

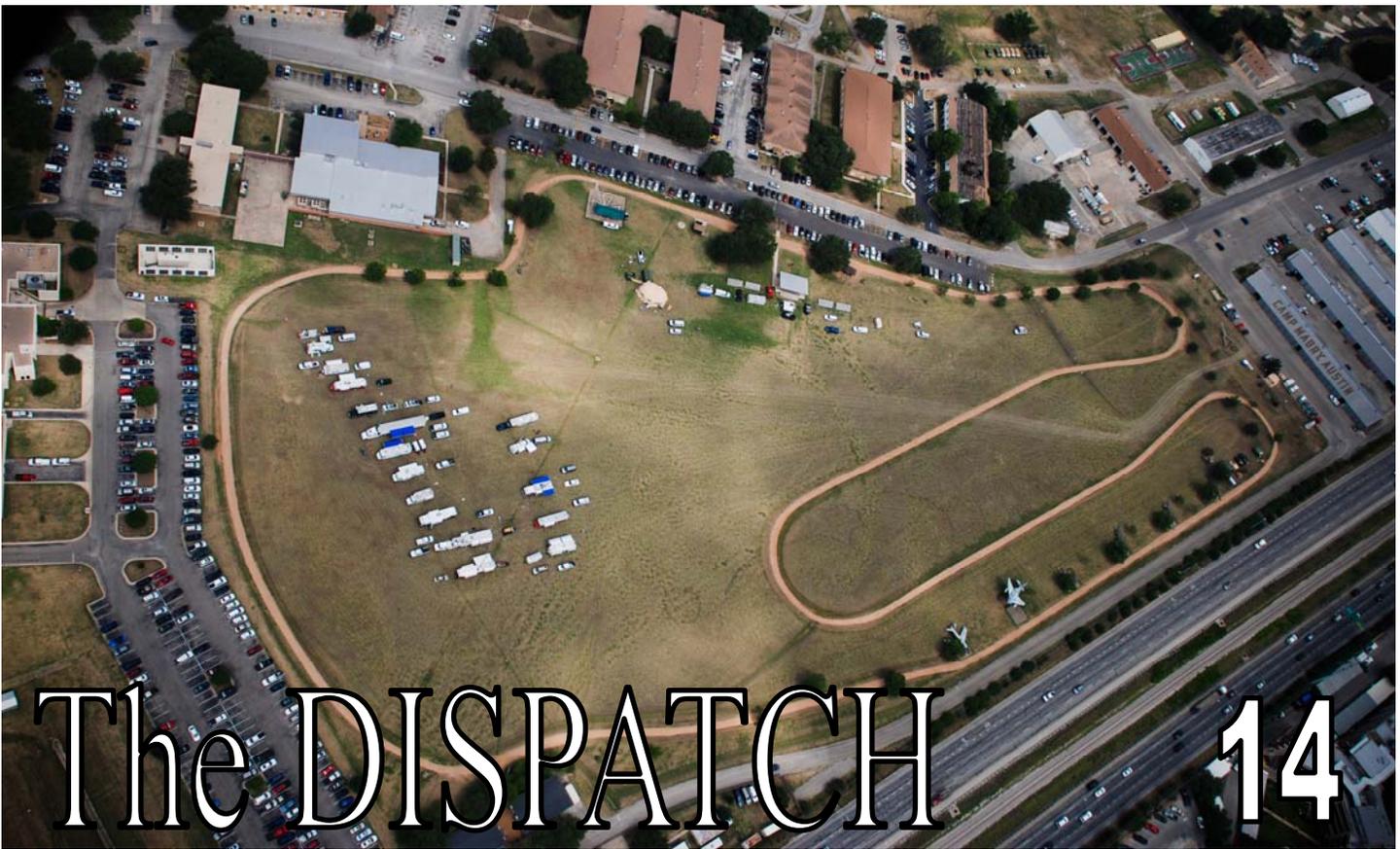
The DISPATCH



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Cover- A P-51D (top) and a P-51C belonging to The Horsemen aerobatic demonstration team fly over Kelly Field June 6. The two-seat Mustang offered rides to five enlisted Guardsmen of the 149th Fighter Wing. (Texas Military Forces photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Wilson)

THE BULLETIN BOARD

TRICARE Prime Travel Access Standards Changes

Week of June 15, 2009. As a practical matter, DoD never really enforced TRICARE travel access standards but it will be enforced now. TRICARE has long had established policy to help beneficiaries receive timely health care. The standards require that enrollees shouldn't be assigned a primary care manager (PCM) at a military hospital or clinic that's more than a 30-minute drive from the beneficiary's home address. If they want to continue to be seen in the Military Treatment Facility, current Prime enrollees in the U.S. who live farther away than a 30-minute drive from the MTF will have to request a waiver of the drive-time standard from the MTF commander or the TRICARE Regional Office.

VA Health Care Enrollment Made Easier

VA health care eligibility rules changed on Monday, June 15, 2009, making it easier for more Veterans to enroll in VA's health care system. The VA has also provided a web-based calculator for Veterans to enter their income information, number of dependents, and zip code to determine if their income falls within the new income threshold adjustments. Veterans can check to see if they qualify under new rules for VA health care by visiting www.va.gov/healtheligibility. Veterans are also encouraged to contact VA's Health Resource Center at 1-877-222 VETS (8387) for further assistance.

82nd Airborne Seeking Veterans

The 82nd Airborne Division Association, Inc. is trying to locate veterans who have served with the division during the last 66 years to record their deeds for history for the younger generations. The 82nd Airborne Division is the most decorated division in today's military. The association has 100 civilian chapters in the U.S., which serve 34,000 military and civilian members. For more information, visit the 82 Airborne Division Association website at <http://www.82ndassociation.org/default.aspx>

Army NCO Forum Helps Soldiers

Noncommissioned officers are communicating about issues ranging from combat operations to physical fitness -- all on one Internet forum developed by the Army. The forum, called NCO Net, is meant to make it easier for NCOs to share information, ideas and best practices among other NCOs. NCO Net is part of a larger program called the Battle Command Knowledge System. Topics discussed on NCO Net range from combat operations to the proper way to fill out paperwork. Anyone with an AKO login is eligible to join the forum. To join, visit the Battle Command Knowledge System webpage at <https://forums.bcks.army.mil/default.aspx?id=556>

Military OneSource Expands Counseling

Military OneSource recently increased the number of nonmedical counseling sessions it will offer to Servicemembers. Eligible Servicemembers, including active-duty, Guard and Reserve members, and their families, may now receive 12 sessions per person, issue, and counselor within 120 days. The new 12-session limit applies to face-to-face, short-term solution-focused telephone consultations, and online consultations. For more information, visit the Military OneSource website at <http://www.militaryonesource.com/home.aspx?aspxerrorpath=/skins/MOS/splash.aspx>

New GI Bill Calculator

The new GI Bill offers several new benefits above and beyond anything previously offered. However, there are limitations as to how and where these benefits can be applied. Each servicemember and veteran must choose which version of the GI Bill will best suit their needs. One of the biggest considerations is how much each veteran will get toward tuition, fees, and living expenses. Military.com has created a GI Bill Calculator to help servicemembers and veterans find out how much their New Post-9/11 Payment rate will be and how it compares to the Montgomery GI Bill. Visit [Military.com/gi-bill-calculator](http://www.military.com/gi-bill-calculator/?esrc=mr.nl) at <http://www.military.com/gi-bill-calculator/?esrc=mr.nl> to get started figuring out your GI Bill payment rate today.

The DISPATCH

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Personnel Recovery Team Training, Texas Style

Story and photos by Sgt. Jennifer D. Atkinson

Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

For Hollywood, a Soldier evading capture in a hostile foreign country after getting separated from his unit is just a good plot for a summer blockbuster, but for Soldiers in the Texas National Guard, it could become a reality show faster than they want to imagine.

On today's battlefield, the front lines are no longer clear and all personnel are in danger of becoming isolated, missing, detained or captured during full-spectrum operations. This is a distinct change from the Cold War, when front lines were clear and personnel recovery (PR) was taught to those who went "behind enemy lines," such as aviators and Special Operations Forces.

The brainchild of special operations and Headquarters Department of the Army, the Texas Army National Guard Personnel Recovery Training Team (PRTT) developed in response to incidents happening in the Iraq war, such as the attack on the Army's 507th Maintenance Company and Staff Sgt. Matt Maupin, a 3rd Infantry Division Soldier captured early in the Iraq war.

"They created [the training team]," said Lt. Col. Gary W. Hipps, officer in charge of the PRTT, but "they didn't have a long term plan for it. National Guard Bureau picked us up, saying 'this is good stuff, our Soldiers could use this'."

To help Soldiers survive and return with honor in an asymmetrical combat environment, the members of the PRTT train troops all over to supply them with the tools they need to be prepared for and prevent isolating incidents. The PRTT also pro-

vides training on how to react quickly and decisively if an isolating event occurs so the Army recovers its person prior to detention and capture.

"Soldiers knew the training and equipment is out there," said Colonel Hipps, "but they just hadn't been trained on it."

The face of pre-deployment training has changed radically, too, said Colonel Hipps. Expanding the amount of knowledge and information is a main goal of the PRTT, not only for Soldiers on the ground, but for commanders and staff

"It's not just 'I'm isolated, what do I do?'" said Colonel Hipps. PR training is also for commanders from the lowest level, such as platoon and company to theater commanders. "We tie all that into a package of contingency planning and training for Soldiers and staff," he said. "We can train soldiers all day long but if there's not a plan from higher and the soldiers plan isn't nested into that higher headquarters plan, it doesn't do any good."

Training Soldiers on the equipment used in theater to help with evasion is a big part of the PRTT's mission, said Colonel Hipps. Much of the equipment is in the system already, he said.

Evasion charts, maps made of a durable paper-like material called Tyvek with a great deal of survival information in the margins, are available, although some units did not know how or where to order them, he said.

Blood chits, made famous by the Flying Tigers before WWII, are notices carried by the service members displaying messages aimed at the civilians that ask them to help the service-member in case they are shot down, are also in the Army supply system, said Colonel Hipps.

"There are tools out there in system called pointee-talkies, that have the pictures and the phonetic spellings [for common action and needs], and you can try your best to communicate," he said.

The concrete benefit is that everyone has thought about it, by the time they go into theater, said Colonel Hipps. "If you think about an event like Sergeant Maupin, can you imagine how scared he was, especially if he'd had no training?"

"We fight as we train, and if we're trained on this stuff, when we're in that situation, we're going to revert to our training," he said. "Having a plan and making sure we're nested into higher may be the difference between evading and surviving and being captured and a totally different situation. The saying is that 1000 days of evasion is better than one day of captivity."

"We give soldiers and staff tools," said Colonel Hipps. "We make them more aware, give them tools to be able to protect and save lives."

Left— Capt. Wade Aubin, from the Texas Personnel Recovery Training Team reads the text from a "blood chit" during a personnel recovery class at Camp Swift.



Operation Purple Camp: Appreciating That Kids Serve Too!

By Cheryl Barbeau

Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

Operation Purple camp is a time for having fun, making friends, and reminding military kids that they are the Nation's youngest heroes, Kids Serve Too!

"As an organization dedicated to serving military families, the National Military Family Association recognized the need for more resources to support military children. In 2004, the Operation Purple program was created as a way to help military children struggling with the stresses of war."

The program aims to help military kids from all branches, experience care-free fun while also learning coping skills to deal with deployment-related stress and fostering relationships with other children who know what they are going through. Operation Purple camp allows kids to gain confidence by learning to be stewards of the community and of the environment. These week-long, overnight camps are open to all military children ages 7-17.

Texas has two locations for Operation Purple Camp. The first is in Trinity in June and the other in Brownwood in August. Camp Cullen, a YMCA run camp hosts the June camp in Trinity. Five hundred and thirty acres along the shores of Lake Livingston, offers Trinity's Operation Purple Camp kids a wide range of water sports, horseback riding, climbing on the ropes course, nature, drama and so much more.

In addition to the many fun activities available, the campers also gather as a cabin group each day where they learn, bond and share experiences as a child whose parent is deployed, about to be deployed or just returning.

On this particular day the Camp theme was Military Experience. The 72nd



out of Huntsville brought 2 military vehicles, equipment used in the field, MREs and many chances for the children to see and feel up close some of what their parents use in their jobs. Each stood in line to ride in the military truck and to try on a helmet and vest. One child found out just how heavy the vest can be as soon as her second arm went thru the arm hole she landed flat on her back from the weight. Children being children found this amusing and educational. "No children were harmed in this demonstration."

MREs were opened and shared among the campers with some saying they were glad lunch was not far away. Others said it was pretty good, but of course they were sampling the dessert.

After each child spent time exploring the gear, the youth were brought inside for a presentation from SFC Colin Scott from Texas Military Forces Drug Demand Reduction Program.

While many seemed to be familiar with the basics about drugs it was a good opportunity to clear up a few misconceptions the group had and to reinforce the dangers drugs can carry.

The highlight of the day was the special guest flown in by helicopter, Brigadier General Joyce Stevens, Commander of the Texas Army National Guard.

She and her flight crew talked some about what brought them to the military and some of their experiences overseas. After each presentation the children asked questions of each guest. The favorite two questions from the morning were "So is learning to fly a helicopter really hard or like SNAP?" and after being told 1,003 artillery rounds were fired at a target, a child wanted to know "How many missed?" The soldier answered, None-of course!

General Stevens and the other soldiers also shared their view of what it is like to be a parent and to be away from their children. They shared their favorite things the children sent to them or made for them while they were deployed. The message was clear, any communication they had with their families while away was treasured and deeply appreciated, no matter how simple. These soldiers wanted the kids to know they missed their children as much as the kids missed their parents. General Stevens, her aircraft crew, aide, and the four soldiers from Huntsville Ar-

mory joined the campers for lunch where the kids continued to ask questions. Each soldier who volunteered their time that day seemed to really have a gift for relating to the children. It seemed that some saw their own children in the faces of the campers.

Between the camp staff, trained professionals, volunteer counselors and TXMF soldiers these children were in good hands. Even strangers to this camp contributed to the welfare of the children by offering what some may have considered a small gift. The impact however was beyond expectations. The gift came with a note to each child that read: *Thank you! Please accept this stuffed animal as a thank you from Assignment Whisper. We realize that your parent's deployment has impacted your life in ways that we cannot even imagine. We pray that this token of our appreciation will remind you that Americans have not forgotten your contribution to our country as well as the commitment of your parent(s). Thank you for your dedication to our nation!*

As we walked around the lunch room we noticed many campers had their stuffed animal peeking out of their backpacks, in their lap, and even displayed proudly on the table next to their food plate. It seemed every camper, regardless of age, valued this gift immensely.

General Stevens left the children with these words, "We really, really appreciate your support and need you in our lives. Thank you!" Kids Serve Too!



Above- General Joyce Stevens, joined by Camp Cullen's Director, greets two of the campers prior to her talk to the entire group of campers and counselors.

Left- Staff Sgt. Archuleta, 72nd BTSB of Huntsville Armory carefully shows this camper the various equipment and gear used in the field.

On the Ground: Forces Mark Progress in Iraq Security Transfer

American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, June 29, 2009 – As the security agreement deadline looms, U.S. and Iraqi forces celebrated the transition of security in Iraq's cities from coalition to Iraqi control and commemorated the transfer of a combat outpost and security station.

The U.S.-Iraq security agreement calls for the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from Iraqi cities by tomorrow and all U.S. combat troops from Iraq by 2011.

In Diyala province, Iraqi officials and coalition leaders from the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team and the 25th Infantry Division celebrated the transition of security in the cities from coalition to Iraqi control during a June 25 ceremony in Baqubah.

"This event certainly displays the high degree of cooperation made by the Iraqi security forces and the coalition in recent history," said Army Maj. Chris Hyde, public affairs officer for the combat team. "The Iraqi army and police force have improved dramatically in their ability to provide security for the people and communities of the province. As coalition forces pull out of the region's cities, we leave the people of Diyala in the strong, capable and energetic hands of the Iraqi security forces."

Also in Diyala province, U.S. forces transferred Combat Outpost Mullalah to the 5th Iraqi Army Division on June 25.

The outpost had been home to soldiers of the 25th Infantry Division's 2nd Battalion, 8th Field Artillery Regiment, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, since September.

A major staging area for U.S. soldiers, coalition forces will continue to have a presence there when teaming with their Iraqi counterparts.

"Now is the right time for [COP Mullalah] to be turned over to the very capable 4th Battalion [5th Iraqi Army Division]," said Army Lt. Col. Matthew Anderson, commander of the 2-8 FA. "This is symbolic of a much bigger change."

Elsewhere, Iraqi forces assumed control of Joint Security Station Aziziyah in Wasit province during a June 23 ceremony.

Soldiers of Battery C, 1st Battalion, 77th Field Artillery Regiment, 172nd Brigade Combat Team, handed over the security station to 2nd Company, 2nd Battalion, 32nd Iraqi Army Brigade.

"This ceremony symbolizes the progress made over the past month," said Army Col. Dick Francey, 41st Fires Brigade commander and commander of American troops in Wasit province.

Colonel Francey expressed his confidence in the Iraqis' ability to provide security in the region. "I know you will do wonderful things," he said. "Insurgencies in the area have gone to the ground and they better stay down or the Iraqi army will take them down again."

The Cobra Battery soldiers moved onto the station in March and improved living conditions alongside rotating Iraqi army units.

Another transfer is in the planning stages. U.S. leaders met with a Salahuddin provincial director general June 20 to discuss the transfer of Forward Operating Base Brassfield-Mora, known by local Iraqis as the "Silo," from U.S. forces back to residents of Samarra.

"It is important that the [next] unit realizes that they need to be out of the Silo by early 2010. The issue is very important to agriculture in Samarra," said Army Lt. Col. David Snodgrass, deputy commanding officer of the division's 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

Promoting agricultural development is one of the brigade's main efforts, and returning a major grain storage area back to the Iraqi government will greatly assist local farmers, officials said.

The long-term goal is to turn over the entire base, but in stages. Parts of the base will be sectioned off by T-wall barriers and returned to the city of Samarra to begin reconstruction of the grain storage areas. One of the first areas to be turned over comprises three buildings and a scale that remains from when the silo was operational.

"This place is in a key location for local farmers to turn in their grains," said Bahaa Naja Ali, the director general of seeds and grains, explaining the impact the silo's return will have on local agriculture. The Samarra silo is one of the main storage areas for wheat and other grains harvested in the province.

Also marking progress, the Iraqi Army Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Academy in Taji graduated 38 in its first class of drill sergeants June 21. The 21-day Iraqi Army Drill Sergeant Course is designed to provide drill sergeants with the knowledge, skills and abilities to conduct high-quality training.

Marine Corps Command Sgt.Maj. Daniel C. Terwilliger, senior enlisted advisor for Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq, delivered the graduation speech. The graduation represented a vital component of Iraq's progress toward a more capable and professional NCO Corps, he said.

(Army Sgt. Allison Churchill of 41st Fires Brigade contributed to this article. Compiled from Multinational Corps Iraq, Multinational Division South and Multinational Security Transition Command Iraq news releases.)



Sameer Al-Haddad, receivership secretariat and representative to the prime minister, and Army Capt. Timothy Stephenson commemorate the signing over of Joint Security Station Aziziyah to the Iraqi army in Wasit province, Iraq, June 23, 2009. U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Allison Churchill

Texas Task Force 1 Prepares For Next Hurricane Season

Story and photos By Sr. Airman Andrew Dumboski
136th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Fort Worth, Texas (19 May, 2009) — About 30 members of Texas Task Force 1 got hands-on experience loading medical litters on a 136th Airlift Wing C-130H at Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base, Carswell Field, Wednesday in preparation for hurricane season.

The training gave the members a chance to see first hand how they will be loading special-needs patients during an emergency evacuation, and what they can expect during that time.

“We brought medical specialists out here today, to get them oriented with the aircraft,” said Army Reserve Lt. Col. Alexandre Migala, TX-TF1 medical team manager. With the team responding to disasters like large hurricanes, “creating formalized training improves our effectiveness.”

TX-TF1 is a state-deployable resource that responds to any disaster as requested by the governor. It consists of 68 different agencies including the National Guard and Reserves, firefighters, doctors and K-9 search units.

One of the agency’s missions is the pre-evacuation of special-needs patients prior to a large hurricane hitting an area.

“We try and get the ones who can’t get out of the way, out of the way,” said Jeff Saunders, Texas Task Force Operations chief.

That mission was the focus of this training.

“At least we’re not going to be pinching our fingers when we’re doing this for real,” said Lee Gillum, Montgomery County paramedic, referring to the clamps that hold the litters in place.



During the training, task force members set up the stations that hold the litters, unfolded and loaded two litters, then secured them in place.

The training was all preparation, to get people out of harms way faster, before the storm comes, said Master Sgt. Ken Bishop, 181st Airlift Squadron loadmaster, who deployed for humanitarian missions and worked with members of the task force during hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

Above and left- members of TX-TF1 receive instruction on the proper carrying of a litter and the attachment of the litter to hooks inside the C-130.

Litters can be hung five-high and several rows across affording medical personnel enough space to walk between litters, climb up to the highest patient and attend to their needs in mid-air.



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136th Regional Training Institute Plans for Growth

Story by Master Sgt. Brenda Benner
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs



CAMP MABRY, Texas – The Texas Army National Guard has nearly 19,500 members within its ranks. Providing each member with leadership and skill-

specific training for mission readiness is a monumental task for the Camp Mabry-based 136th Regiment (Combat Arms) Texas Regional Training Institute (TX-RTI).

The Texas RTI prepares Soldiers and their organizations for deployments supporting both state and national requirements. The National Guard Bureau-funded institute offers a combination of weekend classes and those with two to three weeks duration at both Camp Mabry and Camp Swift. Training thousands of Texas Soldiers in order to keep pace with the mission requirements of the Global War on Terror and unexpected natural disasters has stretched the RTI to its limits.

Someone very familiar with the institute's current situation is Sgt. 1st Class Eric Ueckert, the RTI's course manager for the Basic Non-Commissioned Officer Course (BNCOC). He teaches the Basic Army Instructor and Small Group Instructor Training Courses and also Phase 1 of BNCOC.

"During the last two years as the Guard is transitioning, we are offering

training for military police, cavalry, and combat medics," said Sergeant Ueckert. "We also host hazardous materials and the combat lifesaver courses. We have many different courses for our Soldiers."

Due to an incredibly busy training schedule and limited facilities, Sergeant Ueckert said everyone has to be creative, such as using stagger-scheduling during the weekends. He said it's akin to "hot-bunking" on a ship.

"Except for holidays, we have courses nearly every weekend," Sergeant Ueckert said. "Our biggest constraints are classrooms, billets, and not having our own dining facility that's convenient for the students."

Each state-level National Guard training institute from across the nation became an important source for training its Soldiers once course standardization was developed.

Command Sgt. Maj. Milton Simpson, the Texas RTI's Regimental Command Sergeant Major and Commandant said it all began in the early 1990s when The Army School System (TASS) standardized all programs of instruction, including the testing and the equipment utilized.

Recent years have found the RTI challenged to keep up with the demands of a growing force. According to Sergeant Major Simpson, approximately 425 students passed through the RTI's doors during 2005. Attendance increased to nearly 1,700 Soldiers for 2008.

"Our mission is set for nearly 2,300 students for 2009 according to our classroom quotas," the commandant stressed. Our training tempo has increased tremendously. Soon, during 2010, we'll see the second evolution of TASS. It's known as the One Army School System. Under this new concept, we anticipate active-component Soldiers coming through our doors.

"Currently, we are missioned to teach 28 courses. Between Camp Swift and Mabry, we have 18 classrooms and approximately 100 beds," said Sergeant Major Simpson

The anticipated increase of students will combine with an already overloaded training academy. There's no room for growth within the confines of Camp Mabry, but there is optimism for an expansion project. Years of preliminary plans have advanced to the stage of detailed blueprints for construction of a new training academy campus at Camp Swift, roughly 35 miles east of Austin.

The new seven-building facility will include 33 state-of-the-art classrooms with a 604 student capacity. It will also include a resource library, a 500-seat auditorium, a 525 bed student dormitory, a fitness center, a running track, a dining facility, a 15-lane small arms simulations center, a separate administration building and an additional dormitory for cadre personnel.

"With this increased capacity we could train approximately 5,200 Soldiers in a 12-month period," said the hopeful commandant.

Sergeant Ueckert said the concept is to have a self-sustained campus environment, basically a "one-stop, one-shop" situation.

The projected cost for the approximate 12-acre state-of-the-art facility is nearly \$70 million.

"The leadership of Texas is aggressively pursuing the appropriated funding," Sergeant Major Simpson advised.

He said the new facility will have a positive impact on the local economies of Elgin and Bastrop during the two-year construction phase and certainly thereafter. He hopes construction could begin by 2012 and staffed by 2014.



Architect's rendering of the new seven-building RTI facility at Camp Swift.



Celebrating the Army's Birthday in Iraq

From left, Master Sgt. John Nombrano, noncommissioned officer in charge, Red Team, Combined Joint Task Force-82, Maj. Gen. Curtis Scaparrotti, the commander of the 82nd Airborne Division and CJTF-82, Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Capel, 82nd Abn. Div., CJTF-82 and Pfc. Richell Vannieuwenhuyzen, finance specialist, CJTF-82 take part in a cake-cutting ceremony to honor and celebrate the Army's 234th birthday, June 14, at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan. In keeping with the Army tradition of having the oldest and youngest Soldier cutting the cake, Nombrano, 60, from San Angelo, Texas and Vannieuwenhuyzen, 18 from Troy, Mo., were bestowed the honor during this year's celebration. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Michael Armstrong)

afterdeployment.org Explores Behavioral Health Information

FALLS CHURCH, Va. – The U.S. Army, with oversight by TRI-CARE Management Activity (TMA), has created an interactive Web site that allows service members and their families to explore behavioral health information. The site launched Aug. 5, 2008 at <http://www.afterdeployment.org>, and development continues.

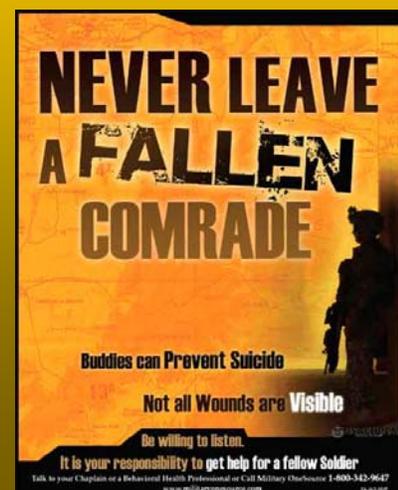
“Afterdeployment.org serves as an interactive, self-help solution to assist with behavioral health needs following deployment,” said Army Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director, TMA.

Authorized by legislation, the site is a pilot project to help service members deal with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other behavioral health conditions.

Visitors to afterdeployment.org will notice the user-friendly environment. By clicking on a video link play button, users can watch veterans, spouses and other family members tell real-life stories about how war changed their lives and how they dealt with the demands of readjusting after combat deployment.

In addition to these first-person accounts, a tool bar on the left side of the Web site links beneficiaries to educational topics that include: Getting Help, Check How You're Doing, Staying Healthy Where You Live, Stories from Home and Far Away, and Links, Books, Blogs & Pods. In each of these areas, additional links offer detailed information on chosen subjects.

A user-friendly environment is not all that matters to service members. Privacy is of paramount concern, and users don't have to register to access the site. Afterdeployment.org provides confidential education on sensitive issues such as stress and triggers, conflict at work, reconnecting with family and friends, moods, anger, sleep, substance abuse, stress management, kids and deployment, spiritual guidance, living with physical injuries and health and wellness.



Medical officers have their day in the spotlight

Story by Master Sgt. Brenda Benner
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

CAMP MABRY, Texas – Two outstanding Texas Military Forces (TXMF) medical officers were recognized for their exceptional leadership during award ceremonies held June 13.

Army Lt. Col. Michael Steve Marshall, the Deputy Joint Surgeon for the TXMF since his return from Afghanistan in 2005, received the Federal Service Medal, the Texas Purple Heart, the Texas Combat Service Ribbon and also his belated Freedom Salute recognition.

He was initially mobilized with the 111th Area Support Medical Battalion during February of 2003 and was headed for Iraq until several members were split up to fill key positions. At the time, then Maj. Marshall was assigned as an instructor for the Officer Basic Course. He later deployed to Afghanistan as the senior medical advisor to the Afghan National Army's Central Corps.

It was during August 2004 in a Western Afghan village that a meeting between warring factions turned violent.

"All was well until someone pulled out a gun and started shooting," Marshall explained. "It was pure mayhem. We were under small arms fire and tank fire, but I was only slightly wounded. We lost eight Afghan soldiers that day from the contingent I was working with."

Colonel Marshall said it was his medical training and previous duty as an infantry officer that allowed him to react immediately. He helped others escape while under fire and provided first aid

once in a safer position.

The following is an excerpt from the award citation: His courage and gallant actions under fire were instrumental in the survival of two Afghan general officers, an American Soldier and an Afghan interpreter.

"Sometimes I feel like Forest Gump ... being at the right or wrong place at the right or wrong time," Colonel Marshall said from the podium. "These awards came to me by circumstance. They are really for my family. I wish they (son James Bailey and wife Glory) could be the ones wearing them because they were the ones who dealt with the burden of my deployment, it was easier for me.

"Being in Afghanistan was a remarkable time in my life," Colonel Marshall said proudly. "We were successful in improving the health of many Afghans. I was privileged to be a part of that."

Marshall's Texas Combat Service Ribbon was awarded in reference to his deployment for Operation Iraqi Freedom from June to September 2008.

Air Force Colonel Brett A. Wyrick received the Legion of Merit for his outstanding accomplishments while recently assigned as the command surgeon in support of Operation Jump Start (OJS) from December 2006 to June 2008. His efforts were essential in the development and ongoing success of medical support capability to the TXMF and the U.S. Border Patrol.

While assigned with OJS, he also served as the joint command surgeon for the TXMF during which time he led the

medical integration effort with agencies such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Northern Command, the Governor's Division of Emergency Management and the Department of State Health Services.

His leadership has guided policies regarding flood rescue operations, hurricane relief, rabies eradication and pandemic influenza planning.

Colonel Wyrick has been called before several Texas State Senate Committees for his expert testimony to assist with policies affecting military service members, their families and veterans as well.

The colonel said he is looking forward to his next duty station at Andrews Air Force Base, Md.

"I'm finishing up my residency in aerospace medicine at Brooks Air Force Base (San Antonio) and after that I'll be the air surgeon which is the top doctor position in the Air National Guard," said Colonel Wyrick. "I want to thank my friends and my family for all of their support because nobody gets here without that," he said proudly.

Below left- Lt. Col. Michael Steve Marshall, center, receives his many awards from Brig. Gen. Red Brown. Marshall's son, James Bailey, keeps track of the certificates.

Below right- Col. Brett A. Wyrick, left, receives the Legion of Merit from Col. Connie McNabb, Director, Joint Staff, Joint Force Headquarters. (Photos by Sgt. Ann Benson, Texas Military Forces Public Affairs)



1-149 ARB Soars at Operation Southern Thunder

Story and photos by 1st Lt. Adam Musil

36th Infantry Division Public Affairs

It was a cool December day and above the city of Ramadi, the battle was all around Captain Matt Salo of the 1-149th Attack and Reconnaissance Battalion (ARB), 36th Combat Aviation Brigade, 36th Infantry Division. His Apache helicopter was taking enemy fire and due to civilians on the battlefield and a targeting system damaged by enemy fire, the helicopter was unable to engage the enemy targets. Below, the Marine unit he was supporting was pinned down and taking fire from all directions. To Salo's flank was a second Apache helicopter. Unable to fire, the two Apaches navigated through the airspace and coordinated with the Marines on the ground until the fighting ceased. This was an intense situation and one that could not have been successfully completed without the proper amount of training.

The 1-149th ARB is the 36th Infantry Division's organic Apache battalion. They are the teeth of the 36th Combat Aviation Brigade and every year they attend gunnery to remain sharp and prepared for battle. This year's annual training is called Operation Southern Thunder.

"Training here at Gowen Field is key. Overseas is a complex environment. You have a lot of people on the radio and also you have moving targets and you are trying to destroy those targets," Captain Salo said describing his first annual training as an aviator. "There is no one thing you can do to prepare for battle. Training scenarios help with these situations."

The Annual Training mission begins with a three day flight from Houston, Texas to Boise, Idaho. The training takes place at Gowen Field. Once on the ground, crewmembers prep the helicopters for training scenarios. During the training, a total of 15 Apaches and 22 crews are tested on their ability to perform running and diving fire maneuvers as well as work on the tactics, techniques, and procedures they learned from their deployment in Iraq. Crewmembers must also pass an individual qualification and an aircraft qualification.



Above right- An Apache helicopter takes off from the forward arming and refueling point (FARP) and prepares for gunnery operations.

Above- Sgt. Robert Moses, 1-149 ARB and Spc. Joshua Huckfeldt, 1-149th ARB, both from Houston, Texas, load rocket simulators onto an Apache helicopter for gunnery exercises.



"This entire event is like a ballet out here," Major Scott Nicholas, battalion operations officer, 1-149th ARB said when describing what goes on inside the operations center. "We control the operations coming out of the FARP (forward arming and refueling point) and another team in the tower controls the training tables. There is some complexity to this operation and all of us must be synchronized in order to conduct operations successfully."

This is the third time the 1-149th ARB has utilized the training site at Gowen Field. According to Major Nicholas, Gowen Field is one of the best gunneries the Army has to offer and the annual training is an opportunity for all Soldiers of the 1-149th ARB to perform many of their mission essential tasks.

"Conducting attack helicopter operations and conduct reconnaissance operations, we've got those down, I believe. The great benefit of this training is the command and control aspect specifically deployment and redeployment operations," Major Nicholas said.

The 1-149th is a robust battalion made up of five companies, all of which have a significant role in Operation Southern Thunder. From the unit movement officer, to the cooks, to the armors and maintenance personnel, it takes an estimated 32 people to support two pilots firing gunnery. This complex movement is challenging, but also rewarding for all Soldiers.

"This annual training is a lot of work, but it is also a lot of fun," Sergeant Patrick Awomsu, Apache Armament, Electrical Systems Repairer, D Co. 1-149th ARB said. "We have Apaches moving through the FARP at a rapid pace. It is a challenge to get all of them loaded and ready for gunnery, but I enjoy being out here and able to do my job."

While these Apaches could be used for state missions there are no plans to mobilize overseas with these vehicles. Soon, the helicopters being tested at Operation Southern Thunder will be replaced with the Apache Longbow. The Longbow will provide the pilot with an upgraded computer and targeting system. This new Apache will also house an improved navigation system and velocity rate sensor. However, the basic flying principles will remain the same.

"I flew around 750 missions overseas, but I basically went straight from flight school to Iraq so this is the first annual training I have ever attended," Captain Salo said when asked about his experience on the range. "I have never experienced a training environment like this. For a co-pilot, it's where we really train to do our job."

Historic Mustangs Offer Ride Into The Past

By **Master Sgt. Gregory Ripps**
149th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

SAN ANTONIO, Texas - A small group of men stood together in the morning sun near the Kelly Field runway, scanning the clear sky for two fighter aircraft. Soon they could see two P-51 Mustangs approaching the field, the distinct hum of their Merlin engines announcing their approach. Their colorful markings identified them as belonging to distinct U.S. Army Air Forces units that had helped carry the air war from the skies of Great Britain to the blue over German-occupied Europe.

But wait! This wasn't 1944, but June 6, 2009. And the pilots, despite flight suits reflecting an earlier era, were civilians. Members of The Horsemen, a P-51 formation aerobatic demonstration team, the Mustang jockeys had come to provide rides for a handful of lucky enlisted members of the 149th Fighter Wing.

"We're glad to do something for you guys," said Dan Friedkin, who flew a blue-nosed P-51C named "Princess Elizabeth." Speaking of the military in a broader sense, he continued, "You do so much for us."

The Texas Air National Guard unit shares Kelly Field with Port San Antonio, and the Airmen shuttled to the civilian side of the runway, where the veteran aircraft and their pilots were cheerfully welcomed by Patrick Plott, director of operations for Atlantic Aviation Services, which frequently handles Transient Alert aircraft on weekends.

Five Airmen were chosen to take a ride by random drawing. It was literally a gift "out of the blue," and to mix metaphors, none of them looked the gift horse – a Mustang – in the mouth. Or maybe they did, in another sense, because they all seemed fascinated in different aspects of the 1940s aircraft. Their wing's own flying unit, the 182nd Fighter Squadron, flew versions of the P-51 (by then redesignated the F-51) in the late 1940s and the early 1950s, both before and after the squadron's deployment during the Korean War.

Now Senior Airman Jessica Harvey, 149th Medical Group; Tech. Sgt. Mark Hipp, 182nd Fighter Squadron; Master

Sgt. Keith Thomas, 149th Mission Support Flight; Master Sgt. Ed Wertke, 149th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron; Staff Sgt. Eric Wilson, 149th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office; and Staff Sgt. Jason Wyatt, 149th Maintenance Squadron, had their chance to fly inside a P-51.

Each ride took place in the back seat of the D-model, piloted by Ed Shipley. A five-year member of the demonstration team, Shipley has chalked up a total of 2,500 flying hours with about 100 in the aircraft with the black and white checker board patterned nose scheme he flew this day. Flying south and east of Kelly Field, and refueling once on a civilian airfield near Castroville, Texas, he provided his passengers with a range of maneuvers including a barrel roll and a loop.

"That was awesome," said Sergeant Hipp, a flight safety and egress specialist. "That was so cool." He wouldn't compare it with a ride in one of the wing's F-16s except to say the modern fighter aircraft was "way louder."

Sergeant Wertke described his ride as a person who knows vintage warbirds. A flightline expediter in the Air Guard, he has worked many years helping to restore and maintain World War II aircraft in the Commemorative Air Force.

"[The P-51D] is rock solid and tracks great," said Sergeant Wertke. "It was a fast, smooth ride."

Mr. Friedkin said the checker-nosed P51D had been restored 15 years ago and "Princess Elizabeth" seven years ago, although his group acquired that latter aircraft only about a year ago. He noted that both aircraft keep as many of the original parts as safety factors allowed and that they both sported authentic color schemes. When not engaged in air shows or Air Force Heritage Flights, the two P-51s are kept with others on a ranch near Eagle Pass, Texas. Obviously enthusiastic about the P-51 Mustang, he encourages anyone interested to check his group's Web site at www.asb.tv.

"Flying P-51s is a hobby and a passion," said Mr. Friedkin. "I use any excuse I can to go fly."

Fortunately, Guardsmen of the 149th Fighter Wing were available this time.



Above left- Tech. Sgt. Mark Hipp of the 149th Fighter Wing straps into the back seat of a P-51D Mustang with the help of pilot Ed Shipley. Sergeant Hipp was one of five members of the wing to receive a ride in the vintage aircraft out of San Antonio's historic Kelly Field June 6. (Texas Military Forces photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Wilson)

Above right- A P-51D with a member of the 149th Fighter Wing in the back seat taxis into position on Kelly Field June 6. The two-seat Mustang offered rides to five enlisted Guardsmen of the 149th Fighter Wing. (Texas Military Forces photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Wilson)

Over 700 Schools Partner with VA to Help Veterans Pay for Education

VA Press Release

WASHINGTON - The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced today that it has entered into more than 700 agreements with institutions of higher learning across the nation to participate in the Post-9/11 GI Bill's "Yellow Ribbon Program."

Many schools signed agreements for participation in not only undergraduate programs, but graduate and doctoral programs as well. Some schools entered into one agreement that covered all their campuses throughout the United States.

"VA is very pleased with the wide-spread interest in the program," said Under Secretary for Benefits Patrick W. Dunne. "We strongly encourage any interested universities to formally sign-up with the agency before the June 15 deadline to ensure participation in the 2009-2010 academic year."

The Yellow Ribbon Program is a provision of the Post-9/11 GI Bill that allows degree-granting institutions to voluntarily enter into a formal agreement with VA to fund tuition and fee expenses that exceed the highest public, in-state undergraduate rates.

The institution can contribute up to 50 percent of those expenses and VA will match this additional funding for eligi-

ble students. This may enable qualified students to potentially attend school tuition-free.

This program is reserved for participants at the 100 percent benefit level, specifically those who have served at least 36 months on active duty or served at least 30 continuous days and were discharged due to a service-related injury.

Congress intended the Yellow Ribbon Program to be utilized by universities to make up the difference in the costs for out-of-state, private or graduate tuition, although some institutions may choose not to participate.

Some universities have announced their desire to participate in the program but have not signed a formal agreement with VA, which is required under federal law. VA suggests schools interested in the program contact the Department or visit our Web site for more information.

The Post-9/11 GI Bill, passed by Congress last year, is the most extensive educational assistance program authorized since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944.

The maximum benefit allows every eligible Veteran, servicemember, reservist, and National Guard member an opportunity to receive an in-state, undergraduate education at a public institution at

no cost. Provisions of the program include payments for tuition and fees, housing, and a books and supplies stipend.

Benefits are payable for training pursued on or after August 1, 2009. The tuition and fee benefit is paid directly to the school and is not meant to exceed the established (or actual) in-state charges at a public institution.

With the large numbers of Veterans and servicemembers expected to sign-up for the new Post-9/11 GI Bill program, VA projects a 20 to 25 percent increase in the total number of participants in VA's education programs.

VA has received more than 60,000 claims for education benefits during the first five weeks since Veterans and service members could apply online. Up to 460,000 students are expected to participate in the program during the first year.

For information on specific schools participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program, go to www.gibill.va.gov/GI_Bill_Info/CH33/YRP/YRP_List.htm.

Additional information about the Post-9/11 GI Bill and Yellow Ribbon Program, as well as VA's other educational benefit programs, can be obtained by visiting VA's Web site www.gibill.va.gov or by calling 1-888-GIBILL-1 (or 1-888-442-4551).

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: Why should I call the Lifeline?



The **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** is a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in suicidal crisis. If you need help, please dial 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You will be routed to the closest possible crisis center in your area. With more than 130 crisis centers across the country, our mission is to provide immediate assistance to anyone seeking mental health services. Call for yourself, or someone you care about. Your call is free and confidential.

Para obtener asistencia en español durante las 24 horas, llame al **1-888-628-9454**.

From immediate suicidal crisis to information about mental health, crisis centers in our network are equipped to take a wide range of calls. Some of the reasons to call 1-800-273-TALK are listed below.

- Call to speak with someone who cares.
- Call if you feel you might be in danger of hurting yourself.
- Call to find referrals to mental health services in your area.
- Call to speak to a crisis worker about someone you're concerned about.

Camp Mabry Prepares For Next Hurricane With DICE

By Elizabeth Cohen

Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas (June 8, 2009) – The Department of Defense Interoperability Communications Exercise, or DICE, was a four-day long event at Camp Mabry. This exercise included over 25 agencies participating on state, local and national levels, many of whom were communication experts who sought to test emergency communication through a simulation of hurricane conditions.

Situated on Camp Mabry's parade field was a double line of vans, representing the first responders in the event of a natural disaster. Towards the center sat Sprint/Nextel's Satellite Cell on Light Truck or SatCOLT, a vehicle designed to give a satellite-powered version of cell phone service to the hundred wireless handsets that Sprint had brought and charged for DICE. These were used in the exercise to simulate downed cell phone towers and snapped power lines.

"We are here to support the other units," said Lee Martin, Raytheon Director of DoD Sales. He and his team ensured that the radio systems of the first responders were tied together, so they could talk to one another. "Everyone has their own system," Martin added. "[but they] all have to talk on a common network." Raytheon gear provided this synergy.

"This is what tax dollars get you," said Cary Snyder, Technical Support Manager of Sprint's Emergency Response Team, as he indicated the emergency response vans around his SatCOLT.

The inside of the vans were equipped with all the technology that each specific agency would need to complete their part in a natural disaster setting. Some, such as the Texas General Land Office, were visiting with communications consultants about upgrading their technology. "We are here to learn," said Greg Pollock, Deputy Commissioner of Oil Spill Prevention and Response of the TGLO. He and his team were there to observe, and thus were not actively scripted into the exercise, Pollock added.

Chief Jack Colley, Division of Emergency Management, Office of the Governor, arrived on the final day of the exercise to discuss the objectives of DICE. "This exercise is extremely important because it shows the efforts of about eight years of not only funding but deployment of equipment across the state and our capability to work together as a team throughout the entire state of Texas. Our focus is on a single effort which is to provide a rapid and orderly response to any event," Colley said.

Chief Colley was briefed on the event by Col. Kevin Turnbo, J6/Chief Information Officer. According to Col Turnbo, the DICE program consists of five phases: check-in, staging, training, and the breakdown and after-action report. Col Turnbo said that: "The after-action reports resulting from this training should prove invaluable to operators during the coming hurricane season." The DICE exercise shows that many state, local and national organizations and first responders to disaster situations are gearing themselves up for the hurricane season.



Camp Mabry's parade ground was transformed into a state-of-the-art mobile communications park during the DICE exercise being conducted here June 1-4, 2009. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Eric Wilson, Texas Military Forces Public Affairs)

Department of Labor- Transition Assistance Seminar: Resume Support and More

WHO: All Texas Military Forces, Reserve Components, Veterans and their Spouses

WHAT: Department of Labor- Transition Assistance Seminar

WHEN: July 11-12, 2009. Saturday 9:00-3:00pm and Sunday 9:00-12:30pm

WHERE: 1775 California Crossing, Dallas, TX 75220

WHY: Resume support; know your benefits, career enhancing support, file VA claims.

The National Guard, Department of Labor, Texas Veterans Commission, and your Transition Assistance Advisors are working together to provide you a day and half Seminar free of charge. Attend in lieu of drill, IDT credit with Commander's approval. Spouses also invited to attend this FREE Seminar. POC: Please contact Harvey King at (512) 463-2815 or king.harvey@dol.gov or Jacinda Johnson at (512) 782-1201 or jacinda.johnson@ng.army.mil to reserve your spot.



Letter to Airmen

Michael B. Donley
Secretary of the Air Force

Thursday, June 18, 2009

Teamwork

Earlier this year General Schwartz and I had the privilege of presenting the Air Force Cross, the Air Force's highest distinction of valor in combat, to Staff Sergeant Zachary Rhyner for his efforts on April 6, 2008 in Afghanistan. Family, friends and comrades gathered to honor the extraordinary heroism of Sergeant Rhyner and his Joint teammates -- and to be reminded of the remarkable tenacity of the American warrior. Like all of America's Airmen, Sergeant Rhyner's story is one of **teamwork** -- teamwork that began well before combat started.

As Sergeant Rhyner and his Army teammates fought their long and grueling battle, they were not alone! Contributions came from many corners and Services. Acquisition professionals and industry partners ensured that the team deployed with reliable and effective equipment. Veterans of recent expeditionary operations ensured that the team's tactics, techniques and procedures were first-rate by passing on hard-won knowledge. Finally, combat power from the skies above helped secure the team's position by multiplying their firepower.

This remarkable experience reminds us that teamwork starts with YOU. By joining the Air Force, you have joined a cause greater than yourself -- one where success comes from collective efforts. Daily, you build on a rich legacy of Americans who pooled their talent to change the world -- from launching American military aviation with the Wright Flyer ... to catapulting the Project Mercury astronauts into space ... to being a critical component of the Joint cyber team. And, while domains of air, space and cyberspace continually evolve, our heritage demonstrates that teamwork is the linchpin of success.

We have added Sergeant Rhyner to a long list of distinguished Airmen -- rightfully so, as the actions of his Joint team reflect the finest traditions of American warriors in battle. In the process, we are reminded that *all* Air Force stories -- including your own -- begin with Airmen who commit to working together to serve our Nation. Thank you for all that you do for our continued success as a Total Force team.


Michael B. Donley
Secretary of the Air Force

Time for Summer Fun, Not Summer Madness

By Maj. Steve Keihl

Behavioral Health Team

Somewhere in my Iraq photo collection, there is a picture of me standing next to my vehicle with a thermometer reading 156 degrees Fahrenheit. Yuck!

Maybe the thermometer wasn't working properly, but I can clearly recall that it was HOT! It may not be 156 degrees today, but let's face it, summertime in the Lone Star State can get pretty hot and uncomfortable at times. Dealing with the heat is just one challenge for many during the summer months. During the summer, most children have an extended break from school and many families plan special summer vacations and trips. You may be asking, how does the heat or family vacations relate to mental health?

The connection exists. For many years both professionals in the medical and psychological communities have explored the connection between physical and mental health. While there is a great deal of debate regarding which impacts the other more definitively, the connection between physical health and mental health is real and very important.

The summer months often include spikes related to certain mental health oriented struggles. In fact, one recent study even claims that the extended summer months could actually serve as a trigger for suicidal behavior. Wow! So what is the deal? Why is there a potential for problems during the summer and what can we do to combat these issues? Keep reading...

As stated previously, our physical and mental health are linked. During the summer months, schedules often adjust (sometimes significantly), nutritional standards shift, and even our sleep patterns vary more frequently. In other words, we often create our own physical and mental challenges/problems by failing to maintain healthy controls over our lives during the hot summer months. Follow these three TIPS for a more happy and healthy summer!



Tip #1 : Monitor Your Schedule/Calendar. The summer months often include extended vacations and changes to our normal schedule.

If you have kids off school, this is especially relevant. During the summer it is important to monitor the personal schedule/calendar and create a healthy balance. Some people and families are guilty of overextending themselves, planning too many activities, and staying too busy during the summer months.

Many experts recommend a less rigid schedule during the summer months in order to compensate for some of the school year stresses and pressures. Constant activity can lead to anxiety, impact immune function, and cause problems both with physical and mental health.

The opposite extreme is equally problematic. While the summer heat may tempt one to spend hours upon hours in the air conditioned comfort of their home watching TV or playing on the computer, this is not healthy either. We need to maintain appropriate levels of physical activity and exercise.

Take a look at your summer calendar for the next two weeks. What does it look like? If it is overloaded with events, programs, activities and gatherings, you may need to cut back a little. If it is completely empty, it might be a good idea to schedule 2-3 activities.

Tip #2 : Manage Your Diet. Another area that is often problematic during the summer months is management of proper nutritional intake. Many people fill their menus with soft drinks, hot dogs, summer treats, more alcohol, ice cream, etc. Kids especially struggle with major changes to their diets. Many spend more time at fast food restaurants and the twists and turns of summer schedules often create longer gaps in between meals leading to binge eating.

Another common struggle is late night snacking during the summer months. Good nutrition is important the whole year round. Enjoying the tastes of the summer does not equal a total destruction of healthy habits and nutritional guidelines. Once again, nutrition is important for both physical and mental health!

Tip #3 : Maintain Healthy Sleep Patterns. This might be the most important tip of all. Summer months often lead to variations of sleep patterns. Kids stay up later and get up later. Working adults get sucked into the summer pleasures and find themselves staying up too late, especially on work days. Sometimes the activity in the house makes it tough to go to sleep or stay asleep.

Disruption to sleep patterns is associated with a host of physical and mental problems and disorders. We need to get our beauty sleep. We need to make sure that in the midst of our summer fun, we do not neglect proper and healthy sleep patterns.

Make your summer an exciting and wonderful time! Watch your schedule and be sure you are maintaining a healthy balance of activity and rest. Keep your diet under control... enjoy yummy summer treats, but do so in moderation while maintaining a healthy and balanced diet. Get your sleep! If you follow these three simple tips for the summer, you improve your chances of a healthy and happy one!

A TRICARE Reminder About Covered Infertility Treatments

Falls Church, Va. – Infertility is a difficult condition for families to cope with. Many TRICARE beneficiaries may be wondering what their options are if they find themselves in a situation where infertility becomes an issue. The answer is, with a few important exceptions, TRICARE covers most infertility treatments.

Diagnostic services to identify physical illnesses or injuries to the reproductive system are covered for both men and women. Infertility treatments, corrective treatments and surgeries for women are also covered. However, treatment of male infertility including erectile dysfunction may be cost shared, which is determined on a case by case basis.

Therapies covered by TRICARE include hormonal treatment, corrective

surgery, antibiotics, administration of human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG) or radiation therapy depending on the cause. These therapies are covered for both sexes.

Treatments excluded from TRICARE coverage include in-vitro fertilization (IVF) for women. Reversal of surgical sterilization is not covered for either sex.

Although TRICARE does not cover IVF, there are four military treatment facilities (MTF) where IVF medical training programs are conducted. The four MTFs are: Wilford Hall Medical Center in San Antonio; Tripler Army Medical Center in Honolulu; Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C.; and the Naval Medical Center in San Diego. Beneficiaries who participate in these programs will

be responsible for all MTF costs.

These IVF programs are available to military members and their families. However, the IVF treatments are not covered by TRICARE and beneficiaries are responsible for all costs.

Get more information on covered infertility treatments by visiting your TRICARE regional contractor's Web site:

Health Net Federal Services (North Region) <https://www.hnfs.net/bene/home>

Humana Military Healthcare Services (South region) <http://www.humana-military.com/>

TriWest Healthcare Alliance (West region) <http://www.triwest.com>

Don't Trip Up: Keep Immunizations Updated for Safe Summer Travel

By Mrs. Patricia Opong-Brown
TRICARE Management Activity

With Memorial Day weekend in the rearview mirror, the summer travel season is shifting into high-gear. While many families will choose destinations within the United States, TRICARE reminds beneficiaries choosing overseas locations to make sure their immunizations are up-to-date.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends travelers receive vaccinations to protect themselves. When it comes to suggested travel immunizations, the CDC has three categories: routine; recommended and required.

Routine vaccinations protect against diseases that are uncommon in the U.S. but common in other parts around the world. This is why the U.S. has a routine immunization schedule for all stages of life starting with childhood immunizations. Recommended vaccinations guard travelers against illnesses found in other parts of the world so they don't bring these diseases back home. Required vaccinations are certified on a traveler's immunization card to show a record of the vaccine at customs before entering the country.

The necessary immunizations depend on a variety of factors such as the traveler's age, health status, past immunizations and, of course, the destination. Other considerations include whether the traveler is pregnant, breastfeeding, traveling with infants or children, or if they have a compromised immune system due to illness such as diabetes or HIV.

If beneficiaries have overseas travel plans, the TRICARE

Management Activity (TMA) recommends they talk with their primary care manager (PCM) to determine exactly which immunizations are required for their destination. According to the CDC, it's best to schedule a PCM visit at least four to six weeks before traveling, as many immunizations take time to effectively

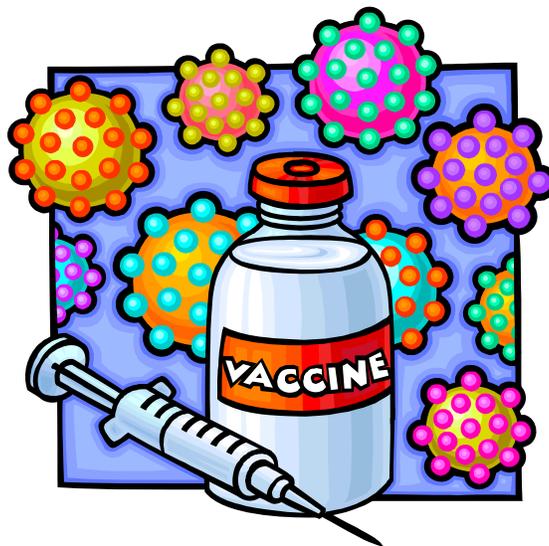
guard against diseases, and some may require a series of vaccinations.

TRICARE covers age-appropriate doses of vaccines, as recommended by the CDC. Immunizations for active duty family members whose sponsors have permanent change of station orders to overseas locations are also covered. Beneficiaries can check with their PCM or regional contractor to determine if the immunization they need is covered.

When traveling to some islands in the Caribbean, the CDC recommends the Hepatitis A vaccine. Hepatitis A is a viral infection that affects the liver. When traveling to certain countries in Africa and South America, International Health Regulations require the yellow fever vaccine. To enter

these countries a traveler's International Certificate of Vaccination, also known as the "yellow health card," must be stamped with a vaccination certificate to show proof of the yellow fever vaccine. Yellow fever is a disease spread to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes.

TRICARE wants all beneficiaries to have fun and stay healthy this summer. For more information about travel vaccinations, travelers should speak with their PCM or log onto www.cdc.gov/travel. To learn more about TRICARE immunization coverage go to the "Covered Services" section under the Medical tab at <http://tricare.mil/mybenefit/>.



News Briefs

Japan Apologizes for Bataan

The Japanese Ambassador to the U.S., Ichiro Fujisaki, spoke at the 64th reunion of the American Defenders of Bataan and Corregidor (<http://www.west-point.org/family/adbc/>) in San Antonio recently and offered an apology to veterans and their families for the Bataan Death March. About 73 surviving Bataan Death March veterans of the Army and former Army Air Corps, some of them bedridden, were in attendance. This may be the first time Japan has formally apologized to the veterans since the

Death March was conducted more than 67 years ago, although Japanese leaders generally repeat a landmark statement of apology approved by the cabinet in 1995 on the 50th anniversary of Emperor Hirohito's surrender when discussing the Bataan Death March. For more information, including educational materials, visit the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force Bataan Death March Fact Sheet at <http://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=3667> and PBS's Bataan Rescue website at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/bataan/>

VA Reopening Health Care Enrollment to Thousands of Veterans

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), which now has nearly 8 million Veterans enrolled in its award-winning health care system, is poised to welcome nearly 266,000 more Veterans into its medical centers and clinics across the country by expanding access to health care enrollment for certain Veterans who had been excluded due to their income.

“This incremental approach to expanding enrollment ensures that access to VA health care for a greater number of beneficiaries does not sacrifice timely access or quality medical care for those Veterans already enrolled in VA’s health care system,” Dr. Gerald Cross, VA’s Acting Under Secretary for Health, said. “Over the next four years, we hope to provide enroll-

ment to more than 500,000 Veterans.”

Under a new regulation effective June 15, VA will enroll Veterans whose income exceeds current means-tested thresholds by up to 10 percent. These Veterans were excluded from VA health care enrollment when income limits were imposed in 2003 on Veterans with no service-connected disabilities or other special eligibility for care. There is no income limit for Veterans with compensable service-connected disabilities or for Veterans being seen for their service-connected disabilities.

Veterans who have applied for VA health care but were rejected due to income at any point in 2009 will have their applications reconsidered under the new income threshold formula. Those who applied before 2009, but were rejected due to in-

come, must reapply. VA will contact these Veterans through a direct-mail campaign, Veterans service organizations, and a national and regional marketing campaign.

Information about enrollment and an income and assets calculator are available at www.va.gov/healtheligibility. The calculator provides a format in which Veterans enter their household income, number of dependents, and zip codes to see if they may qualify for VA health care enrollment.

In addition to applying online, Veterans may also contact VA’s Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222 VETS (1-877-222-8387). Each VA medical center across the country has an enrollment coordinator available to provide Veterans with enrollment and eligibility information.

VA Enhancing Injury, Recovery Lab for Veterans with Traumatic Brain Injuries

WACO, Texas – To improve the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)’s capabilities to conduct research that will benefit America’s Veterans and their families, VA will combine its Brain Injury and Recovery Laboratory in Austin, Texas, with the VA’s Center of Excellence for Research on Returning War Veterans in Waco, Texas.

“This move will place our laboratory in an ideal location that will allow us to better serve our nation’s military families and Veterans,” Dr. Gerald Cross, VA’s Acting Under Secretary for Health, said. “This program

consolidation will enable VA to meet its mission of better understanding brain injuries and to help Veterans recover from such injuries.”

Moving the laboratory will allow Veterans easier access to VA hospitals in Waco and in Temple, Texas, and will also enable them to work with servicemembers stationed at Ft. Hood, Texas —the largest U.S. Army installation in the world.

Researchers will also have access to the world’s most powerful research magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machine, which is located in Waco at the Center of Excellence. All re-

searchers currently working in Austin have started research either at the Center of Excellence for Research on Returning War Veterans or at other research facilities at the Central Texas Veterans Health Care System in Temple.

The Waco VA Medical Center has several construction projects scheduled in the future, which will further enhance the capabilities of the Center of Excellence. “This groundbreaking research project is an important part of realizing our goal of making the Waco VA a world-class PTSD and mental health care research cen-

ter,” Rep. Chet Edwards (D-Waco) said in a January 2008 Research and Development Article. “It is one of the few programs in the country focused on the links between genes and brain anatomy in the development of PTSD and mental illness in our combat soldiers.”

VA looks forward to fulfilling this commitment to our Veterans with this new program enhancement. For more information please go to www.heartoftexas.va.gov or contact Diana Struski at 817-739-3989.

This Month in Military History: July

The USO was formed in 1941 in response to a request from President Franklin D. Roosevelt who determined it would be best if private organizations handled the on-leave recreation needs of the rapidly growing U.S. armed forces. Roosevelt's call to action led six civilian agencies to coordinate their civilian war efforts and resources to form a new organization – the USO (United Service Organizations). The six civilian agencies were the Salvation Army, Young Men's Christian Association, Young Women's Christian Association, National Catholic Community Services, National Travelers Aid Association and the National Jewish Welfare Board. The USO was incorporated in New York February 4, 1941. The USO is a private, nonprofit organization, supported by private citizens and corporations.



December of 1966 found Bob Hope and his indefatigable USO Show troupers entertaining off the shores of Vietnam.

Throughout World War II, the USO was the channel for community participation in the war effort. In more than 3,000 communities, USO centers were established to become the GIs "Home Away from Home." Between 1940 and 1944, U.S. troops grew from 50,000 to 12 million, and their need for a variety of services grew accordingly. USO facilities were quickly opened in such unlikely places as churches, log cabins, museums, castles, barns, beach and yacht clubs, railroad sleeping cars, old mansions and storefronts.

At its high point in 1944, the USO had more than 3,000 clubs. USOs could be many things to many people: a lively place to dance and meet people; a place to see movies or find religious counsel; a quiet place to talk or write letters; and, of course, a place to go for free coffee and doughnuts.

From 1941 to 1947, USO Camp Shows presented an amazing 428,521 performances. In 1945, curtains were rising 700 times a day to audiences as large as 15,000 and as small as 25 on some outposts all over the world. More than 7,000 entertainers traveled overseas. During World War II, Americans had come together as never before. By war's end, the USO could claim that more than 1.5 million volunteers had worked on its behalf.

Civilian agencies, National Guard Roll DICE for Hurricane Prep

By Maritza Vargas

Texas Military Forces Press Release

Camp Mabry, Austin, TX (1 June, 2009) – With hurricane season upon us, the Defense Interoperability Communications Exercise (DICE) prepares state, federal, and local military forces, as well as business agencies for crucial communication capabilities during emergency situations. The training exercise, hosted by North Communications will take place over four days, and is meant as an interoperability exercise between 40 agencies and roughly 160 people.

Tests designed to verify communication networks between all participants are being conducted throughout the event. The training will help local, state, and federal agencies exercise communication capabilities and learn how to communicate with each other, said Col. Kevin A. Turnbo, J6 CIO. "It will be able to identify tactical communication facilities in Texas, prioritize communication placement, and provide practice ability," Colonel Turnbo added.

Participants began arriving at Camp Mabry Monday in order to set up tents and equipment. Local, state, and national representatives and agencies such as Sprint, AT&T, Verizon, Raytheon, and Cisco went through a staging area where their information and resources were entered into an index. This information was then used by the Communication Coordination Group (CCG), located in building 33 at Camp Mabry, to match resources and assets during the training.

While the CCG remained the central hub for all communication activity during DICE, the command tent located on the camp's parade field acted as the tactical forward center during the actual exercises. The tent also serves as a facility for training classes, orientation, and meetings. Surrounding the tent are the communication centers of other agencies, fully equipped with communication devices used in real, emergency situations. The event was significant due to its "direct benefit to the hurricane season," said Brian Attaway, the Agency Administrator of the event.

Agencies such as Sprint, AT&T, and Verizon played a vital role in the exercise, due to their mobile communication abilities. Because cell towers usually get knocked down during hurricanes, rescuers and officials are forced to rely on mobile towers and satellites to communicate with one another. An example of such a cell tower was provided by Sprint and located on the parade field amidst all other communication tents. Sprint also issued a hundred mobile phones during the exercise.

Also included in the exercise, was Texas Army National Guard Armory in Midland, TX, which was connected directly to the CCG via link radio networks provided by Raytheon.





Col. Lee Henry (left), commander of the 56th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Multi-National Division—Baghdad, renders the oath of enlistment to Spc. Timothy Vaden during a re-enlistment ceremony at Camp Victory, June 2. Vaden, from Saginaw, Texas, is an infantryman serving with Company D, 2nd Battalion 142nd Infantry Regiment, 56th IBCT on his first tour to Iraq. Vaden re-enlisted for six additional years in the Texas Army National Guard. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Kendrick 56th IBCT PAO, MND-B)