This month, we honor our Veterans – Veterans from every generation, including the many veterans within our organization. Our ranks are lined with men and women who have stepped up when our state and nation called – Citizen-Soldiers who have put their lives in harm’s way in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Bosnia and all over the continent of Africa.

Right now, our 1AD MCPOD Soldiers are spread across the battlefield of Iraq and our SOD-A, TIOG and 1CD MCPOD Soldiers are preparing for upcoming deployments. The veteran Soldiers in our RTI and TCGC are training the next generation of leaders, preparing them to lead Soldiers into battle. Soldiers from Medical Command, many veterans themselves, are working to ensure the Texas Army National Guard is ready and able to send healthy, medically ready Soldiers to support our many overseas operations. Our troops in the MPAD and in HHC, not only support these overseas deployments, but are also providing trained and ready Soldiers to deploying Texas units.

And let’s not forget our veterans who have served honorably here in Texas. This past August, for the first time since World War I, 100 percent of our Texas Guardsmen were mobilized at one time, in support of Hurricane Harvey response operations. Troop Command was asked to spear head logistics support to the tens of thousands of National Guard, Active Duty and Reserve service members who came to Texas to support this mission. This was the first time we have ever supported this type of mission, and we did it with no notice. Yet, you rose to the challenge and accomplished the mission well above standard.

On top of this, some of our Soldiers directly supported rescue and stability operations in the impacted areas – wading through three to five feet of water, in some areas, to help Texans in need.

As we move into the holiday season, make sure that you are taking care of yourself and taking care of your team. For those of you who are deployed, work hard, but identify opportunities for your team to rest. If you see a Soldier in need, reach out and let your leadership know. Check on each other through the holidays and support each other.

Thank you for the work you’ve done this year and for your unwavering support to our state and nation. You exemplify what it means to be a Troop Command Texas Guardsman – Texans Serving Texas.
AUSTIN, Texas--The little armory atop a hill, in the now-upscale Austin Bee Caves neighborhood, is seldom talked about, and even often unknown to both military and civilians. While the aging facility’s story actually starts south of Austin, much of its roots are lost in a swirl of Cold-War mystery.

The 12.5-acre site just off Bee Caves road, often colloquially called the “hilltop,” now houses the 71st Troop Command, but started life providing the city, and more importantly at the time, Bergstrom Air Force Base with protection from aerial attacks.

When visitors arrive at the gate today, the giant Nike-Hercules missile pointing skyward pays homage to the armory’s beginnings as the site of an integrated fire control center for the 10,000-pound missiles capable of hitting targets up to 90 miles away.

In the 1960s, the suburban hilltop had all of the necessary equipment to track targets, fire the missiles and would even house the troops needed to run the air defense equipment.

Complete with radars and generators, Defense Site BG-80 was just missing one thing: Missiles.

So, where were they?

The exact location of the launch site isn’t known. What is known is that the missiles were somewhere close.

Technical data on the launch capabilities suggest that the launch site and the integrated fire control needed to be separated by at least 0.56 miles but not more than 2.98 miles.

Pedro Garcia knows where they were, but he’s not saying. Garcia was stationed at the armory in late 1962 and 1963.

“You just jerk the rope, the clips came off and the tent fell on both sides,” Garcia said. “Then the launcher started raising.”

Now at 74 years old, Garcia said that he thinks the surface to air missiles that were housed near the Bee Caves Armory were essential to the security of Bergstrom Air Force Base. What is now Austin Bergstrom International Airport, at the time was under Strategic Air Command and a prime target for Cold War foes.

“Back then, the Bee Caves Armory was instrumental, because of Bergstrom operating the way they did,” Garcia said. “I think it could have been a target for Russian bombs.”

With the days of the cold war squarely in the rearview mirror, the Soldiers of 71st Troop Command spend their days at the hilltop armory looking forward and preparing to defend the United States in future conflicts, pausing only occasionally to ponder the Cold War secrets that still surround the little Armory.
From refugee to successful Soldier

By: Cpl. Alexander Logan, 100th MPAD

Austin, Texas-- To the casual observer who catches him toiling away in his garden or playing with his 11-year-old daughter, Capt. Bau Phan appears to be a normal, every-day citizen. However, his calm demeanor and professional achievements hide the struggles and barriers that he has faced in his lifelong journey.

“My father and I escaped Vietnam; we came over here as refugees,” said Phan. “If he didn’t escape Vietnam, he would have been put through a reeducation camp. Reeducation camps are mostly hard labor or slavery.”

The Phans, who escaped by sea in 1978, made their way to the Philippines where they applied to emigrate to the United States.

“If we weren’t accepted, there were only several other options,” said Phan. “If it wasn’t Australia or a European country we would have gone back to Vietnam, and that would have pretty much meant death for my father.”

Phan and his father were accepted into the United States as refugees. They lived in both Oklahoma and Louisiana, before settling in Texas where Phan became a naturalized citizen in 1984.

After graduating high school and searching for a way to help pay for college, Phan enlisted in the Army. After basic training, advanced individual training and airborne school, Phan was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division. Three weeks after joining the 82nd, he deployed to the Persian Gulf and served in Operation Desert Storm.

Phan was honorably discharged from the Army and returned to Texas, studying at Texas State University and working in the private sector until the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. After the events of that day Phan decided to return to uniform.

“There were some slots available to join the Texas Army National Guard to help contribute,” Phan said. “I got back in after 10 plus years out, and this was the best way for me to contribute while remaining in Texas.”

Returning to the Texas National Guard as a staff sergeant, Phan was chosen to receive a direct commission because of his education and previous leadership experience in the military and the private sector. It was in 2009 he selected to serve in the Army’s Military Intelligence branch.

“I was given two choices; Military Police or Military Intelligence. Military Intelligence allows me to utilize my process of thinking and my intellectual side,” said Phan.

Phan soon found himself serving in Iraq, where he deployed with the Texas Army National Guard’s 36th Infantry Division and assisted in the breakdown of key facilities in the Basra area.

Today, Phan holds two distinct roles in the Texas Army National Guard. As a full-time Active Guard Reserve Soldier Phan is the officer-in-charge for the 101st Information Operations Battalion, and is the acting operations officer for the 71st Theater Information Operations Group for his traditional M-day duties. From these key positions, Phan directs the day-to-day readiness and training initiatives that support the organization’s mission to support major commands in deploying cross-functional teams to control the information environment.

In addition to his full-time National Guard commitments, Phan also volunteers as Camp Mabry’s CrossFit gym manager, where he leads the non-profit gym at the camp.

Even with all of his past and current success, Phan has never forgotten his path to the United States or what he left behind in Vietnam.

“We left our family over there,” Phan said, explaining that while Phan and his dad had escaped from Vietnam his mother, grandparents, and siblings had remained behind.

Determined to reunite with the family was left behind during his escape, Phan returned to Vietnam and located his mother, siblings, and surviving grandparents. He also met his siblings’ spouses and children, uniting with family that he had never known existed. Phan now keeps in touch with his family in Vietnam, maintaining ties to the country that he was forced to flee so long ago.

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Samuel DeLeon
A Reporter with Many Hats
By 1LT Steven L Wesolowski, 100th MPAD

KILLEEN, Texas—When Killeen locals are watching captivating events from across the city or state of Texas, whether from their everyday mobile devices to the traditional broadcast on the TV, not very many would imagine the hard work and daily challenges taken by multi-media journalists (commonly abbreviated as MMJ’s) to make their news happen. The news coverage team of KWTX Channel News-10 has one particular reporter who shares how he got there from the US Army and reflects on his perseverance in this very-highly demanding profession.

Audiences to the live on-the-scene footage of Hurricane Harvey flooding shared on their Facebook news feed or friend’s wall from this local broadcasting station, would also have no clue that the creative who helped piece their respective content is a happily married Citizen-Soldier with 13 and 15-year-old sons who can’t wait to drive their father’s white ‘66 Ford Mustang. This dedicated family man credits his journalism success to his fairly recent active-duty transition from his many years of being a radio communications repairman to his completion of the Defense Information School in broadcasting, along with his continued passion for candid photography as an ongoing hobby.

The four-combat-tour Army veteran SGT Samuel DeLeon upholds his reputation by wearing many hats, as if literally, in order to keep up with his tight deadlines. Serving as a video and photojournalist for the Texas Military Department under the 100th MPAD, a Texas Army National Guard detachment unit part of 71st Troop Command located in Austin, DeLeon simultaneously works full-time as an MMJ in Killeen.

A lot of news stations are adopting the ‘one-man band’ aspect to reporting,” DeLeon explains. “What it used to be, the reporter just had to worry about getting the story and delegate a photographer or videographer to handle all the rest as far as the visual side of the story. Now everything digital, it’s a lot more streamlined. Reporters are now expected to do all the work at-once from finding, shooting, editing and publishing their own story with Senior Editors’ approval for release on TV. I have to take the same video pushed out on TV, and then turn it around and write it out for our news website, and share it on our associated Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms.

One of the key principles DeLeon said he will carry with him from his military experience are maximizing his resources given to him from both sides of journalism.

“I am happy to know when other people are enjoying my work” DeLeon shares. “I know I can turn-in the great advice from members of my news team who are recent college graduates as well as from local viewers, including those who are also members of the National Guard and Active Duty Soldiers. I serve my job well because of the many resources provided to me from both sides of journalism.”

Sometimes, the hardest part between both roles can be the communication between civilian anchors and fellow employees in his news team who are also Veterans from a different era. The terminologies used in military broadcasting and journalism can sometimes be hard to translate for senior executives at the news station, especially while covering time-sensitive news at Fort Hood. However, it’s never a big issue as long as he connected interviewees and his support at KWTX.

“The most challenging experience was covering the nine Soldiers who drowned from a military vehicle roll-over in the flash-flooding back in summer 2016,” DeLeon recounts. “Especially while I am still a Soldier and that such news-worthy events take him back to his tours in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“While such unfortunate accidents can happen at any minute’s notice, DeLeon covers the series of events from the families going through mourning; the surrounding communities promoting the memorials of lost brothers-in-arms; and to the increased safety awareness across the military as well.

Because of his passion for photo-journalism and keeping up with the evolving field of social media, DeLeon prides the fact he is always learning something new and growing from his profession every single day.

“I will always have available the chance to learn something from someone else, to then pass that knowledge on to other people I’ve also learned from,” DeLeon said. “It is truly rewarding, as it is all about helping the craft get better.”
SO THAT OTHERS MIGHT LIVE
By Sgt. Kyle Burns, 100th MPAD

For many service members, there are a variety of reasons they chose their military professions, but Spc. Maggie Barcellano’s reasons are shocking.

“When I was pregnant with my daughter Zoe, her father was diagnosed with cancer,” said Barcellano, a Medical Command Soldier in Texas Army National Guard.

Vince, her husband, was diagnosed with cancer while she was still pregnant with their daughter Zoe. As time went on, things became difficult beyond comprehension.

“I spent my pregnancy watching him helplessly,” Barcellano said. “He passed in July and Zoe was born in November.”

For many, the death of a spouse would have been the breaking point in their lives, not for Specialist Maggie Barcellano. For her it was a turning point.

“There were a handful of hospice workers that had an incredible impact on my life, and the end of Vince’s,” she said. “I decided I wanted to go into medicine.”

After her husband’s death, Barcellano didn’t have time to feel sorry for herself. She knew she needed to take action.

“I never wanted to feel that helpless again,” Barcellano said. “I would not sit idly by if another person I loved got sick. In the meantime, I would be able to use my skills to help other families and patients to pay forward the love that I got.”

Barcellano is currently pursuing entry into the Interservice Physician Assistance Program (IPAP), which will give her accreditation as a physician’s assistant.

In this way, Barcellano exemplified what it means to be a Soldier in the Texas National Guard.

Persevering through life’s trying times and using the experiences from her life, she has decided to help anywhere she can.

She currently volunteers at the Officer Candidate School, following future military leaders and helping them understand the importance of medical functions and its importance. Her work as a medic ensured Soldiers were ready, healthy, and able to react quickly when Texas needed them most.

“When the hurricane hit, I was able to do something about it,” she said. “Mine was a small part, but all of us together made a difference.”

With her dedication to her Texas community undeniably clear, one can’t help but recall the last line of the Army Medic Creed and how accurately it applies to the life of Maggie Barcellano:

“These things we do so that others may live.”
FORT HOOD, Texas – Soldiers throughout their military career decide they want to change careers in the Army. Some do it for many reasons for promotion, cross-job training experience or even just to change jobs. To switch their Military Occupational Specialty, a Soldier has to go to school to change their job status.

The process involves going through a Regimental Training Institute (RTI). It is a process with which a Soldier goes to reclassify, or change their job, in the Army. In the Texas Army National Guard, Course Manager Sgt 1st Class Jeffery Crook runs the RTI for the 13 Romeo series in Ft. Hood. This school trains Soldiers to run radars for the weapons locating systems that guide the artillery equipment.

Crook also supervises the Advance Leadership Course for noncommissioned officers (NCO’s) who are preparing to promote in the senior enlistment ranks under that MOS. The school combines both classroom and field training and lasts three weeks.

"It is approximately 120 hours classroom instruction going through operation, maintenance of the Q36 and Q53 Radar systems." Crook explained.

Crook started as an assistant instructor and taught in the A 2/131 Battery in San Antonio and with reorganization he moved to the RTI in Ft. Hood and became a full instructor, senior instructor than promoted to course manager in 2014.

With a staff of five, Crook runs the only 13 Romeo RTI in the Texas National Guard in the state. The only other school is at Ft. Sill, Ok. which is an active duty RTI.

The biggest difference with the Texas RTI in the National Guard versus the active duty component is the length of time to take the course.

"The reasoning, though, behind us as an RTI over active duty component, as an active duty component is two months," Crook said, "and we (Texas National Guard) go through it in three weeks."

With his instructors and senior instructor training Sol-
AUSTIN, Texas—In the competitive field of emergency medicine Texas Army National Guard Soldier, Sgt. Steven D. Domel assigned to HHC, 71st Troop Command says it’s his military education and training that has provided an edge amongst his peers in the civilian medical field.

Domel started his career in the military to pursue his passion for healthcare in May of 2015. He joined the U.S. Army as a combat medic, where he became a certified EMT after completing his advanced individual training.

Becoming a medic was his next professional step after working as a certified medical assistant. His passion for emergency medicine didn’t stop when he left the active duty Army. Domel joined the Texas Army National Guard in 2015, and began his schooling at Texas State University in Round Rock. The 28-year-old single father to 3-year-old son, Jace, is a full-time student and a citizen Soldier. He is currently a senior and will soon earn his Bachelor’s degree in nursing. Domel said he hopes to earn his Master’s degree as a nurse practitioner.

His passion was defined after working a rotation in a psych emergency room, he thrived at his ability to easily connect with patients and help them through their issues.

It was after this experience he realized he wanted to specialize in Psych ER, and someday work towards employment at Veterans Affairs to help Soldiers with post traumatic stress. He feels the military has prepared him to handle “more fast paced and traumatic situations.” Domel has also said that in the future he would like to apply for Officer Candidate School to become an officer in the Texas Army National Guard to continue his service as a nurse.

“taking from the emergency side and it being more of a Band-Aid, and making that switch to fixing the problem, stopping it and saving them. Making that adjustment from saving their life and trying to keep them alive you’re actually fixing them.”

Domel compares himself to his classmates stating that his experience in the military has taught him an automatic mindset to react quickly and efficiently to save lives. He has seen some nurses who still struggle with basic skills such as applying an iv, and the military has provided him the opportunity to learn, practice and continue his medical education where he has mastered these basic skills.

Throughout his time in the military Domel has become a trusted medic and an asset to Camp Mah by caring for Soldiers, as well as maintaining excellent bedside manner and humor allowing Soldiers to feel comfortable and cared for.

“I like helping people, I like the way it makes me feel to help them,” Domel said.

“I like helping people, helping people get better and feel better. It’s more of a purpose, that I am actually doing something worthwhile.”

These are the type of individuals who have chosen to serve in the Texas Army National Guard, serve the Soldiers, their community and the public. Who’s ready for their next flu shot?
ERBIL, Iraq - Texas Army National Guard Spc. James Green, a combat radio specialist with the 1st Armored Division Main Command Post - Operational Detachment, has always had a passion for computers. Luckily, he is able to do what he loves every day.

"The IT world is pretty much dealing with dream boxes. You can do anything on a computer, not only that, but there is limitless possibilities for creation. It's an ever-evolving chessboard," said Green.

Green is a husband to his wife Hannah, a father to his 10-year-old daughter Aeris, and a full time IT specialist for a well-known tech company in El Paso, Texas as well as a Texas National Guard Soldier.

Currently on his third deployment overseas, one may wonder how Citizen-Soldiers are able to balance responsibilities on the home front, while being a full-time Soldier halfway across the world? Green says it all falls on his support system.

"It really helps to have a wife that's in the military; she really understands that it's a giant field trip," said Green. "As far as my daughter goes, she is really independent. It is really hard to narrow down a time to talk to her between her school and my schedule. It's usually based down to the weekends at certain spots. Her mom keeps her up a little bit later so we can talk."

Despite the challenges that come from being away from home, Guardsmen like Green, are able to use deployments to sharpen their Soldiering skills and advance their military education, while doing what they love.

"The way it started was my master sergeant asked me what did I come for, and what do I want to do here, and I said, 'work out and go to schools,' she made it happen."

Green just completed the basic leader course, which is the first course leading into the U.S. Army non-commissioned officer education system and is ready to pin on the rank of sergeant.

"My goal for all of the Soldiers that were deployed, was to at least complete BLC, be promotable, finish at least two college courses and/or obtain at least one certification class," said U.S. Army Master Sgt. Kristy Eichelberger, Combined Joint Operation Center – Erbil non-commissioned officer in charge.

Eichelberger manages a team of 27 enlisted service members who work to provide network support to the entire Northern Iraq on a daily basis. She recently handpicked two Texas Guardsmen to complete a security course, in which Green was one of the two chosen.

"As far as active duty, we have signal courses all the time at Fort Bliss," said Eichelberger. "So at any given moment we can send them to two or three classes per year whereas on the reserve side, after they get done with deployment, they go back to their civilian sector where they may have to pay for the classes out of pocket."

The course is designed to increase technical expertise, which not only benefits the Army, but the Soldier as well.

"Security plus is all about setting up the firewalls so that intruders would have a really hard time getting into our network to get our sensitive files," said Green. "It also benefits me in the outside because with this certification, I can pretty much get a job anywhere starting at least 70K a year."

Nearly 100 volunteer Texas Guardsmen deployed to the Middle East with the “America’s Tank Division” in support of Operation Inherent Resolve. The purpose of the addition is part of an Army initiative to round out its active-duty division and corps headquarters elements during deployments.

"I don’t see them as National Guard; I treat them all as one. We are all fighting one fight and making sure the strike cell is on mission to do their job," said Eichelberger.

Following re-deployment, Guardsmen will be given the choice of staying with the MCP-OD, or returning to their previous unit.

"I plan on staying until I retire or they kick me out," said Green. "I want to make my wife be able to be completely comfortable and my daughter to get whatever she wants."

On any given day, there are thousands of Guardsmen deployed around the world just like Green, who hit pause on family, civilian jobs and their community in order to support their comrades overseas.

“The military, in a large way, has precedence over a large bit of my life and really it’s a matter of just amalgamating the two worlds into one and it becomes a steady stream," said Green.
SAN ANTONIO, Texas - Special Operations Detachment-Africa Officer In Charge, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Derek Rewekant, who spent the middle part of his career with 7th Special Forces Group, now spends his time with a different special group: the kids at his daughter’s elementary school.

Whether rucking through South America, conducting combat operations in Iraq or Afghanistan, and now volunteering at his kids’ schools, Rewekant said that it is all an investment in the future.

As part of the Watch Dog program at daughter Sophia’s San Antonio school, Rewekant mentors the young students. After multiple deployments, the Ranger Tabbed Guardsman now teaches youth about staying active and healthy.

“The Watch Dog program is mostly about being a positive male role model, in an environment where that can sometimes be lacking,” Rewekant said. “We go out on the playground and just keep them moving, sometimes we will do pull ups together.”

While with 7th Group, Rewekant mobilized to Haiti after a magnitude-7 earthquake produced a deadly tsunami that killed more than 200,000 thousand people. It was on that mobilization that Rewekant saw first-hand the difference selfless service can make to a community.

“When we were in Haiti doing disaster relief, you could really start to see the progress that was being made,” Rewekant said. “When you start to make progress it always makes it worth it.”

Rewekant doesn’t just hang out on the playground showing off how many pull ups he can do, he also volunteers at St. Mary’s University’s ROTC program where his step-son Daniel is a student.

“These guys are our future leaders, so it’s important that we help guide them as they grow in their careers,” said Rewekant. “I pass along the things that helped me get where I am today.”

“I think that interacting with the kids at both schools is an investment in the future of the country,” Rewekant said. “I hope that I can give them something to strive for and they try to achieve more than they thought they could.”

While Rewekant likes interacting with the students at both schools, the SF Soldier doesn’t shy away when it’s time to do the dirty work landscaping. Rewekant said that he often helps out with projects around the elementary school, role modeling the value of a job well done to youngsters who undoubtedly look up to the elite Soldier.
A HURRICANE OF HOPE

COMMENTARY BY STAFF SGT. BETHANY ANDERSON
100TH MPAD

SWEENEY, Texas - As a mother and Texas Army National Guard soldier, I have had first-hand experience with wildfires, tornadoes, ice storms, snow storms, and earthquakes. But Harvey was my first hurricane.

When I first heard the phrase “Texasians serving Texas,” I only thought of myself as a Texas Guardsman, serving the citizens of Texas and the United States. I never thought it would mean Texas Army National Guard Soldiers. As a Guardswoman, I have had first-hand experience with the thin ribbon of road that cut through the massive expanse of water. I have driven through a lot of intense situations as a mom and as a Soldier, but this was, by far, my most stressful drive ever.

We arrived at the hotel in San Antonio around 1 AM August 29, 2017. Despite being mentally and emotionally drained, sleep didn’t come easy. Kayden’s fingers were gripped around my index finger and Alex’s head rested gently on my shoulder while I stared out of Emily’s asleep on the couch. My family was safe, but he uncertainty of our situation still gnawed at me as I finally drifted to sleep.

Sunshine poured through the hotel room the next morning. Alex and Kayden hopped up and exclaimed, “It’s not raining! Can we go home now?” I was both amused and disheartened. “No, it’s still raining at our house. It’s not safe to go home.”

I spent the next two weeks answering that same question. Each time my answer produced a look of disappointment on my children’s faces. We relocated three times and had to relocate the dogs twice. Each time we left the dogs with someone else, Alex’s heart would break and she’d stink its arms desperately fighting back tears.

I spent every day checking the weather, skimming through Facebook for information and watching Brazoria County press conferences for updates.

I hated not being able to tell my children when we would go home. I didn’t even know if we’d have a home to go back to.

Anxiety, guilt and frustration came in waves, but I held it together to feel safe. They couldn’t see Mom disappear into her emotions.

Disappointing my children wasn’t the only thing on my mind. I had a couple part-time jobs and had recently started my own business. Even though my husband was still working, Harvey’s relentless pressure put every stream of income I had in limbo. Our family was already struggling to keep up with finances, and this certainly wasn’t going to help.

When I got a message from my unit asking if our family was financially affected by the storm, I didn’t respond. Thousands of other people were much worse off than we were. It didn’t feel right to ask for help, but my mom reminded me of all the times that we were able to help other people.

“You and JD have helped financially support others when they needed it,” my mom said, “You need to give others the opportunity to keep up.”

I replied to the text and let my unit know our family’s situation.

Peers and leaders in the 71st Troop Command reached into wallets, without hesitation, and gave money, gift cards, toiletries and toys to my family. Many of whom had never seen my face or heard my name before. Letters, gift cards and care packages also arrived from friends and family.

“This is like Christmas!” Alex shouted in excitement as she reached into a box of toys.

My children were filled with joy and laughter as they played with the new toys, and still are, both overwhelmed and humbled by the support my family and I received from my fellow service members.

One of my responsibilities as a Public Affairs NCO is to help tell the Army story. My unit, the 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, even found a way for me to support the Texas Military Department’s mission in response to Hurricane Harvey. Despite my own situation, I was able to help tell the Army story. My unit, the 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, even found a way for me to support the Texas Military Department’s mission in response to Hurricane Harvey.

I had Soldiers from my team spread out all over the state of Texas working long, hard hours to make sure people knew who we were and what we were doing to help. It’s difficult to be a leader standing next to any unit empowered me to dig in and help my Soldiers be successful.

While my unit was doing everything they could to ensure the safety and wellbeing of my family my business partners from all over the country flew into action. They look up donations and sent our family care packages. Another business partner sent a care package of supplements to help with my daughter’s digestive health.

We were able to explore some fun places as many businesses were closed like the amusement parks and the movie theaters. We went to the zoo, the aquarium, and the science museum. We ate at all of our favorite restaurants, and we even went to a drive-in movie theater.

We had seen our home in almost two weeks and didn’t know what to expect, but we were hopeful.

The closer we got to home the more destruction and devastation we saw. It all. My girls needed protection and the buildings and homes were severely damaged.

Every penny we received was used on gas, groceries and bills. The monetary gifts I received were in exact proportion to what we needed, exactly when we needed it. No more, no less.

On Saturday, September 9, the roads cleared and the sun broke through the clouds - so we headed home.

We hadn’t seen our home in almost two weeks and didn’t know what to expect, but we were hopeful.

My children were filled with joy and laughter as they played with the new toys, and still are, both overwhelmed and humbled by the support my family and I received from my fellow service members.

I am a better person because of this experience and I will be able to bless others because of it. There are too many people who helped to list them all, but I will never forget and will always cherish their generosity.

There is a lot of uncertainty in our near future, but I am certain that everything’s going to be just fine.

STAFF SERGEANT BETHANY ANDERSON
PHOTOS FROM HURRICANE HARVEY
FORT HOOD, Texas - If you have never heard of a Main Command Post-Operational Detachment, you aren’t alone.

But 1st Cavalry Division MCP-OD Soldier and Texas Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Kristina Nicely said the new reserve component structure is a mutual benefit to both the Active Duty component and the National Guard.

Nicely works as a personal trainer most days, but for one week every three months, she heads to Fort Hood where she works shoulder-to-shoulder with her active duty analyst counterparts.

The relatively new units are the direct result of lessons learned from the previous decade and a half of integrating reserve units into active duty operations and represent the cutting edge of a new multi-component unit design.

Departing from the typical Guardsman’s traditional drill schedule, the Soldiers of the 71st Troop Command’s 1CD MCP-OD drill quarterly. That schedule allows the troops to spend a week, fully engaged in real-world work at their active duty station.

The arrangement, Nicely said, also benefits the active duty ranks, who use the National Guard Soldiers to augment their roles in positions where they struggle to recruit.

Another advantage, according to Nicely, is that the Guardsmen don’t have to maintain any of the systems needed to do their jobs, which, for example, gives them the maximum possible time while on drill status, to fine tune their analyst skills.

"Before, you always had to take one day out of the weekend getting the systems working or doing some kind of maintenance to them," Nicely said. "Now, we fall in on equipment that active-duty Soldiers are using daily. It really gives us a great opportunity to dig in and do our jobs."

While analysts assigned to the MCP-OD are mixed in with the 1st Cavalry’s analysts, they are often tasked with something called reach-back-missions. For those missions, the Guardsmen are tasked by forward assets to work on real-world problems.

"In a reach-back mission, we are asked to do the research and produce actual intelligence products," Nicely said. "Those products then go forward and help instruct the generals on the ground making the decisions."

Nicely said that she and her fellow Guardsmen add interesting skills sets and perspectives to those problems from their civilian careers.

"As a personal trainer, you have to figure out what motivates people," Nicely said. "The idea is to figure out what is going to get them to achieve their goals."

This skill is something she says keeps her interested in the analysts world she enters once a quarter.

"I like putting pieces together," Nicely said. "I like correlating activities and people and then trying to figure out what motivates them."