johnsonii@us.army.mil. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for security, accuracy, propriety, policy, clarity and space.

Task Force Twister Commander: Col. Arlan DeBlick
Task Force Twister PAO: 1st Lt. Christopher Averett
Task Force Twister PA NCOIC: Staff Sgt. Karl Johnson

DEBLIECK'S PICKS

GAMES 9/5	PICKS
Navy vs. Ohio St.	Ohio St.
Oregon vs. Boise St	Oregon
Florida Atl. vs. Nebraska	Nebraska
Alabama vs. Virginia Tech	Alabama

Play against the commander by submitting your picks to karl.johnsonii@us.army.mil