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Commander

Col. Suzanne Adkinson

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE

RETIRED MASTER SERGEANT

KENNETH RAY WALKER



Kenneth Walker enlisted in 1976 as a motion picture cameraman. Following basic training at Fort Leonard Wood and AIT at Lowery Air Force Base, where he graduated with highest honors, he was assigned to the 124th Signal Battalion in the 4th Infantry Division where he served in the Tactical Photography section, a predecessor to Combat Camera. In 1978, already an award-winning photographer, MSG Walker was selected to serve with the Defense Nuclear Agency at Enewetok Atoll in the Marshall Islands documenting the radioactive clean-up process. MSG Walker served at Fort Bragg with the prestigious Airborne Test Board before ETS from Active Duty in Dec 1981. Following their Active Duty service, he and his wife served in the Texas Army National Guard's 100th Public Affairs Detachment for two years while attending the University of Texas in Austin together. After which, MSG Walker carried his passion for photography into the civilian sector, where he owned a commercial photography studio providing advertising photography for 18 years. In 1997, MSG Walker rejoined the Texas Army National Guard and continued to serve in Public Affairs. He served with the 49th Infantry Division, 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, 101st Information Operations, 636th Military Intelligence, 36th Infantry Division and JFHQ.

During his time in the Guard he has served at every level of leadership, from team leader to Sergeant Major.

Following his 2005 deployment to Iraq, he accepted a full time position as the Public Affairs Officer for the Joint Counterdrug Task Force.

In 2012, MSG Walker began serving as the Public Affairs Sergeant Major for the State Public Affairs Office, the senior enlisted Public Affairs leader in the Texas Military Department.

MSG Walker's efforts to improve the overall force were realized in the first state-wide Unit Public Affairs Representative training program that decreased the funding needs for Public Affairs coverage across the state, while increasing agency's Public Affairs assets by over 400 percent.

Throughout his career MSG Walker has been awarded the Meritorious Service Medal, 4 OLC; the Joint Services Commendation Medal, the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, 2 OLC, the Army Achievement Medal and the, Iraq Campaign Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Army Overseas Service Ribbon, 4 OLC; as well as numerous state awards, and received the Public Affairs Lifetime Achievement Award for his many years of service to the Public Affairs community in the Texas Military Department.

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED: CHALLENGE ACCEPTED: Texas ChalleNGe Academies

EAGLE LAKE, Texas -- Lakesha Peterson can only describe the moment as bittersweet as tears streamed down her face while she watched her daughter board a bus to the Texas ChalleNGe Academy-East campus in Eagle Lake, Texas, July 17, 2016.

Peterson, like many other parents and family members said their goodbyes to their teens before the 16-18 year olds begin their 22-week journey in the military-style, education program at one of the two TCA campuses in either Eagle Lake or Sheffield.

For this iteration, collectively, the TCA campuses at Eagle Lake and Sheffield have an enrollment nearing 200 candidates, who, after completing the acclimation process, will become cadets and eventually graduates of the program.

Peterson, of Frisco, said she brought her daughter to the program to help her get her life back on track.

"She's a good kid," Peterson said. "She's just bad."

Peterson said she hopes her daughter is able to recover credits and earn enough credits to qualify to be a senior so she can finish her diploma.

Like Peterson, Kaylon Cole, from Fort Drum, New York, dropped his 18-year-old daughter to the program in hopes of her earning her high school diploma.

Story and photos by: 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy, Joint Counterdrug Taskforce PAO

welcome nearly 200 cadets

“...it's only up from here”
-Kaylon Cole, parent

Cole said he looked up the program online and thought it would be a good fit for Asia Baker.

“(There’s a lot of stuff) that brings her here,” Cole said. “She was not making the grades in school and making poor choices. It’s only up from here.”

Cole said he hopes to see a change in his daughter when he sees her in 22 weeks and that she joins the Air Force.

“I hope to see a completely different person,” he said, “somebody who is respectful, obedient and follows instructions.”

While at the academy, cadets get exposure to the military training lifestyle, while engaging with Texas National Guard airmen and soldiers.

Texas Joint Counterdrug Taskforce airmen and soldiers work with the candidates during the process, mentoring them and assisting the cadre.

TCA is a Texas National Guard-sponsored educational program to help at-risk youth between 16 and 18 years old get their lives back on track. The program is completely voluntary and requires a 17 and a half-month commitment.

All cadets must not have any felony convictions and be drug free at the time of entry.

The academy is broken down into the 22-week residential phase and a 12-month, post-residential phase.

TCA focuses on eight core components – academic excellence, health and hygiene, job skills, leadership and followership, life-coping skills, physical fitness, responsible citizenship and service to the community.

In addition to their schoolwork, cadets have the opportunity to participate in other programs like archery, student council, student leadership positions and the Commandant’s Challenge. Students also perform community service every Saturday and have the option to attend church and participate in intramural sports on Sundays.

TCA is a Department of Defense-funded program and receives 25 percent funding from the state. The program is free to Texas residents.

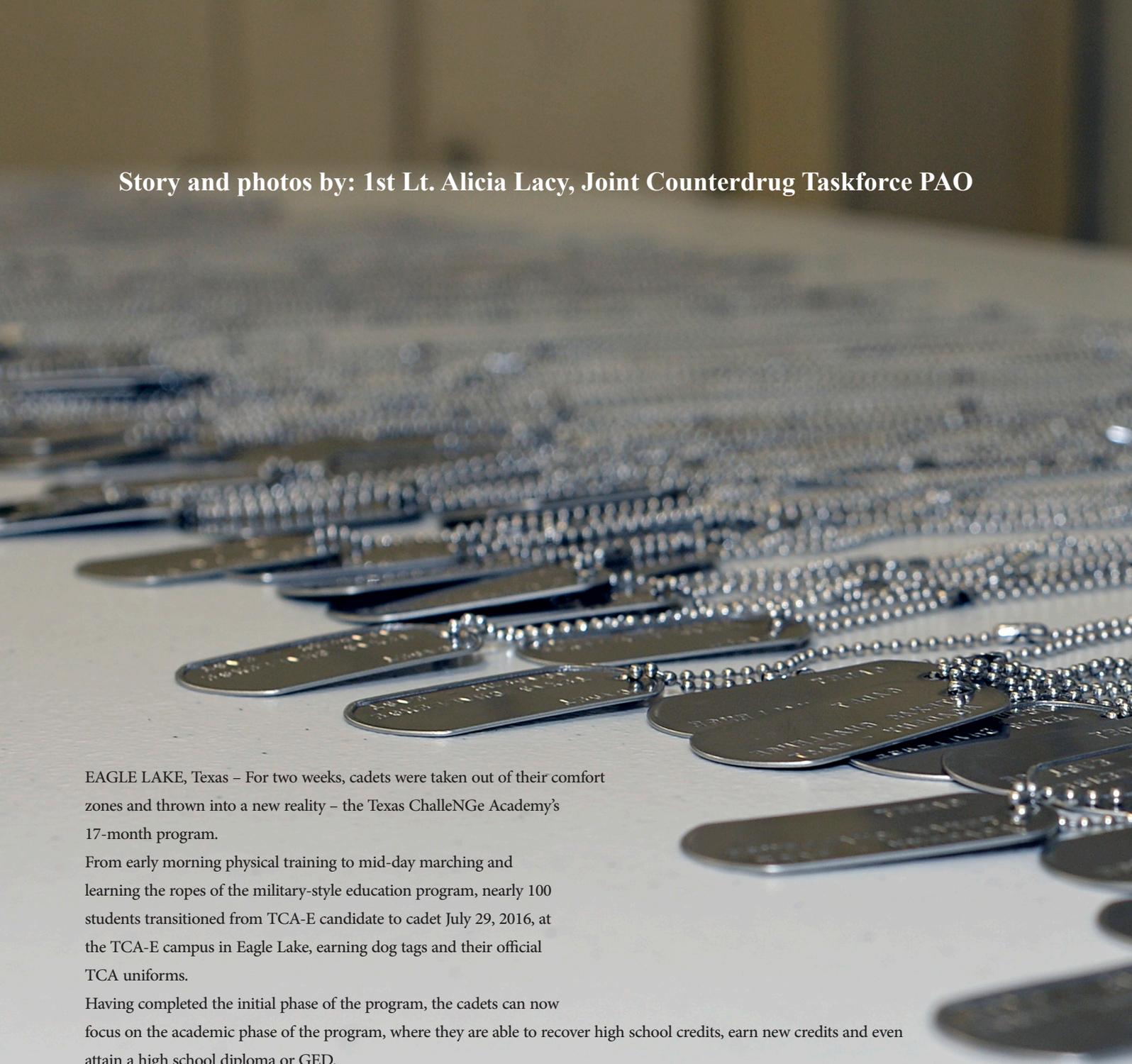
FROM CANDIDATES TO TCA-E STUDENTS COMPLETE ACCLIMA



CADETS: ATION



Story and photos by: 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy, Joint Counterdrug Taskforce PAO



EAGLE LAKE, Texas – For two weeks, cadets were taken out of their comfort zones and thrown into a new reality – the Texas ChalleNGe Academy’s 17-month program.

From early morning physical training to mid-day marching and learning the ropes of the military-style education program, nearly 100 students transitioned from TCA-E candidate to cadet July 29, 2016, at the TCA-E campus in Eagle Lake, earning dog tags and their official TCA uniforms.

Having completed the initial phase of the program, the cadets can now focus on the academic phase of the program, where they are able to recover high school credits, earn new credits and even attain a high school diploma or GED.

“Stop looking in the rearview mirror,” said Lisa Williams, TCA-E program coordinator, to the cadets. “There’s nothing back there for you. Stop looking behind you and start looking in front of you. Your future is in front of you. Any mistakes you made in the past, leave them there.”

TCA is Texas National Guard-sponsored, military-style education program to help at-risk youth and high school dropouts between 16 and 18 years old get their lives back on track.

While at the academy, cadets get exposure to the military training lifestyle, while engaging with Texas National Guard airmen and soldiers. For the two-week acclimation phase, the Texas Joint Counterdrug Taskforce airmen and soldiers assisted cadre and staff.

“Today is a brand new day,” said Col. Suzanne Adkinson, Texas Joint Counterdrug Taskforce commander. “Tomorrow is whatever you make it. So we can’t take away whatever happened in your past, whatever choices that brought you here, but we’re happy that you’re here.”

Staff members and taskforce members attended the graduation ceremony to congratulate the cadets for completing the first phase of the program. “This is a course for you,” Adkinson said. “It’s not a give me course. Nothing in life that is handed to you will mean anything to you. You have to work for it.

Credit recovery depends on how hard you are willing to work.”

The National Guard program is completely voluntary and requires a 17 and a half-month commitment.

All cadets must not have any felony convictions and be drug free at the time of entry.

The academy is broken down into the 22-week residential phase and a 12-month, post-residential phase.



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-Lisa Williams, program coordinator

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Story and photos by: 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy
Joint Counterdrug Taskforce PAO



STARBASE



STARBASE

Enloe, who will enter the seventh grade this year, said the program also helped the students learn to work together.

During the graduation ceremony, former STARBASE student Tech. Sgt. Elizabeth Alicea delivered a few words to the students and guests.

"I was always grateful to the STARBASE program because I felt that it was one of the first pillars in my life and development," she said.

Alicea attended the STARBASE program in Puerto Rico, which is sponsored by the Puerto Rico National Guard.

"Take all your STARBASE experiences and take it to school and share them," she said.

"Don't forget them."

The Texas National Guard sponsors STARBASE Houston, a Department of Defense program.

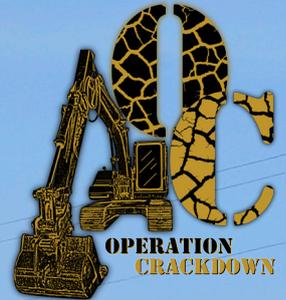
The program hosts more than 50 classes throughout the school year, to include public schools, home schools and parochial schools, Guillen said.

The curriculum is based on science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, and is aligned with the state education standards.

The purpose of STARBASE is to expose youth to the technological environments, while allowing them to engage with civilian and military role models on military bases and installations.



OPERATION CRACKDOWN DALLAS





Texas Joint Counterdrug Taskforce partners v

DALLAS – The Texas Joint Counterdrug Taskforce is ending its summer with its largest Operation Crackdown to date, set to raze more than 60 structures at more than 50 locations.

The Dallas Crackdown mission, which is the taskforce's sixth mission in the city, began July 25 and will continue through the end of August.

Operation Crackdown is a program unique to the Texas National Guard that provides National Guard engineers to a community to demolish structures linked to the use and/or distribution of drugs.

The partnership between the taskforce and the city of Dallas has resulted in about 120 structures demolished over the past five years.

The difference between the city of Dallas' mission and a typical mission is that Crackdown personnel will spend nearly six weeks demolishing structures, whereas the typical Crackdown mission is two

weeks and includes about 30 structures.

“We’ve been given an opportunity to expand the program and the city of Dallas has taken advantage of that to aggressively pursue the demolition of these drug houses,” said Army Col. Suzanne Adkinson, Texas Joint Counterdrug Taskforce Commander.

To start the process on this behemoth operation, city of Dallas officials made a request. After a request is made, agreements between the Texas National Guard and the requesting city are made using Military and City Lawyers. For a structure to be selected, it must have a connection with the drug trade. Once the site has been approved, the city must receive approval from the homeowner to demolish the structure on his or her property. Then the structure is inspected for hazardous materials. Law enforcement officials then secure the site before the Guard's arrival.



Story and photos by: 1st Lt. Alicia Lacy, Joint Counterdrug Taskforce PAO

with Dallas for largest Operation Crackdown

“We are excited that Operation Crackdown is demolishing structures in our city that have been havens for drugs and other criminal activity,” said Community Prosecutor Jill Haning, in a statement. “The demolitions are a positive development and an essential part of the fight against blight in our neighborhoods.”

The Community Prosecution section of the Dallas City Attorney’s Office has been tasked with coordinating the operation, with more than one dozen city departments involved in this mission.

“Our goal is more structures and removing more safe havens that foster drug activity,” said Air Force 1st Lt. Bruce Robison, Crackdown officer in charge. The program is made possible through asset forfeiture funds that represent the proceeds of, or were used to facilitate drug-related crimes.

“It’s the opportunity to take drug money off the

street and reuse it to demolish drug houses, making it a little safer for the people in the community,” Adkinson said.

On average, each two-week mission costs the taskforce about \$30,000, which includes personnel and equipment costs.

The operation not only provides a service to the community in its war against drugs, but also enhances military readiness for the Texas Guardsmen, who utilize the engineering skillset in their real-world mission, and allows the Texas National Guard to partner with communities within the state.

“We’re excited to be able to give back to the community in this way,” Adkinson said. “It ties in to our state and our TAG’s mission to partner with our community, as well as staying ready and relevant to being the force of choice, while providing the right forces at the right time to execute the mission.”

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COUNTERDRUG COURIER

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