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Sgt. Todd Plybon, injured in an IED attack in October of 2009, received a watch as a thank you for the time he has spent serving his nation.



Cover—Texas National Guard Special Forces Soldiers prepare for training at Hurlburt Field in Florida. Photo by Staff Sgt. Malcolm McClendon, Texas Military Forces Public Affairs)

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The DISPATCH

Vol. 5, No. 12 December 2010

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• *'Real Warriors' TBI Campaign*

The Traumatic Brain Injury "Real Warriors" Campaign provides resources and tools for veterans seeking treatment for invisible wounds of war. The Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health launched the Real Warriors campaign to promote building resilience, facilitating recovery and supporting reintegration of returning servicemembers, veterans and their families. The program also works to combat the stigma associated with seeking psychological health care and treatment. For more information, visit the Real Warriors Campaign website, at <http://www.realwarriors.net/>, the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health website at <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/>, and DoD's Warrior Care webpage at http://www.defense.gov/home/features/warrior_care/.

• *2011 Air Force Warrior Games*

The Air Force is seeking 25 warriors to compete in the 2011 Warrior Games, an Olympic-style competition open to wounded, ill and injured military members and veterans. Approximately 200 warriors from all services will compete in the event, which will be held May 16 through 21 in Colorado Springs, Colo., with training camps scheduled in February and May. Athletes will compete in archery, cycling, basketball, shooting, swimming, track and field and volleyball. People interested in applying should do so immediately by calling the Air Force Wounded Warrior office at 800-581-9437. The application deadline is Dec. 16, 2010. For more information about the Games, visit the 2011 Warrior Games website at <http://usparalympics.org/usoc-paralympic-military-program/warrior-games-presented-by-deloitte>.

• *New Army Wounded Warrior Website*

The Army Warrior Transition Command has launched a new website at ww.WTC.army.mil, which is designed to be a comprehensive source of information on Army warrior care. The website contains information on: (1) the Army Physical Disability Evaluation System; (2) the Army Wounded Warrior Program (AW2) at www.AW2.army.mil, (3) the Comprehensive Transition Plan; (4) career and education training options; and (5) resources for families and caregivers. WTC also provides additional information on warrior care on the WTC blog at <http://wtc.armylive.dodlive.mil/>.

• *Operation Home Cooking at Lackland AFB*

For the 35th year, San Antonio, Texas area families can brighten the holidays for Air Force basic trainees through Operation Homecooking. The program gives local families the opportunity to share their traditional Thanksgiving Day with basic trainees. Families within a 30-mile radius of Lackland may invite two trainees by calling (210) 671-5453/5454/3701 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Trainees can also be requested via the Operation Homecooking website. Hosts must pick up trainees at the Basic Military Training Reception Center, Bldg. 7246, between 7 and 11 a.m. Thanksgiving Day. All basic trainees must be returned to the base by 7 p.m. For more information, visit the Operation Homecooking webpage. For more information visit <http://www.lackland.af.mil/homecook/>.

• *PTSD Resources for Veterans*

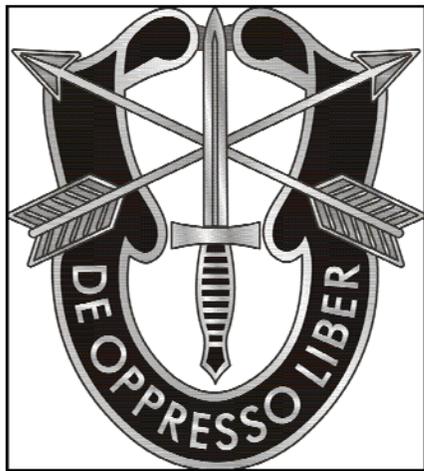
For those who bear the burden of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), whether Veteran or family member, the Department of Veterans' Affairs has a wide range of VA's National Center for PTSD website at <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>. Additionally, the Veteran Combat Call Center is available 24/7 at 1-877-927-8387.

• *United Through Reading*

United Through Reading offers servicemembers the chance to read to their children every day. The reading is recorded onto a DVD and sent with a copy of the book to the servicemember's child. Deployed servicemembers can go to more than 60 USO locations, or 200 other Department of Defense sites, to record themselves reading a book to their children. Deployed servicemembers are not limited to just one book on one occasion. Servicemembers can read a book for each of their children, and participate at as many locations as they like. For more information and to find participation locations worldwide, visit the United Through Reading website at <http://www.unitedthroughreading.org/military/>.



ON THE ROPES...



Members of the Texas Army National Guard 19th Special Forces Group participate in a joint exercise with the Air Force in Florida and Alabama. The team practiced fast roping off UH-60

Blackhawk helicopters at Hurlburt Field, Fla. in preparation for night assaults at Anniston Army Depot, Ala. The joint exercise also included A-10 Warthog and C-130 Hercules air support. *(Photos by Staff Sgt. Malcolm McClendon, Texas Military Forces Public Affairs.)*

Army training center preps last division HQ deploying to Iraq

By Maj. Eric Verzola
Operations Group Alpha, Battle Command Training Program

JOINT BASE LEWIS-McCHORD, Wash., (11/23/10) -- Operations Group Alpha trained the Texas National Guard's 36th Infantry Division for upcoming operations in southern Iraq.

The citizen-Soldiers from the "Arrowhead" Division will deploy to southern Iraq later this year. It is the last division headquarters scheduled to deploy to southern Iraq in Operation New Dawn.

The mission rehearsal exercise (MRX) was conducted by Operations Group Alpha, Battle Command Training Program (BCTP) here at the Battle Command Training Center.

Based at Fort Leavenworth, Kan., the U.S. Army's Battle Command Training Program prepares commanders and their staffs for war-fighting overseas and in the contemporary operations environment.

The exercise consisted of two phases. The first phase began on Oct. 18 and lasted two weeks. It was followed by a mid-exercise assess-

ment, Phase II, which started on Nov. 8 and ended

today.

The 36th, with observation and training assistance from BCTP, will assist in the turnover of over 26 U.S. bases in its area of operations to the Iraqi government as the drawdown of U.S. troops proceeds.

The Arrowhead Division has a long history of fighting in Europe during World War I, freeing prisoners from German concentration camps in World War II, and assisting fellow citizens during natural disasters. It is uniquely prepared to make this transition with the government of Iraq.

As a National Guard unit, its ranks are filled with citizen-Soldiers from varying real-life occupations and backgrounds, which aptly prepare them to assist in transferring security and civil institutions to the government and people of Iraq.

The divisional area of operations will include Basra, in the south of Iraq, and facilitate the withdrawal of

troops and equipment. As with previous coalition units in the area, the 36th will continue to advise and assist Iraqi security forces, including the Iraqi army, police and department of border enforcement.

Some in the unit have likened the period that the 36th is entering

to the Marshall Plan, which followed in the aftermath of WWII. The Marshall Plan saw significant U.S. technical and economic assistance to European countries in an effort to spur economic growth and political stability.

During the recent mission rehearsal exercise here, the unit dealt with a scenario that included civil unrest, infrastructure and road challenges, reduced number of forces, interaction with State Department personnel, drawdown of forces, and stability operations, all while continuing to foster partnership with Iraqis.

To better prepare the unit, the exercise involved the expertise of Iraqi role players and leaders from the 1st Infantry Division, the unit that the 36th will be replacing.

Maj. Pat Wentz, an engineer observer/trainer for OPSGRP Alpha, said he was impressed by the unit's innovation and tactical skills. "I was able to assist the 36th in refining their primary task of basing, infrastructure development, current operations and plans," he said. "They have developed a great tool for tracking route clearance with their area of operations during this exercise."

Col. Jack Flowers, commander of OPSGRP Alpha, said he is proud of Operations Group Alpha, which arrived a week prior to Phase I of the four-week exercise.

"Their hard work to prepare the 36th for this historic mission will have a lasting effect in forming an enduring strategic partnership with the government of Iraq," he said. "They did a superb job in executing the MRX and preparing the division staff here in JBLM."



Maj. Eric Verzola, an Operations Group Alpha public affairs observer/trainer, meets Maj. Gen. Eddy Spurgin, the Texas National Guard's 36th Infantry Division commanding general, prior to his DVIDS training for the unit's Mission Rehearsal Exercise at Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash. (Photo by Melissa Stevens, Operations Group Alpha, Battle Command Training Program)



Inter-Agency Cooperation Fosters Success, Standards

**Story by Staff Sgt. Daniel Griego
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

The September 11th attacks "changed our world," said President George W. Bush. They inarguably changed the way we look at adversity and our own security. Just as much, and following also the devastation of Hurricane Katrina, these events changed the way we react to emergencies.

"No man is an island," said English poet John Donne. "Entire of itself, every man is a piece of the continent."

Now, more than ever, disparate agencies recognize the immeasurable value in coordinated responses to emergency situations. They recognize that no response force is an island of assistance.

In the wake of 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, the 2008 hurricane season saw Texas executing one of the best-orchestrated collaborations of emergency response in history.

"Envisioned as the mechanism to unite as many users as possible into a single cell," said Col. Robert E. Waters, director of operations, the Air Coordination Group in Texas can "accept mission taskings, formulate solutions among the members and ensure coordinated responses across all federal, state and participating private agencies."

Likewise, the Joint Task Force-71 "Minuteman Brigade" serves as the core command group for all of the Texas Military Forces, as well as supporting agencies.

"In a modern, post 9/11 environment, especially one with the constraints we face," said Craig Parkhill, Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) coordinator for JTF-71, "the interoperability of agencies is paramount to effectively protecting the citizens of our state and our country. JTF-71 is taking a leading role by exercising and coordinating with agencies across the state and across the nation."

This coordination extends further than being prepared for hurricanes and other natural disasters. Inter-agency cooperation is the watchword even in the most controlled of environments. The annual South Texas humanitarian mission, Operation Lone Star (OLS), for example, challenges the military and civil medical agencies to synchronize in a real-world mass-casualty exercise by providing free health care services to low-income families.

"At one level, we provide free care," said Dr. Brian R. Smith, lead for the public health agency sponsoring OLS and the regional medical director for Health Service Region 11. "At the same time, it provides a preparedness exercise for those of us in public health and the Texas Military Forces to work together and to practice together in a major event."

This practice of approaching a scheduled and planned operation from the standpoint of emergency response helps to prepare these departments that continue to build strong working relationships. Such was also the case when the JTF-71 practiced command and control over the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS) conference, held in August of this year in Austin, Texas.



Army Cpt. Steve Schippers of the 6th Civil Support Team coordinates with the incident commander, Chief Walker M. Veal, Chief of Police for the Killeen I.S.D. and Army Lt. Col. Jet Hays, commander for the 6th CST.

Harmonizing the scores of businesses, organizations and units in a smooth-operating conference tested both the management skills as well as the execution skills of the state's primary command and control asset.

Conferences and humanitarian missions aside, there's no substitution for the proper training in simulating a full-scale emergency situation, as when Central Texas conducted Operation Phantom Vigilance, a three day exercise in which the collective forces of Fort Hood, Killeen, Harker Heights and Austin engaged four separate incidents that stressed, tested and perfected our local and state assets.

Operation Phantom Vigilance featured the JTF-71's own 6th Civil Support Team (CST), confronting an undetonated vehicle born improvised explosive device (VBIED).

"Doing all of this always makes it worth while," said Army Cpt. Steve Schippers, operations officer for the 6th CST. "Every time we go out, we're meeting new people, interacting with different agencies, this time it was police, a lot of times it's fire."

Said Chad Berg, Emergency Management Coordinator with the Killeen Fire Department, "it tested all of our resources, all of our communications with other agencies. It really assisted us in making some changes and supporting some of the changes that we'd already noticed but needed the documentation to back up."

A new age of emergency response is upon us and no longer can a single department or outfit hope to react singularly to an incident. For Texas, and so many other states, cooperation is key to success and inter-agency coordination is the standard by which we measure that success.

With these new standards of achievement among our assets, never again will state or civil authorities be left unprepared or unsynchronized.

Take off running with the "All Guard Marathon Team"

WHO: Army and Air National Guard Members

WHAT: The Texas National Guard Marathon Team is looking for qualified runners to represent Texas at the 2011 National Guard Marathon event. Top finishers may be selected for a position on the "All Guard Marathon Team" which represents the Air/Army National Guard at several major running events across the Nation. To qualify for the team, you must meet the following:

- Have ran a full marathon (26.2 miles) since 1 January 2010 in a qualifying time.
- Males under 40 must have run under 4 hours
- Males over 40 must have run under 4 hours and 15 minutes
- Females must have run under 4 hours and 30 minutes

WHEN: 1 May 2011

WHERE: Lincoln, NE

POC is **CW2 Michael Long** at 512-782-5547 or michael.w.long@us.army.mil



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.

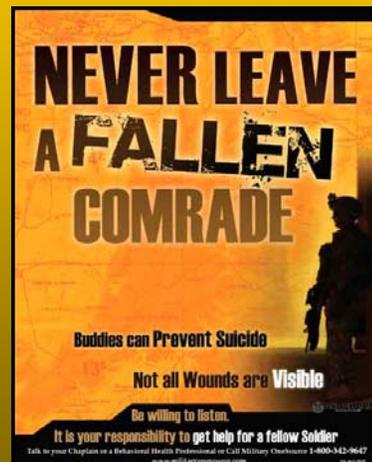
Authorized by legislation, the site is a pilot project to help service members deal with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other behavioral health conditions.

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.



NEW ANDROID APPS AVAILABLE FROM WWW.AFTERDEPLOYMENT.ORG— CHECK 'EM OUT!

Secretary Gates notes Guard partnership with Chile

*By John Banusiewicz
Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs*

SANTIAGO, Chile, (11/20/10) -- The Chilean military can offer a wealth of experience in disaster relief operations to the United States and other nations, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said here Nov. 20.

At a news conference with Chilean Defense Minister Jaime Ravinet following a 45-minute private meeting at the Gen. Bernardo O'Higgins Military Academy, Gates noted Chile's "fortitude and resilience" following natural disasters that interrupted celebration of the nation's bicentennial year.

"Americans were deeply impressed with the manner in which the Chilean government, military and people responded to the horrific earthquake and tsunami that struck in February," he said. "Losses were tragic, but would have been far worse without the swift and skillful response that saved many lives and rebuilt many communities.

"And then, of course, we all witnessed and cheered the extraordinary rescue of 33 trapped miners --- a tribute to the spirit, courage and ingenuity not only of those men, but of Chile as a nation," he added.

Noting that Ravinet visited him at the Pentagon in September, Gates said today's meeting was a welcome opportunity to discuss what Western Hemisphere nations can learn from Chile's experience and achievements in dealing with crises and natural disasters. The two defense leaders also discussed opportunities to further strengthen the bilateral military relationship between the two nations, he added.

"The United States and Chile share common values, interests, and the overarching goal of peace and stability in this hemisphere," Gates said. "Our two militaries have collaborated on defense modernization, and Chile has forged a partnership with the National Guard of the state of Texas to share experience in building capabilities in areas such as crisis response."

The secretary said he and Ravinet also discussed revitalizing multilateral institutions and spoke about the Conference of the Defense Ministers of the Americas, which they'll both attend in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, in the coming days.

"I believe this forum has a vital role to play in fostering cooperation between the governments and militaries of this hemisphere, allowing us to address those challenges [that] we all face, -- whether the fight against drugs, arms and human trafficking or the need to improve disaster response capabilities," Gates said.

The secretary said he's especially looking forward to discussions at the upcoming conference about creating a framework among Western Hemisphere nations to share information and expertise and deliver lifesaving capabilities more quickly and effectively than was possible following a massive earthquake in Haiti early this year.

"Chile can offer real experience and accomplishment in this area," the secretary said. "In addition to its domestic expertise, it's long been an important contributor to the multinational peacekeeping force in Haiti, playing a critical role in the United Nations stabilization mission there before and in the aftermath of the devastation."

Moving forward, the secretary said, the United States will continue to be grateful for the friendship and partnership of the Chilean people.

This afternoon, Gates and Ravinet visited Fort Lautaro, where they saw capabilities demonstrations of the Chilean military's special operations brigade in a variety of missions.

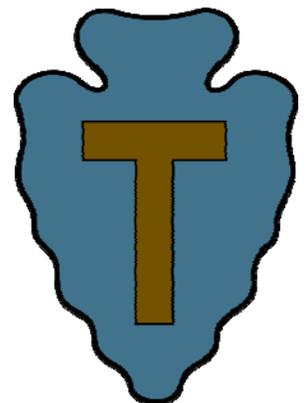


U.S. Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates, left, and Chilean Defense Minister Jaime Ravinet talk with the members of the Fuerte Lautaro, Chilean Special Forces, in Colina, Chile, Nov. 20, 2010. (DOD photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Jerry Morrison)

72nd IBCCT - home at last!



Soldiers of the 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team participate in an uncasing ceremony at Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, Saturday, November 20, 2010. In this ceremony, unit flags were unrolled, thereby symbolizing mission completion and readiness for more missions. More than 20 units of the 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team mobilized as part of one of the largest deployments of the Texas National Guard since World War II. (Photos courtesy of the 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team.)



36th Infantry Division: ready, willing

By Sgt. Jeremy Spires
36th Inf. Div. Public Affairs

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. - Soldiers of the 36th Infantry "Arrowhead" Division, Texas Army National Guard, came here in late September to begin the final stages of training for their deployment to southern Iraq, where they will serve as the headquarters of U.S. Division - South in support of Operation New Dawn.

Over the course of two months, as the weather turned from clear blue skies to rain and finally to snow, the Texas Guardsmen and women conducted back-to-back

mission readiness exercises at the Battle Command Training Center, where headquarters like the 36th's hone their skills in order to handle the complexities of managing stability operations in places like Iraq.

"The men and women of this division have been doing an outstanding job getting mission-ready for this historic deployment," said Maj. Gen. Eddy M. Spurgin, the division commander. "They have worked very hard and I have the utmost confidence in their ability to complete the mission ahead of them."

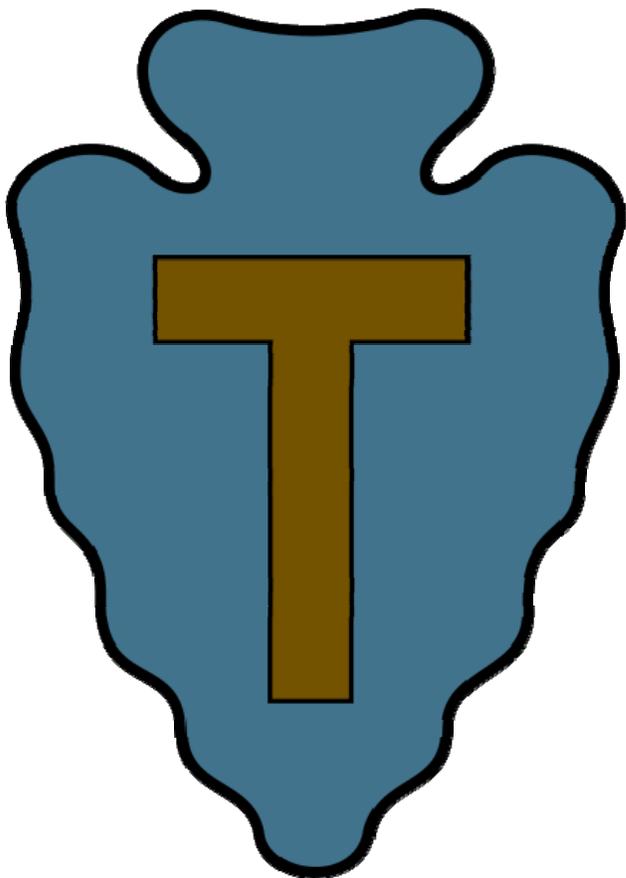
The 36th Division will be the third and last National Guard headquarters to deploy to Iraq since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003-an honor that was reflected in the comments and hard work of the division staff throughout the course of their training at the BCTC. The two exercises were designed to imitate, from the perspective of a division headquarters, as realistic an operational environment as the trainers could devise, including key leader engagements

and press conferences with Arabic-speaking role-players, as well as battle drills and a variety of other situations or incidents that could occur within the nine provinces of southern Iraq while the 36th Division is there.

Tactics, techniques, and procedures learned from past deployments-including those of the 1st Infantry Division, who the 36th Division will replace in January-were used during the exercises. They gave the division staff the unique opportunity to streamline their practices and procedures in reaction to anything that might happen while deployed.

"The scenarios are very realistic and challenging, plus we always need to be ready for the worst-case scenario," said Maj. Warren Kostencki, a native of Harker Heights, Texas, and officer-in-charge of the day shift for the division's current operations integration cell.

Arrowhead soldiers worked alongside counterparts from 1st Army Division-West, the 191st Training Brigade, and the 1st Infantry Division throughout the exercise. The trainers mentored the 36th staff in managing not only their own operations, but also the opera-



g and able for Operation New Dawn

tions of the advise-and-assist brigades currently located in the USD-S area of operations.

"They basically observe and teach us TTPs that they have seen used," said Major Kostencki.

"They are very sound in their doctrine and all of them are experienced in what we are doing here."

As the higher headquarters for a number of active-duty and reserve-component units deployed to southern Iraq, the 36th Division's primary responsibility will be helping manage the responsible drawdown of U.S. forces in advance of the Dec. 31, 2011, deadline, as well advising and assisting their partners in the Iraqi security forces.

"I know the division is ready for this responsibility," said General Spurgin. "The early mornings and long nights of training have really paid off."

The exercises also gave division leaders a chance to discuss and rehearse some of the actions needed to transition their mission to the U.S. State Department's new Basra consulate late next year—something that hasn't been done in recent memory and will likely be an historic first for a Na-

tional Guard division. The new Basra consulate will reportedly be the largest U.S. consulate in the world, with a staff of more than one thousand.

"While most U.S. military forces will be departing Iraq, it's important to remember that this does not signify a decline in our commitment to the people of Iraq," said General Spurgin. "Rather, it shows the readiness of our partners in the Iraqi security forces to take on the full scope of their responsibility for the security and stability of southern Iraq."

The second and final mission readiness exercises concluded in a comprehensive after action review attended by the Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr.

When it came to the 36th Division's upcoming mission, General Casey spoke on the importance of being flexible and culturally adept, especially since the division will be paving the way for the State Department.

"It's absolutely critical to get the mindset right," he said, adding that he will be thinking of his Texas citizen-soldiers every day.

Story Highlights

- **Soldiers of the 36th Infantry Division are finishing up the final stages of training before deployment to Iraq.**
- **The 36th, also known as the "Arrowhead Division," will assume responsibility for US Division-South from the 1st Inf. Div. this winter.**
- **The 36th Inf. Div. is only the third National Guard headquarters to deploy to Iraq.**
- **Army Chief of Staff George W. Casey personally attended the after action review of the 36th Inf. Div. final mission readiness exercise.**

Midland schools lend troops a helping holiday hand

**Story by Tony Waggoner
Midland Reporter-Telegram**

A host of Midland schools are working to help those in need this holiday season.

At least seven schools in the Midland Independent School District are participating in everything from can food drives and gathering clothing to assisting military soldiers and their families.

Emerson Elementary School

Earlier this year, Gabe Rodriguez was teaching social studies and science to sixth-graders at Emerson Elementary School. Now Rodriguez is serving in the military and was deployed to Afghanistan.

Students at Emerson decided they would reach out to their former teacher.

Approximately 22 boxes were shipped to Rodriguez from students, Emerson Elementary Assistant Principal Sue Shelton said.



"We asked the different grades to bring different things, personal care items, food and snacks and other little neat ideas the kids had for him," Shelton said.

Shelton said reading specialist Jenny Klatt was in constant communication with Rodriguez and received a list of items he needed and could share with his fellow soldiers.

The school also sold dog tags with Rodriguez's name for \$1. Close to 200 were sold in all, Shelton said.

Emerson Elementary is set to hold a canned food and clothing drive after Thanksgiving to help families in need for Christmas.

Parker Elementary School

Students at Parker Elementary are working with the charitable organization Honor Our Troops to collect money for care packages for U.S. soldiers.

Parker Elementary counselor Jennifer Pender said this is the second year the school has worked with HOT. Last year students collected clothing and other items and found the packages rather large.

Students purchased dog tags for \$2 and raised almost \$400 for the soldiers.

Pender said that amount is "pretty impressive" because many of the students come from lower socio-economic families.

The school also recently made a donation to the United Way of Midland. Almost \$300 in coins was collected.

Parker Elementary will participate in a canned food drive before Christmas that will benefit the Midland Soup Kitchen Ministry or Safe Place of the Permian Basin, Pender said.

Santa Rita Elementary

Santa Rita Elementary students' character education focus for December is compassion.



Emerson Elementary sixth-grade science teacher Gabe Rodriguez helps a pair of his students with a geology lesson in class March 26. Rodriguez deployed to Afghanistan with the 176th Engineer Brigade of the Army National Guard in July. Some of his former students recently gathered 22 boxes of goodies to send to him. (MRT stock photo.)

With that in mind, students are raising money for the organization Christmas For Our Troops, school counselor Patrice Compton said.

Students will receive a free game of bowling from Diamond Lanes in Odessa for each item they donate. The child who donates the most items in each classroom will receive a free family package from Diamond Lanes, as well.

Compton said Christmas For Our Troops organizers sent almost 2,000 boxes to soldiers in 2009. The shipping cost for the packages was around \$30,000, organizers told her.



Until every one comes home.

Want to help?

<http://www.uso.org/howtohelp/>

NEITHER RAIN NOR SNOW NOR HEAT...

Our troops look forward to receiving your letters and packages. That's why it's important to make sure your mail gets there, to the right person, in the right place.

The Department of Defense has issued the following guidelines for addressing your mail to military and civilian personnel deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Use the service member's full name. The Department of Defense cancelled the Any Service Member program so mail must be addressed to someone specific.

Include the unit and APO/FPO (Air/Army Post Office or Fleet Post Office) address with the nine-digit ZIP Code™ (if one is assigned).

Include a return address.

For packages, print on one side only with the recipient's address in the lower right portion.

Examples:

SSGT Kevin Taylor
Unit 2050 Box 4190
APO AP 96278-2050

SSG John Atkinson
HHC 20th EN BN
APO AE 09355

SGT Robert Smith
PSC 802 Box 74
APO AE 09499-0074

SGT Jane Doe
CMR 1250
APO AA 09045-1000

Before you send a letter or package to one of our military service members overseas, make sure you're aware of the restrictions. Mail addressed to military and diplomatic post offices overseas is subject to certain conditions or restrictions regarding content, preparation, and handling.

Although there are specific restrictions for each five-digit Military and Diplomatic Post Office ZIP Code (APO/FPO/DPO), generally, the following are prohibited in the region of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom:

Obscene articles (prints, paintings, cards, films, videotapes, etc) and horror comics.

Any matter depicting nude or seminude persons, pornographic or sexual items, or nonauthorized political materials.

Bulk quantities of religious materials contrary to the Islamic faith. Items for the personal use of the addressee are permissible.

Pork or pork by-products.

There are certain factors to consider when sending packages to our troops overseas. To make sure package contents arrive in good shape, take these into consideration.

Extreme Temperatures: Desert temperatures typically exceed 100 degrees.

The Box: Select a strong box with room for cushioning. On recycled boxes, cover all previous labels and markings with a heavy black marker or adhesive labels.

Cushioning: Place the cushioning all around your items. Close and shake the box to see whether you have enough cushioning. Add more newspaper, styrofoam, cushioning material if you hear items shifting.

Batteries: Battery powered items will sometimes get turned on during shipment. Remove and wrap the batteries separately.

Sealing: Tape the opening of the box and reinforce all seams with 2 inch wide tape. Use clear or brown packaging tape, reinforced packing tape or paper tape. Do not use cord, string or twine.

Include a card describing the contents: Improperly wrapped packages can fall apart during shipment. Including a card inside, listing the sender's and recipient's addresses plus a description of the contents, helps in collecting the items.

The United States Postal Service offers free Priority Shipping flat-rate boxes free.

A quick, easy, and convenient way for you to ship Priority Mail packages to military personnel serving overseas. The Priority Mail APO/FPO Flat Rate Box features predetermined rates regardless of weight (domestically) or destination, similar to our other Flat Rate products.

Some key benefits:

Only \$12.50 when used to send to APO/FPO addresses; \$2.00 less than our domestic pricing.

Box features the "America Supports You" logo and APO/FPO addressing block.

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<http://www.usps.com/supportingourtroops/welcome.htm>



Communicating through Waves of Radiation

Story and Photos by Sgt. David A. Bryant
36th Infantry Division Public Affairs

JOINT BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD, Wash. – The transition from Operation Iraqi Freedom to Operation New Dawn will provide a unique communications challenge as operating bases across Iraq close up shop, dismantle in-place systems and head for home.

That challenge was readily taken on by the Soldiers of Company C, Division Special Troops Battalion, 36th Infantry Division, who set up their communications satellite systems here Oct. 21 as they prepare to provide a seamless transmission of information for United States forces departing Iraq.

“We’re basically doing a (communications exercise), turning

on all the equipment, communicating with each other and making sure everything works,” said Sgt. James M. Naven, a computer communications technician with Co. C. “Each satellite dish talks to a satellite in space, which in turn sends the information back down to our main hub.”

The company is comprised of three signal platoons and the Division’s network communications section, said Sergeant Naven, a 27-year-old native of Whitney, Texas. Some Soldiers will be stationed in Kuwait with the main communications hub, some will remain with the Division’s command group and still other Soldiers are prepared to take mobile satellite terminal trailers out into the field to provide communications for bases in Iraq as they close down.

“We’re just testing to get any bugs out of the system,” Sergeant Naven added.

For the Soldiers operating the equipment, the exercise was a chance to get hands-on training with the mobile system, said Spc. Brandon S. Dawson, a satellite maintenance and operator controller with Co. C. Setting up and firing-off the satellite systems has increased the Soldiers’ eagerness to utilize the equipment in the real-world setting of Iraq.

“The wealth of knowledgeable noncommissioned officers available to train us (on the system) has been invaluable,” said the 25-year-old native of Nederland, Texas.

(Continued on page 15)

Most blood donations collected at Fort Hood are shipped to battlefields in Iraq or Afghanistan within four days of collection.

Over 40 units of blood may be needed for a single injured soldier

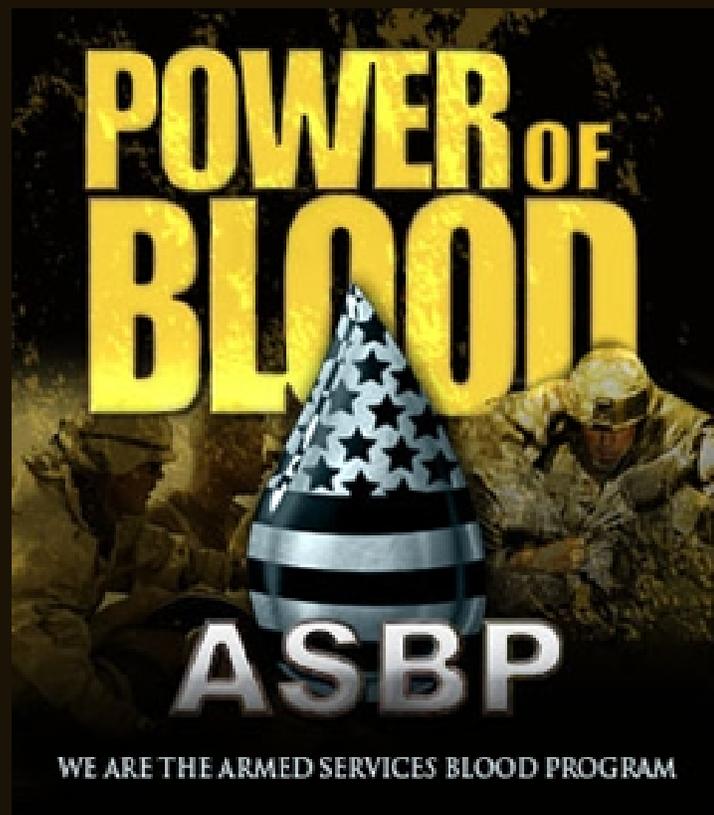
Your donation may save:

- A servicemember injured in action
- A child with cancer
- A family member in need

Donation centers located at Ft. Hood, Ft. Sam Houston and Lackland Air Force Base.

For more information, or to schedule an appointment, visit:

<http://www.militaryblood.dod.mil/Donors/default.aspx>



A gift of time, for his time...

Sgt. Todd Plybon and his wife of 17 years, Tara, look at a watch gifted to Sergeant Plybon by an anonymous benefactor from New Jersey, as thanks for the time he has given to the nation and the state of Texas during his military career. The anonymous donor contacted the National Guard in all 54 states and territories, asking for a chance to say thanks to Soldiers who have given so much in service.

Sergeant Plybon was injured by an improvised explosive device in October of 2009, while serving with the Agribusiness Development Team in Wardak Province, Afghanistan. Two other Texas National Guard soldiers, Staff Sgt. Christopher Staats and Spc. Anthony Green were killed in the attack.

For Sergeant Plybon, the recovery has been slow. Medical intervention and physical therapy can only repair so much, and Sgt. Plybon will be medically retired from the Texas National Guard.

The early part of Sgt. Plybon's recovery was hard, said Tara. After absorbing the fact her husband was home and alive, she could lay in a separate bed and reach out and touch him, but nothing more.

Despite the rocky physical road for Sgt. Plybon, for Tara, it's been a chance to strengthen their marriage. "When a husband and wife go through something like this...it just brings you closer to each other," she said.



(Continued from page 14)

"I'm loving it; this is what I've been waiting for."

None of the training would have been possible without the active assistance of JBLM units, however, said Maj. John Kerby, Co. C commanding officer.

"If it had not been for the 51st Expeditionary Signals Battalion, we wouldn't be able to do any of this," said Major Kerby, a 34-year-old native of Coppell, Texas. "They provided us with a location to set up, the fuel to run our vehicles and everything. Because of their help, our Soldiers will be ready for anything they may face in Iraq. We are very grateful to them for everything they have done for us."



Spc. Brandon S. Dawson, a 25-year-old satellite maintenance and operator controller with Company C, Division Special Troops Battalion, 36th Infantry Division, ensures the connections are secure on an AN-TCC187 satellite dish here Oct. 21. The Nederland, Texas native and his fellow communications Soldiers from Co. C set up the equipment to test their capability to provide a seamless transmission of information to United States Forces departing Iraq during the 36th ID's upcoming deployment as part of Operation New Dawn. (Photo by Sgt. David A. Bryant, 36th Infantry Division Public Affairs)

[http://www.facebook.com/
TexasMilitaryForces](http://www.facebook.com/TexasMilitaryForces)



[http://www.flickr.com/photos/
texasmilitaryforces/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/texasmilitaryforces/)



Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Survey-More Accessible to Families

Army News Service

Army family members can now use the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness global assessment tool and all its online self-improvement modules without having a sponsored Army Knowledge Online account.

While family members have been able to participate in CSF for the past nine months, program participation required them to have AKO accounts. These accounts needed to be sponsored by a military member, which was cumbersome, according to the program's director, Brig. Gen. Rhonda Cornum. She said that's all changed now.

"We went through a lot of development and discussion and tried to loosen up the rules for AKO use, but that was not possible," said Cornum. "Family members can now get their own, unique ID, user name and password directly with the Soldier Fitness Tracker, so all they need to do is give their social security numbers once, because

we now verify through [the Defense Enrollment Eligibility System]."

It's mandatory Army family members participate in the DEERS. The database includes more than 23 million records pertaining to Active Duty, Reserve Component troops and their family members.

Originally, enrollees needed to have AKO-sponsored accounts, but that was a problem, explained Cornum, because it was cumbersome and required being re-sponsored every 120 days at the expiration of an AKO password.

"You have to think up a new, unique, painful password and as you can imagine, people were not very excited about that because it could take you 15 minutes to complete the CSF global assessment tool, but two days to get an account. It just wasn't very user-friendly," Cornum said.

The CSF director encourages family

members to participate in the program because she said family is often a large part of the solution to building and enhancing the other four dimensions of strength - the physical, emotional, social and spiritual.

The family version of the Global Assessment Tool is similar to the Soldier GAT, Cornum said, but added that it obviously doesn't ask questions that aren't relevant to family members, such as the perceived readiness of the Soldier's unit. Instead, it poses questions related to the readiness of the family in facing an upcoming deployment, such as "do you think your family is ready for the potential of your Soldier's deployment?"

Find out more at www.army.mil.csf



The Power of REAL Love: Passionate connection with others

By Maj. Steven Keihl
TXMF Resiliency Team

“The absolute value of love makes life worth while, and so makes

Man’s strange and difficult situation acceptable. Love cannot save

life from death; but it can fulfill life’s purpose.”

As we roll into the Holiday Season, we will sing familiar songs, gather together with the people we care most about for extended periods of time, decorate our homes, and enjoy familiar family traditions. We will enjoy food, fellowship, and maybe even a peaceful break from the daily stressors associated with work. In my view, much of what makes the holidays so incredibly enjoyable is sharing concentrated time with the people I love.

The opening quote comes from a fascinating book entitled, “The Fear of Intimacy”. This book discusses the two opposing options that each person on this planet has when it comes to connecting and developing interpersonal relationships. While we all desire to be loved, to have loving relationships, to experience love at the depths of our soul, we also all fight our self-defense mechanisms and fears in order to obtain such love.

We have a choice... connect to the people in our world in a real and vulnerable manner that provides lasting and penetrating intimacy OR push people away, live in isolation and loneliness. Simply stated, we choose to either passionately pursue love and loving relationships OR we commit ourselves to self-protection and spend our time and energy on avoiding pain.

My father used to say, “Prepare for the worst and hope for the best”... the problem is that we cannot do both, especially when it comes to the matters of the heart. We either invest in relationships, which requires taking chances, being vulnerable, and opening ourselves up to potentially painful experiences or we choose to keep ourselves safe from potential pain by keeping closed, isolated, and protected. We really can’t do both.

Picture an Mixed Martial Arts fight for a moment. If one of the two combatants were to open his or her arms in an attempt to lovingly embrace the other per-

son, he or she would now be open to a right hook to the jaw. The only way to avoid such a painful blow would be to maintain a defensive posture and preparation to block. Do you see the dilemma? When we invest our energy in self-protection, we cease to be inviting to other people. The truth is, we become threatening and appear to be unreachable.

This self-protection is especially painful when we think about what we sacrifice when we choose a life of safe isolation. Re-read the beautiful words from the opening quote... my favorite line is the reminder that love can “fulfill life’s purpose”! That is an amazing thought... the love we experience may not be able to keep us safe from the realities of our world, but it can bring a true sense of meaning! When we protect ourselves, we stay safe, we avoid pain, BUT we are alone and our world may cease purpose, passion, and real significant meaning. That sucks!

My vote is for passionate connection! We all have the ability to pursue, develop, heal, and maintain loving and intimate relationships. It sometimes takes serious effort and maybe even a little outside assistance, but we can learn to deeply connect with other people. Think about that as you live through this year’s festivities. Make 2011 a year when you drop the defenses, learn to embrace others, and begin or renew your commitment to walking the journey of life hand in hand with the people you deeply love.

Resiliency Update

The FIRST regional Peer to Peer training event was held 6-7 Nov 2010 at the Texas A&M Health Science Center in Round Rock. Over 100 participants from 17 different units completed the two day training assisting service members to IDENTIFY potential warning signs of peers who may be struggling or hurting, INTERVENE and engage in immediate unit level helping behaviors, and INITIATE the continuum of care. The Texas Military Forces Joint Family Service Support Resiliency Team also completed Peer to Peer training with the 56th IBCT Full-Time staff 16-17 Nov 2010. December events include 2-3 in Brownwood and 11-12 at the University of Texas Arlington. Training in January will be in the El Paso area on 8-9 Jan 2010. For more information or to begin the registration process for your unit, contact the Resiliency Team NCOIC, Staff Sgt. Penny Anderson at either 512-782-5069 or penny.anderson@ng.army.mil.

“...the love we experience may not be able to keep us safe from the realities of our world, but it can bring a true sense of meaning!”

News Brief

Army Guard Leader Stresses ‘New Norm’

By Army Sgt. 1st Class Jon Soucy
National Guard Bureau

ARLINGTON, Va., Nov. 24, 2010 – Army National Guard soldiers who faced mental health issues in the past may have been hesitant to ask for help, because of a fear of being stigmatized or not being promoted.

However, soldiers in the Army National Guard now must adopt the “New Norm” policy, which makes asking for assistance a priority, Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, the command sergeant major of the Army National Guard, said in a memorandum to first-line leaders dated Nov. 19.

“The ‘New Norm’ is the expectation that our soldiers, families and employers speak up and ask for assistance when they face a challenge that they cannot resolve themselves,” he said.

The policy, Burch said, seeks to counteract negative stereotypes that some may have toward those who seek help.

“The failure to seek or provide assistance is unacceptable,” he said. “Seeking and providing it is what we expect and encourage.”

Burch likened it to having a flat tire on the highway. While most are able to

change the flat tire for the spare tire on their own, he said, that is a temporary solution.

To fix the flat tire itself, the help of a professional is needed, he said.

“Very few are able to fix the flat tire without assistance from a professional, the service department employee trained to patch and repair flat tires,” Burch said. “It is not a sign of weakness [to ask for that help]. We should know our limitations and seek assistance when we have exceeded our abilities.”

Burch also encouraged soldiers to use the Buddy-to-Buddy or Peer-to-Peer programs in addition to professional services.

The goal is that soldiers ask for help rather than to try and work through problems on their own.

“When reaching out to a buddy or peer and seeking out the professionals becomes the norm, we can proclaim success,” Burch said. “The ultimate goal is to find an acceptable solution before an issue becomes a problem.”

Burch said the “New Norm” policy also ties in directly with the Army’s Warrior Ethos of mission first, never quitting or accepting defeat, and helping other warriors when they need it.

Embracing the policy as part of the War-

rior Ethos, he said, is one of the ways leaders can ensure the “New Norm” becomes just that.

“We must establish that not seeking help is a behavior that is unacceptable,” Burch said. “We value each member of the [team] too much to leave them stranded beside the road. Most of all, we will not tolerate any mistreatment of those who seek help. The Warrior Ethos demonstrates every facet of this expectation.”

As more leaders engage with and know those under their command, Burch said, the better prepared the entire team will be to provide help if needed.

“We expect all [leaders] ... to be engaged in knowing their team, reaching out to the team, helping when we can, and guiding each other to the professionals that are available through the resources available in our network of providers,” he said.

And that, Burch said, starts with the Army Guard’s senior leadership.

The leadership of Army Guard soldiers, their families and employers “is committed to moving forward with this expectation as the ‘New Norm,’” he said.

Important PTSD tools, support and programs

For those dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological health issues, there is a variety of programs, tools and support available: (1) RESPECT-MIL, <http://www.pdhealth.mil/respect-mil/index.asp> (2) Specialized Care Programs, http://www.pdhealth.mil/clinicians/scp_referral.asp (3) DCoE Outreach Center, <http://www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx> (4) Nationwide Care Coordination Network, <http://www.dvbc.org/default.aspx> (5) TRICARE Mental Health Resource Center, <http://www.tricare.mil/mentalhealth/> (6) the National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder at www.ptsd.va.gov/, (7) the Veterans Suicide Prevention Hotline, (8) and Veterans Chat at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline both at <http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/Veterans/>.



This Month in Military History: December

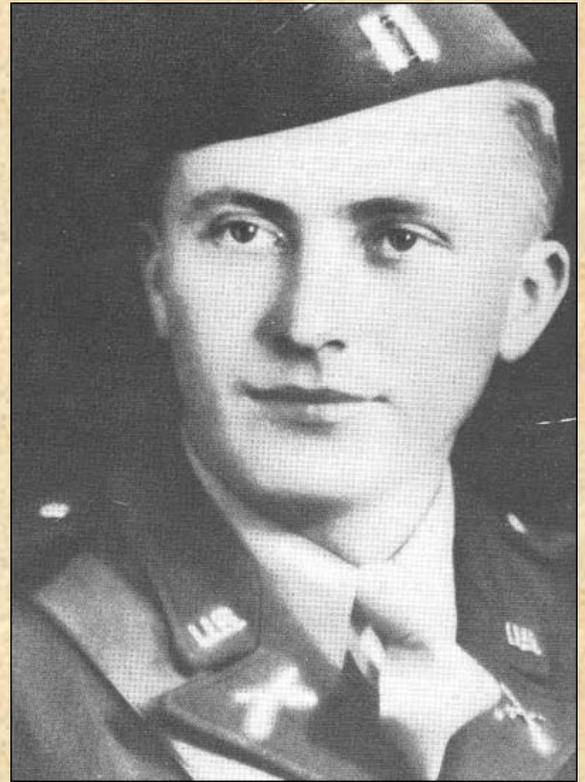
1943- San Pietro, Italy — The 36th Infantry Division (TX) suffers heavy losses in capturing this town on the road to Cassino, south of Rome. The battle was recorded by film maker John Huston and shown as a documentary in American theaters.

Even before the film hit the theaters many Americans knew the story of one of the participants in this attack, Captain Henry Waskow.

He enlisted in Company I, 143rd Infantry, 36th Division, Texas National Guard in June 1935. By the time of this battle he had risen through the ranks to captain, commanding Company I.

He and the men of his company were made famous through the stories of the newspaper reporter Ernie Pyle, who accompanied them during much of the campaign. Pyle had a nationally syndicated audience and his stories were followed across the country. Unlike many reporters, he did not focus much on the 'big picture' battle stories, preferring instead to highlight the individuals involved in the actual fighting on the frontlines. Pyle was often referred to as the "soldier's voice." In this role he wrote often about Waskow and his men.

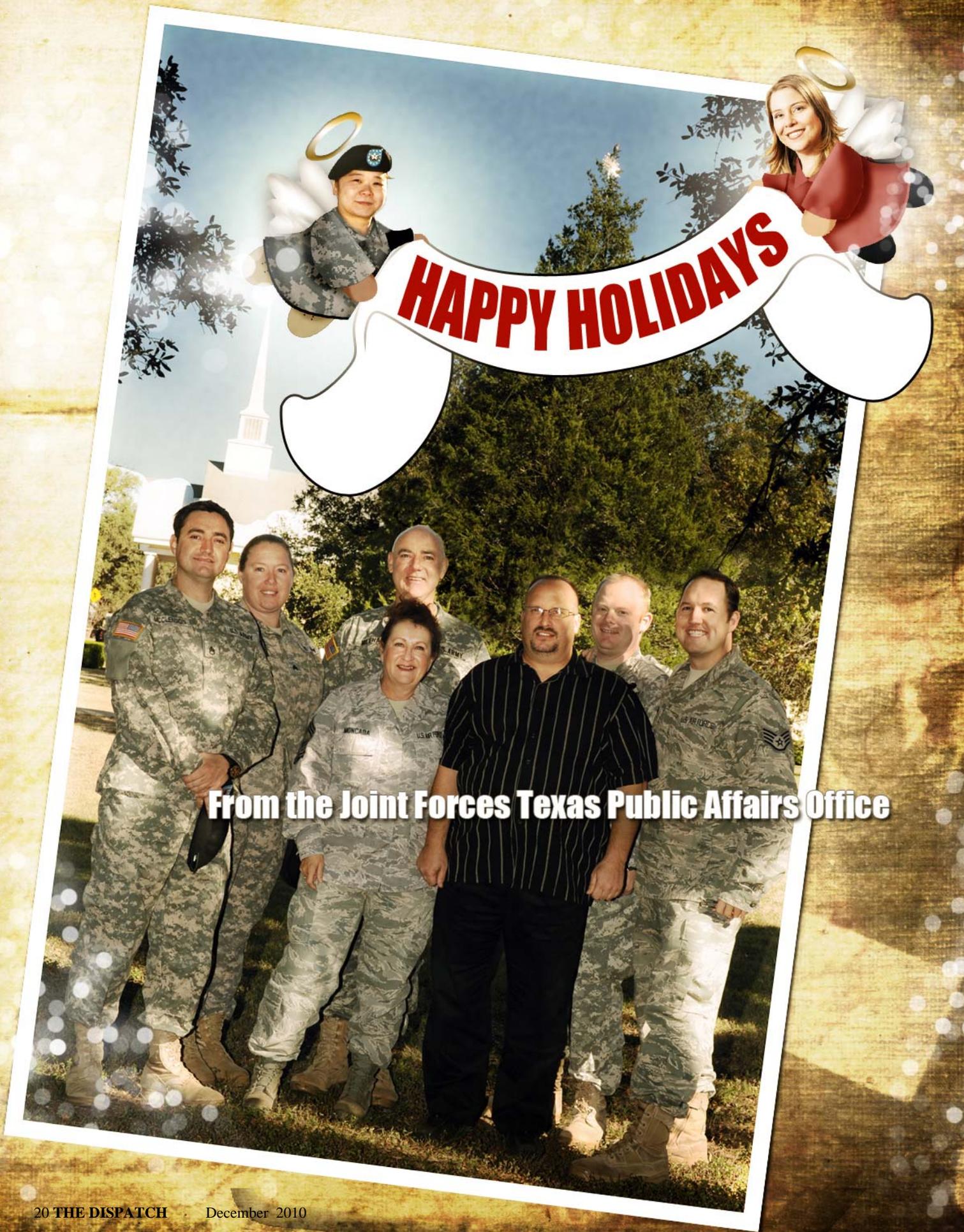
One of Pyle's best-remembered stories told of the story of the death of Waskow on December 14, while trying to capture San Pietro. He described how his men removed his body from the battlefield strapped over the back of a mule and how they, tough, seasoned veterans of months of combat, wept over his loss. Pyle's writing was so touching that many readers felt they had lost a friend themselves without ever having known Waskow.



BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN C.L. SCRIBNER
TEXAS MILITARY FORCES MUSEUM
BUILDING 6, CAMP MABRY, AUSTIN, TEXAS

HOURS OF OPERATION:
WEDNESDAY-SUNDAY—
10:00AM TO 4:00 PM
MONDAY AND TUESDAY -
CLOSED

December 2010 **THE DISPATCH** 19



HAPPY HOLIDAYS

From the Joint Forces Texas Public Affairs Office