

Ryder Dispatch

The Official Newsletter of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 34th Infantry Division



Iowa National Guard photo by Capt. Timothy D. Mills

July 25, 2007, Soldiers of the 1-133rd Infantry Battalion return home after serving nearly 17 months in Iraq. The 1-133rd deployed to Iraq with the 1-34th BCT but did not receive their leave benefit due to a gap in DoD mobilization policy guidance.

Soldiers to be paid for respite leave

Ironman Soldiers have waited nearly three years for funding to be approved

By Staff Sgt. Ashlee Lolkus
Public Affairs 2-34th BCT

Soldiers of the 1-133rd Infantry Battalion are projected to receive a long-awaited reimbursement for their unused Post-Deployment/Mobilization Respite Absence sometime this month. PDMRA was put in place to compensate service members who were extended past their established tours of duty.

Along with many National Guard and Reserve units, soldiers of the 1-133rd were extended past their predetermined redeployment date in 2007. The PDMRA leave allowances were designed to give the soldier

additional time to reintegrate back to society after spending additional time deployed. Unfortunately, soldiers have waited nearly three years to be paid.

After several congress members

“They deserve every penny of the back compensation they will receive.”

Sen. Chuck Grassley,
U.S. Senator (R-Iowa)

pushed the issue in Washington D.C., funding authorization was passed and the process had begun to get the troops their benefits.

“This is great news for the Iowa National Guard troops,” said Sen. Chuck Grassley, the senior U.S. senator from Iowa. “They deserve every penny of the back-compensation they will receive. When we started on this nearly two years ago, I don’t think any of us believed it would be such a bureaucratic nightmare to get these men and women the benefits they are entitled to.”

“The Iowa National Guard is already compiling the necessary information in order to make sure these brave men and women can get

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The Ryder Dispatch returns!

Welcome friends and family,

It has been nearly a year since you've last seen the Ryder Dispatch, if you've seen it at all. A lot has happened since annual training of 2009, some good and some maybe not so good, but here we are.

As we ride alongside you on the upcoming mission that we've been alerted for, the public affairs office plans to keep you informed of what the command is doing, new information about what is going on around the brigade, and what YOU are doing.

The Ryder Dispatch will be published monthly. In each edition, we will have comments by commanders, command sergeants major, chaplains, medics, family readiness assistants, and many more. We also plan to present monthly columns for outstanding Iowa National Guard employers, communi-

ties and individuals that have made themselves great support systems for our brigade.

We are open to any suggestions on news that you may have, photos you would like to share, or any kind of correspondence you may have that will make this publication useful for all of our readers. Anything submitted will be reviewed by our office and if it's useable, you just might see it in print!

Our contact information is listed in the column to the right. We will be setting up our website soon, and will keep units, families, and communities informed as we get things in place.

We look forward to all the great suggestions, stories and photos! Please pass this newsletter on to spread the word, and thanks for reading!

The 2-34th Public Affairs Office

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paid as quickly as possible," he went on to say. Grassley's office anticipates the majority of the claims to be paid out between March 15 and 19.

Soldiers who still remain in service will receive their payment through electronic fund transfer to their bank accounts and those who have separated

will receive a U.S. Treasury check by mail according to a memorandum put out by Grassley.

The memo went on to say, "If soldiers believe they are eligible and have not received payment, it is important for them to contact their unit personnel administration center to apply."



Photo courtesy of WCF Courier of Waterloo, Iowa

Soldiers of the 1-133rd Infantry Battalion stand in formation in the hot summer sun July 25, 2007, waiting to reunite with their loved ones after returning from Iraq.



Commanding Officer

Col. Thomas H. Staton

Command Sergeant Major

Command Sgt. Maj. Craig R. Berte

Mission:

To celebrate and support the soldiers and families of the 2-34th BCT by providing brigade members with information on what is happening around the brigade, and to keep soldiers and families updated on current events and policies set forth by the command.

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Note

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Ryder Command Post

2nd BCT, 34th ID Commander: Col. Thomas H. Staton

Hello, and welcome to our first monthly publication of the Ryder Dispatch! This newsletter is for Soldiers assigned to 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 34th Infantry Division and the family members, friends, employers and community members supporting us.

People may ask how we determined the name "Ryder Dispatch." The 2/34th BCT is called the "Ryder BCT" in honor of Maj. Gen. Charles Ryder, who was the commander of the 34th Infantry Division in World War II. We use the Ryder theme within the BCT to build the team and grow our legacy. As we prepare to mobilize and deploy the BCT in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, people compare Afghanistan to the American Wild West in the late 1800s. During that time, news was carried by dispatch using the Pony Express. The Ryder Dispatch is similar to those of the Wild West to carry our news and disseminate information.

I am very proud to command the Ryder BCT; it is a great organization with a long tradition of service to Iowa and the nation. The most important word in our name is "team." We are a team of teams that depend on each other to be successful. While each subordinate organization is unique and has a specific capability, no unit is more or less important to the team and all have a role in our success. The formal BCT consists of six battalions: 1st Battalion, 133rd Infantry; 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry; 1st Squadron, 113th Cavalry; 1st Battalion, 194th Field Artillery; 334th Brigade Support Battalion, and 2-34th Brigade Special Troops Battalion. In order to fill critical vacancies due to Soldiers still in training or other factors, the Iowa National Guard has alerted the following units to augment the BCT: HHC, 185th Corps Support Sustainment Battalion; 2168th Transportation Company; 3654th Maintenance Company; 832nd Engineer Company; 134th Medical Compa-

ny; and 1st Squadron, 134th Recon and Surveillance from the Nebraska Army National Guard.

I want to welcome these outstanding organizations to the team. However, our team has other members that are just as important to our success who don't wear a uniform: our families, friends, employers and community members. Without the support of these people, our Soldiers would not be able or willing to do the extremely hard work our state and nation asks them to do. If you are reading this newsletter, I consider you to be a member of the Ryder Brigade Combat Team. Welcome!

In October 2009, the BCT received an alert order announcing our potential mobilization and deployment to Afghanistan sometime in late summer or early fall of 2010. The alert order informs the unit of likely mobilization and provides direction for the organization to begin training and preparation for deployment. The critical task

“The nation has called the Ryder Brigade to duty, I'm confident the team will be ready and do a great job.”

at hand for the BCT is preparation and readiness improvement. Soldiers are conducting soldier readiness processing to assess their medical, dental, and administrative status and conducting pre-mobilization training. Units are turning in obsolete equipment and receiving new equipment that is critical to our mission success.

Now is also the time for families, employers and communities to prepare for the likely deployment of the BCT. I urge Soldiers and family members to participate in upcoming Yellow Ribbon events that discuss programs and benefits available to families. I encourage family members and friends to become in-



Iowa National Guard photo by Justin Cato

involved in unit family readiness groups that provide important command information and family readiness improvement tips. Soldiers and family members should communicate with their employers about the upcoming mobilization, the time line and encourage them to utilize the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve network to answer questions and concerns. I would ask communities to rally around our Soldiers and their families and look for ways to provide support to them during this difficult time.

The next significant event on our time line will be when we receive a mobilization order that confirms the BCT will mobilize and establishes the mobilization date. The nation has called the Ryder BCT to duty, I'm confident the team will be ready and will do a great job.

“On the Objective!”
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334th BSB mourns loss of young chaplain

Iowa National Guard Chaplain (Cpt.) Eric B. Simpson, 31, of the 334th BSB and Schofield, Wis. resident died Wednesday, Feb. 10, 2010 as a result of injuries he suffered from a chemical accident at his civilian employment.

Simpson was born Feb. 17, 1978 in Batesville, Ark. to Sherman and Cleda (Taylor) Simpson. He is survived by his wife Sarah E. (Hendon) Simpson and their two children Micah, age 4, and Lydia, age 1.

He graduated from the College of the Ozarks, Point Lookout, Mo. in 2002 with a B.A. in philosophy and went on to complete a Master of Divinity degree from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Ill. in 2005.

Simpson attended the Chaplain Officer Basic Courses while in the U.S. Army Reserve and became the battalion chaplain for the 334th BSB, IA ARNG in January 2009.

Simpson had been a pastor at the



Dept. of the Army photo

Evangelical Free Church of Polk City, Polk City, Iowa before he had moved to Wisconsin to work at Quality Surface Processing, Schofield, Wis.

Simpson was injured Feb. 9, 2010

at Quality Surface Processing while attempting to strip paint from pieces of metal. While dipping the metal into a hot, chemical salt bath, a piece of the machine overhead broke off and fell into the vat, splashing Simpson with liquid that was approximately 900 degrees.

Simpson was burned badly and was brought to St. Clares Hospital and listed in critical condition. Later, Simpson was airlifted to a hospital in Madison, Wis. where he was placed on life support until family was able to gather. The decision was made to remove him from life support. Chaplain (Maj.) Gary Selof, the full-time support chaplain of the Iowa National Guard, was with the family when Simpson passed away.

Memorial services were held Feb. 12, 2010 at the Highland Community Church in Wausau, Wis. The family has since started a memorial fund for the children.

'Strong bonds' events help families connect

Sign-up for upcoming events soon

Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage

March 20-21, 2010 in Sioux City

Deployment Readiness

March 20, 2010 in Council Bluffs

March 27, 2010 in Cedar Rapids

April 24, 2010 in Waterloo

Parent's Retreat

June 25-26 in Cedar Rapids

For information about Strong Bonds events visit their web site at: <https://www.strongbonds.org>. You can even register for the events online!



Iowa National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Ashlee Lolkus

Soldiers bow heads in prayer

During one of the many armory rededications of 2009, Soldiers of Detachment 2 of the 1-168 Infantry Battalion bow their heads in prayer during the invocation Dec. 18, 2009 at the Spencer Armory.



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Family readiness starts with the soldier

By Sara Christoffel
 Family Readiness Support Assistant, 2-34th BCT

As directed in Army Regulation 600-20 the commander of a brigade, battalion/squadron and its subordinate units have an obligation to provide programs, services, support and assistance to their soldiers and to the soldier's family network. Family readiness and assistance is a contractual and statutory obligation to provide ID Cards, access to child and youth programs, Tricare, family readiness programs, to provide contact information for the family assistant specialist and other family readiness staff and to provide time annually to educate soldiers and families on National Guard and Iowa National Guard family programs that support the Total Army Family Program.

The soldiers also have an obligation to their family. They should consistently provide them with information from their unit and their unit Family Readiness Group in regard to family programs and services available to them. The



Iowa National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Ashlee Lolkus
 Sara Christoffel, the Family Readiness Support Advisor for 2-34th BCT, meets with volunteers who will help during the deployment.

Through the Ranks

*2nd BCT, 34th ID Command Sergeant Major:
 Command Sgt. Maj. Craig R. Berte*

Greetings soldiers of the 2nd BCT.

It is a pleasure to serve with you as we all prepare for our upcoming mission. Your unit will give you the necessary training and equipment to prepare you for the war fight, but I want to remind everyone to ensure that you are preparing the home-front for your deployment as well.

Please make every effort, and use this time wisely to plan for matters such as: legal, financial, and insurance obligations, mowing and snow removal, school issues, child care, routine chores and maintenance, among many other obligations that you currently take care of for yourself or your family.

Pre-planning for these issues will save everyone a lot of headaches in the future. Your leaders need 100 percent of your focus and attention as we train for this mission – and that is not possible if you are dealing with problems at home created by the deployment and a lack of pre-planning.



Iowa National Guard photo by Justin Cato

Please take care of your personal matters soon as we'll be getting busy very soon. Please be safe everyday and check to see that your battle-buddy is ready!

*"On the Objective!"
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soldier should also highly encourage their family network to participate in the unit FRG. The FRG's primary purpose is to provide mutual support, information and to encourage communication amongst their peers involved in the group. Soldiers should also provide accurate, current family contact information to the command-appointed FRG volunteer leader, so their family network can receive timely and accurate information on family programs and services.

The soldier and their family network should always be ready. They should prepare financially, emotionally and mentally for times the soldier may be away from home. They should not just be deployment-ready, but always ready as our soldiers are being asked to perform for their state and their country. Family readiness starts with the soldier educating their family and communicating to their family the programs and services available through their Family Assistance and Support Community.

If you are unsure who your FRG point of contact is, please contact Sara Christoffel at (515) 727-3841 or sara.christoffel@us.army.mil.



Chaplain's Corner

Words of inspiration

By Capt. Murray E. Phillips
Chaplain, 2-34th BCT

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my Father's house, there are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you with me that you may also be where I am."

John 14: 1-3, NIV

The news was not promising. Jesus tells his disciples that his ultimate destiny, the giving of his very life, waits at the end of the journey to Jerusalem. His closest followers were deeply worried. They probably went through the entire gamete of emotions: denial, shock, grief, and finally, acceptance.

In our own life journey, we likewise experience moments where we also do not want to believe or hear the bad news. It could be a medical diagnosis to you as an individual, or for someone you love. It may be the end of a job in the midst of a troubled economy. It may be the break-up of a relationship. The list is endless.

When we receive bad news, where is our hope? Is it believing in ourselves and our own ability to control life situations? Is it putting our trust in an unseen power that we, in our human senses, cannot quantify or feel? What is the answer?

The answer sometimes is to simply trust and believe. As followers of Jesus Christ, it is our benefit to follow His advice: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me..." God brings peace of mind in His way and time. How is this accomplished? Sometimes, God brings people into our life to help us through the rough times. At other times, it is seeing that we have strength to persevere and overcome adversity.

This month we begin the journey of Lent, which reminds us of Jesus' earthly journey to Jerusalem where he was unjustly tried and sentenced to die for crimes that had no basis. Yet it is also the time we celebrate the victory of Easter morning. It is a reminder that we have hope that all of the bad news is transformed to good news!

Meanwhile, let us give thanks for the blessings we take for granted. We do not know what the future holds. Through faith, however, we can know who holds the future!

MEDIC! Tips and tricks to staying healthy

By Sgt. First Class Rick Sego
Medical Operations NCO, 2-34th BCT

Integrity is one of the Warrior Ethos that we all strive to follow. We perform our tasks, and missions with all the grace and dedication of professional soldiers knowing what we do is right. What happens when it comes time for that annual Periodic Health Assessment? Not wanting to look weak in the eyes of our "Guard Family," perhaps we tell a little fib to ensure we can go on deployment?

Maybe we think we can handle the emotional crisis, pain of old injuries, or the disease that may ravage our body?

When it comes time for the deployment, will you be able to hold up your end of the mission if your old injury flares up? Will you be there for the "Joe" next to you when you can't

see the enemy through the tears of depression? Integrity can follow along with morality, and doing the right thing may not feel brave, but in the long run, one may be more of a liability than an asset. When performing a PHA, please remember "integrity" and give truthful answers. We all want to do our part; but perhaps, your part is meant to be at home taking care of yourself so you may be an asset, not liability when it is your time.

If you have any questions, please consult your medic, medical professional, or chaplain. If they do not have the answer for you, they know the places to get them. Be safe, be smart, and most of all, be honest.

*Before 'God' or 'mom,'
they call out 'Medic'...*

Income tax assistance

The SJA office offers help for soldiers

Participate in free assistance in the completion and electronic filing of most state and federal income tax returns. Soldiers and airmen will be seen by appointment only. The Staff Judge Advocate office, located at the Joint Force Headquarters building, is currently accepting appoints.

Remember to bring social security cards, last year's tax return, all W-2s, and all 1099/1098s, etc.

Because of Internal Revenue Service-mandated changes, there are several forms the SJA is no longer able to file. (e.g. business income, sale of personal home exclusion, partnership or trust income, rental income, and forms 4797, 5329, 8606, 8814, 8889, 8853, 3903, 4684, 2555, 5695, 8910)

If you have any questions about what forms you can file or for an appointment, please call Christine Vander Weerd, (515)252-4259 or c.vanderweerd@us.army.mil.

Retention offering incentive pay

By Staff Sgt. Ashlee Lolkus
Public Affairs, 2-34th BCT

More than 800 Iowa National Guard soldiers have been eligible for what the National Guard Bureau is calling "Deployment Extension Stabilization Pay" in effect May 28, 2009. DESP is a monetary benefit program for National Guard soldiers who elect to stay with their units through upcoming deployments.

Soldiers who are approaching their end of time in service within a defined 18-month window are eligible for the program. That window lies six months prior to the BCT's projected deployment mobilization date to the deployment end date: Feb. 1, 2010 to Sept. 30, 2011, respectively.

The program's election window began October 2009 with the publication of the alert order, and will end at different times for different individuals. Both officers and enlisted soldiers were eligible to elect for an additional \$500 per month deployed until Jan. 31, 2010. Officers who did not elect to sign up for DESP before that date are no longer eligible for the program. Enlisted soldiers who did not elect DESP before that date, however, are still able to elect DESP until April 30, 2010 at a reduced rate of \$350 per month deployed.

Soldiers who are cross-leveled to

the BCT, soldiers attached to the BCT who were NOT part of the original alert order for example, will have until the mobilization date to elect into DESP. This includes both enlisted soldiers and officers.

"The program is designed to protect the soldier," said Master Sgt. Mike Kots, the brigade retention non-commissioned officer. Kots went on to say

said. If the soldier does not meet medical or any other requirement to deploy, he/she may not be required to complete their time obligation, depending on the specific circumstances.

Although unit commanders can recommend waivers for soldiers that do not meet the requirements for the Army physical fitness test and weight program, Col. Thomas H. Staton, the BCT commander is the deciding factor on whether he wishes to retain the soldiers. If the command approves their election into DESP, the soldiers will be locked in for the period in which the contract is written as long as he/she passes the mobilization processing.

Note that soldiers could lose possible benefits they might normally receive if they decided to re-enlist at a later date. Soldiers who decline DESP become ineligible for benefits for 12 months into any other contract that they pursue, whether that is the very next day after their offer expires or 3 years down the road.

For soldiers who do not fall in the DESP window, current re-enlistment bonuses are at \$5,000 for a six year contract or up to \$50,000 student loan repayment for a six-year contract if eligible. Soldiers are able to re-enlist up to one year prior to their current ETS. If you have any questions please contact your retention NCO.



Iowa National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Ashlee Lolkus

Staff Sgt. Tyler Corell browses through his training materials Feb. 22, 2010 at the battalion career counselors course. Career counselors will be the primary points of contact for Soldiers that are eligible for DESP.

that if soldiers are interested in electing into the program he is available to answer any questions, but to go to their unit career counselor or full-time unit representatives to elect into DESP.

Soldiers who elect into DESP are required to pass the mobilization processing in order to be deployed, Kots



Photo provided by Cpt. William Pick



Iowa National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Ashlee Lolkus



Photo provided by Master Sgt. Mike Kots

We are happy to feature photos sent in by our readers. If you have any interesting photos taken recently, or even in the past, send them in to the BCT Public Affairs office and you may see them featured in future Ryder Dispatch issues. Remember to keep your submissions in good taste and that submissions do not violate OPSEC. BCT contact information can be found on page 2 of this issue.

We need your help!

Recognize your community and employers

The BCT commander, Col. Thomas Staton has expressed great interest in involving communities in many aspects of the BCT alert and possible mobilization and deployment. In order to do this, we need your involvement.

Recommend communities, businesses, employers, etc. from your area to be spotlighted in the Ryder Dispatch and recognized for their efforts to support the BCT, families and communities throughout your area.

If you have a community, business, employer, or any other person/group in your area that has been a huge support of your service to your community, state, and nation, con-

tact the BCT public affairs office.

Please provide the name, location and contact information of the group or person, a short write-up of what they have done to support you, and contact information for yourself. Your community could be recognized, but only if you let us know! *Contact information located on page 2.*



Iowa National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Ashlee Lolkus



Recently reenlist?

Tell your story to GX

Have you reenlisted into the Army National Guard since January 2009? If so, GX Magazine would love to know why and how you reenlisted.

Send the following information to the contact listed below, and you could possibly be featured in a future issue of GX: The Guard Experience Magazine.

Your full name, rank, age, MOS, state affiliation, date and location of reenlistment, a high-resolution (300 dpi) photo of you (if possible, you reenlisting, or a regular portrait shot will be fine) and a brief paragraph describing why and how you reenlisted into the Army National Guard.

Send all content to christian.anderson@GXonline.com. Please note in the subject line of your email: REENLISTMENT. Submissions must be received no later than March 8, 2010.

GX Magazine is a bimonthly magazine dedicated to celebrating and supporting the Soldiers and families of the Army National Guard. To download past issues of GX, please visit:

www.GXonline.com



Iowa National Guard photo by Justin Cato

Command attends the Condition of the Guard address

2-34th Brigade Combat Team commander Col. Thomas Staton and Command Sgt. Maj. Craig Berte are recognized during the Condition of the Guard address as they prepare to deploy with approximately 3,500 soldiers later this year. This will be the largest single mobilization from the state of Iowa since World War II.