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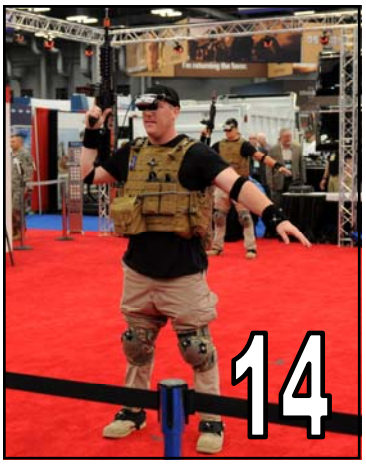
Ranked as the 11th leading cause of death among Americans by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; a recent report released by the United States Army reports that suicides in the military continue to increase with suicide claiming the lives of more than 80 Guard and Reserve soldiers last year.



Cover—Retired Army 1st Sgt. David. McNerney's Medal of Honor sits atop a flag flown on an AH-64 Apache aircraft during a familiarization flight. The flag will be presented to Mr. McNerney's American Legion post. (Photo by Capt. Randall Stillinger, 2-149th Aviation Regiment)

THE BULLETIN BOARD

- ***Program Helps Military Voters***

All 50 states, three territories and the District of Columbia will hold general elections Nov. 2. Those residing outside the U.S. who have not registered or requested an absentee ballot this year should do so as soon as possible by using the Federal Post Card Application. Visit the Federal Voting Assistance Program website, at http://www.fvap.gov/ and follow the prompts to register and request an absentee ballot for the Nov. 2 election. Some states allow submitting the FPCA by email or fax, in addition to regular mail. The instructions will tell you how to fax or email the form. You can also obtain a FPCA from your unit or installation voting assistance officer.

- ***Pain Management Task Force***

The Army Surgeon General, LTG Eric Schoomaker, charted the Pain Management Task Force in August 2009 to provide recommendations for an Army Medical Command comprehensive pain management strategy. The Pain Management Task Force Report is available in PDF format, under Reports on the MEDCOM web site at http://www.amedd.army.mil/reports/Pain_Management_Task_Force.pdf. The report recommends that the Army's pain management strategy be integrated with the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, the Army Suicide Task Force recommendations and other Army and DoD initiatives.

- ***Benefits and Support for Transition Vets***

Have you recently returned from military service? If you've served, you've earned benefits. Now is the time to take advantage of the benefits VA offers OEF/OIF Veterans. Here are just a few of the programs VA offers: (1) five years of cost-free health care, (2) a 180-day dental benefit, (3) going back to school using the new Post-9/11 GI Bill, (4) using the VA Jobs website (http://www4.va.gov/JOBS/) and VetSuccess (http://vetsuccess.gov/) to find a good job, and (5) the use of local Vet Centers (http://www.vetcenter.va.gov/) if you served in any combat zone. For more information, visit the Department of Veterans' Affairs Returning Servicemembers website at http://www.oefoif.va.gov/.

- ***Using Veterans' Preference***

Veterans' preference hiring laws give those who served in uniform a leg up on others when pursuing federal-government employment. This means veterans receive either a five-point or 10-point preference, based on where they served and whether or not they are disabled. To find out if you qualify for a five-point or 10-point preference, visit FedHiresVets at http://www.fedshirevets.gov/job/veterans.aspx. Most federal positions are posted there, and searches can be conducted by job, agency or even location. The American Legion has experts in the federal employment arena who can answers questions or provide assistance in navigating the application process. For more information, visit the American Legion website at http://www.legion.org/careers.

- ***Some Gulf Coast Vets to Get Mortgage Help***

Gulf State veterans impacted by the oil spill may qualify for delayed mortgage payments for existing VA loans. Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric Shinseki noted that several mortgage companies have already announced plans to waive late payment charges and suspend negative reporting to credit bureaus on affected borrowers. VA is asking all mortgage companies to follow this example. For more information, visit www.homeloans.va.gov.

The DISPATCH

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Medal of Honor Hero Takes Flight in Apache Helicopter

Story and photos by Capt. Randall Stillinger
2-149th Aviation Regiment

Houston, Texas-- When David McNerney woke up on Saturday morning, he thought it was going to be a bad day. The combination of cancer and chemotherapy was taking a toll on his body and it was not a good morning. The 79-year old was feeling so bad he asked longtime friend, and Navy veteran, Gerald Blankenship to take him to the hospital instead of to the Army Aviation Flight Facility at Ellington Field.

Retired U.S. Army 1st Sgt. McNerney was scheduled to fly in the front seat of an AH-64 "Apache" helicopter at Ellington Field later that morning and, was determined not to let the Soldiers of the 1-149th Attack-Reconnaissance Battalion down. After the hospital visit, they were on their way to the Texas Army National Guard facility.

While his current battle with cancer is what he faces these days, it was another battle on foreign soil that earned him the Medal of Honor, and made him more than deserving of a ride in a modern attack helicopter.

On March 22nd, 1967, at Polei Doc in the Republic of Vietnam, 1st Sgt. McNerney's unit was attacked by a North Vietnamese battalion. After running through a hail of gunfire to the heaviest area of contact, he killed several enemy at close contact, even after being blown off of his feet and injured by a grenade.

After learning that his company commander had been killed, 1st Sgt. McNerney assumed command and took charge. With the artillery forward observer also killed in action, the new commander adjusted fire to within 20 meters of their position in order to repel the enemy.

After climbing a tree under fire to tie an identification panel to the highest branches, he began clearing a landing site to evacuate the wounded. When explosives were needed to clear large trees, 1st Sgt. McNerney crawled outside of the perimeter to collect it from abandoned rucksacks.

At the end of the day, 22 of the 108 members of the company had been killed in action and 42 were wounded. Despite the pain from his injury, he remained with his unit until the next day when the new commander arrived. On September 19th, 1968, 1st Sgt. McNerney was awarded the Medal of Honor by President Johnson for his outstanding heroism and leadership that inspired his Soldiers.

Upon arrival at Ellington Field, Mr. McNerney was greeted by the Soldiers of the 1-149th. Some were

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1st Sgt. David McNerney sits in an AH-64 "Apache" helicopter before his flight.

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fresh out of high school, others had served on the battlefield of Vietnam, but all were in awe of the hero in front of them.

Like most recipients of the Medal of Honor, 1st Sgt. McNerney is humble about his four combat tours to Vietnam, but after being prodded by Mr. Blankenship, he would oblige and tell a story or two. When asked if he was nervous about flying in an Apache helicopter, referring back to that day in 1967, McNerney joked, "As nervous as I was back then?"

After suiting up in a modern Army aviation flight suit, complete with his name, rank, 4th Infantry Division unit and combat patches, his Combat Infantry Badge, and his Medal of Honor around his neck, he received a pre-flight briefing from Chief Warrant Officer Four Kurt Gruner before heading down to the aircraft.

As he climbed up into the helicopter, there was no sign of fear or reservation from this man, who had risked so much for his Soldiers when they needed leadership the most.

While the mission outside was beginning, the Soldiers of the 1-149th watched the recently released documentary "Honor in the Valley of Tears" which tells the story of that day in March of 1967. Texas Senator John Cornyn also videotaped a message for the audience. Mr. Cornyn said, "That day, as his unit stood surrounded and leaderless in the Vietnamese jungle, the men of the unit looked to 1st Sgt. McNerney, who took command and guided them successfully out of harm's way."

Lt. Col. Scott Kingsley, commander of the 1-149th, also spoke to the Soldiers wanting them to "learn from 1st Sgt. McNerney's experience and use it to become better leaders." He also said that the primary mission of the day was to make Mr. McNerney smile. "This is his day. We will go as fast or as slow as he wants." Mr. Kingsley said.

After taxiing out of its parking space, the crew chief gave the former first sergeant a crisp salute as they headed out on this mission. Escorted by another Apache, the two aircraft took off to the north and out of sight.

The familiarization flight took Mr. McNerney by the U.S.S. Texas battleship and San Jacinto monument before flying over his house and the American Legion post where several of his friends and comrades watched this historic flight. The two-aircraft flight also went out to the Trinity River area near Wallisville, where the battalion does tactical combat training.

Thoroughly impressed with the modern piece of equipment that he was flying in, Mr. Gruner and Mr. McNerney flew past downtown Houston before heading back to Ellington Field. As the helicopter taxied into its place on the ramp, a smile was clearly visible on the face of 1st. Sgt. McNerney. Colonel Kingsley's mission was successful.

After the helicopter's blades stopped turning and the engines were turned off, Mr. Gruner and Mr. McNerney climbed down from the aircraft welcomed back by members of the 1-149th. It was definitely a fitting hero's welcome. Mr. Gruner, who has deployed to both Bosnia and Iraq, said "it was one of the most rewarding things I've ever done."

Senator Cornyn, who helped coordinate the flight, said, "1st Sgt. McNerney was awarded the Medal of Honor for his efforts, and I know Texans join me in expressing our heartfelt appreciation for his selfless service to this country,"

Afterwards, Mr. McNerney chatted with Soldiers wanting to meet him. He compared his Apache flight to his numerous experiences on board helicopters in Vietnam, "Usually there were 5 or 6 of us crammed on a Huey helicopter. It would come down to a 5-foot hover in the landing zone and we would have to jump off while under fire." He said he was just glad to be able to land on the ground this time around.

With the day's mission complete, the Soldiers of the 1-149th were grateful for their time with this Medal of Honor recipient, one of only 87 living today. Through his story of heroism and sacrifice, 1st Sgt. McNerney gave them the confidence and inspiration to learn from past wars that will help them lead on today's modern battlefield.

Texans Train for Disaster with Humanitarian Mission

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

Army Spc. Jorell J. Valdez, a medic with the 3rd Bn 141 Inf, takes a blood sample from a patient for testing during day three of Operation Lone Star.

WESLACO, Texas - "What we do and what we're training for is a mass casualty," said Texas State Guard Capt. James R. Owens, a registered nurse with the DFW Medical Group. "It's about taking care of the population."

For the joint members of the Texas Military Forces, the Department of State Health Services and local civil agencies, preparedness means more than a ready standing force. With the persistent threat of hurricanes, flooding and seasonal pandemics, preparedness requires a fully trained, joint force capable of engaging a large-scale incident anywhere in the state.

This year, these state assets used the annual humanitarian event Operation Lone Star to conduct a complete exercise simulating a mass casualty incident. Providing the Rio Grande Valley with immunizations, physicals and various other medical services, the mission sought to stress and challenge the capabilities of state military and civilian departments, as well as reinforce their cooperation and interagency communication.

"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."

Among the state agencies supporting the operation is the Texas Medical Assistance Team (TexMAT-1), populated by paramedics and medical practitioners from through the state.

"It's an opportunity under a training scenario to see a lot of people at one time," said Charles A. Neely, an EMT paramedic with TexMAT-1. "It just improves our capabilities in the long run."

The two-week operation, running from July 26 through August 6, featured sites in Brownsville, Palmview, Raymondville and San Juan during the first week and will include Laredo, Rio Grande City and Zapata during the second week. Many OLS locations rotate from year to year, but tend to stay centralized in local high schools or elementary schools.

Further bridging the spirit of cooperation, even service members from the Czech Republic and Chilean armies supported OLS this year.

"We need to practice for any kind of mass casualty occasion, too," said Capt. Petra Matulkova, an epidemiologist with the Czech Army. "We need to know these things, being military doctors."

With so many organizations working together, key leaders placed a premium on clear and effective communication throughout the operation.

"A lot of the training that we're doing is being able to communicate," said Captain Owens. "At any level, at any issue, we will have to be able to communicate."

This finely tuned coordination allowed OLS to process 12,645 area residents in 2009, a number that event organizers expect will only grow in 2010 and future years.

Spanning six counties in Texas, Operation Lone Star functions as an ideal execution of a real-time public health crisis, uniting disparate agencies for a common and worthy goal.

"We set it up just as if we may have a thousand people or one person that needs the services," said Captain Owens. "It may be small at one area or larger at another, but in the grand scheme of things, it provides a very good and very applicable training exercise for our units."

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Texas Air Guard teaches a 'Total Force' lesson

Story and photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Mike R. Smith
National Guard Bureau

EL PASO, Texas (July 7, 2010) – Several active duty security forces members now have a better idea what the "Total Force" concept is after learning valuable combat skills from Guard instructors.

Senior Airman Michele Vitorio and Staff Sgt. Robert Holmes, both from the 316th Security Forces Squadron on Joint Base Andrews in Maryland, and about 50 other active duty security forces trained here at the Desert Defender Regional Training Center led by the Texas Air National Guard's 204th SFS.

Desert Defender's area security operations course is nearly 50 days of intense training that prepares security forces for installation security in combat zones. It includes mounted operations on armored vehicles and dismounted operations in foot patrols, among other military tactics and techniques.

About three weeks into her training, Vitorio learned that her instructors were Texas Air Guard members.

"I had no idea," she said. "They are doing a great job."

After service in Korea, Vitorio was assigned to security forces for Air Force One and other official aircraft on Andrews.

Preparing for her first deployment brought her back to El Paso, her hometown.

"It's good to be home," she said, with a laugh. "I love being back."

Vitorio said her favorite part of the training was a land navigation course held during the day and at night in full battle gear.

"That was probably the toughest part of the training," she said."I feel that we are all pretty prepared."

Senior Master Sgt. Earnest Delao, the 204th SFS's operations superintendent, said the Guard instructors work through the Air Force Security Forces Center for their course curriculum.

The 204th was certified as a regional training center for active duty, Guard and Reserve security forces just 18 months ago. Their instructors are also trained and certified by the Air Force.

Now that they are certified, Delao said they spend more time "concentrating on the training."

The squadron has over 49 full-time instructors and staff.

The squadron depends upon nearly 100 traditional Guardmembers from supporting states who come to Texas in a temporary duty status with expertise in services, vehicle maintenance, supply, administration and other specialties.

It all goes a long way in providing the best training available to the deployers, said Lt. Col. Carl Alvarez, the squadron and training center commander.

He said the Air Force has provided the Texas Air Guard with "incredible equipment" to support the mission, including armored vehicles and an armory with a "vast array" of weaponry.

"It's a great organization, it's a great mission, and we are honored and privileged to have the opportunity to do it," Alvarez said.

Holmes said he appreciates his Guard instructors, because of the prior experience they bring.

"The majority of the instructors are prior service Army or Marines … they have that knowledge," he said. "They have a good pool [of instructors] going on over here."

In his almost six years of service, Holmes has deployed to Qatar and Balad, Iraq, for base security operations. In this next deployment, he will return to Balad for area security operations, which takes him "outside the wire" to defend the installation.

He believes this course has prepared him for any scenario.

"This covers everything … inner-base security; it covers outer-base security, foot patrols and mobile," he said. "This training is a lot more of what we do downrange."

Comparing Desert Defender to other courses he has attended, Holmes said, "I think that it's a little bit more intense."

Active duty Air Force security forces Airmen are debriefed after a convoy live fire exercise by an instructor from the Texas Air Guard's Desert Defender Regional Training Center area security operations course at the McGregor Range outside El Paso, Texas, June 30, 2010.

72nd IBCT hands over Camp Cropper Internment Facility to Iraq

Story and photos by 1st Lt. Maria Mengrone
United States Forces - Iraq PAO

CAMP CROPPER, IRAQ – U.S. Forces are continually making great strides in the responsible drawdown of U.S. troops across Iraq. Perhaps the most delicate task rests in the hands of the boots on ground soldiers assigned as guard force in the historical transfer of detainees to the Iraqi government at the Cropper Theater Internment Facility (TIF).

"This turnover marks the last major detention facility to be turned over to the Government of Iraq. What was started here in 2003 will officially be handed over to the Iraqi Correctional Service," said Lt. Col. Warren R. Wintrode, Cropper TIF Commander and 105th Military Police battalion commander from the North Carolina National Guard.

"I want the Soldiers in this battalion to know that this transition is historic and they made it happen. I appreciate their hard work and I am proud of them," said Wintrode.

Detainees transferred to the Iraqi government must have a conviction, arrest warrant or detention order, as conditions set forth by the Security Agreement. Along with the Cropper facility, the ceremonial transfer held July 15 signified the transition of approximately 1,500 detainees to inmate status within the Iraqi corrections system.

Much of the legwork that has made the turnover possible has been credited to the hundreds of Soldiers and Sailors who have served on Cropper TIF as guard force personnel throughout the years.

Final completion of the detainee operations mission in Iraq has fallen primarily on guard force Soldiers of the Texas National Guards' 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT).

"Working with detainees on a daily basis is demanding work, not only providing the basic needs of the detainees, but doing so while treating them with dignity and respect," said Maj. Diana E. Stumpf, Cropper TIF operations officer, 105th MP Battalion.

"The Soldiers who stand 12-hour shifts in the facility every day, working face-to-face with the detainees are the reason the Cropper TIF has run so effectively," said Major Stumpf.

Working on Cropper TIF brings many challenges to the Soldiers performing their daily duties; extended exposure to the searing Iraqi heat, prolong standing and roving on catwalks, over-

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coming language and cultural barriers, and utilizing effective interpersonal communication skills when dealing with detainees' and Iraqi guards are just a few obstacles that guard force personnel must overcome. "We constantly hear 'chief, chief' because detainees want soccer balls, pens, pencils or gloves to clean," said Spc. John S. Simon, Company C, 72nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

"I have my own way of communicating with the detainee big chief, I don't worry about what they did to get here, I don't get friendly with them or speak harshly to them, I just don't ever let my guard down," said Specialist Simon.

"Catwalks are not fun, it was tough getting used to being on your feet for so long," said Texas guardsman Spc. Kenneth E. Dooley, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 133rd Field Artillery, 72nd IBCT from Chico, Texas.

Aside from dealing with the day-to-day demands, soldiers have to remain vigilant and compliant with all standard operating procedures.

"Consistency is the most important element in detainee operations, consistency in conduct, in enforcing the rules, and the treatment of detainees," said Master Sgt. Mark Provost, Cropper TIF non-commissioned officer- in-charge, individual augmentee and native of San Diego.

Sergeant Provost added that the Soldiers mentoring and advising Iraqi guards play a vital role that will serve as a model for how Iraq could operate a successful prison system.

The transfer of the Cropper TIF has taken a more symbolic meaning to some Soldiers that believe detention operations have served a greater purpose.

"I never thought I'd be face-to-face with people that made IED's and possibly hurt U.S. Soldiers, I am grateful to be here because I think of the other Soldiers that didn't make it home, I am here to make sure detainees are treated with dignity and respect because it does save lives," said 22-year-old, Spc. Cindy Garces, Company D, 536th BSTB, 72nd IBCT native of Stephenville, Texas.

"I hope Iraq continues to move forward to where the whole country is happy, not just certain provinces or religious groups, I want Iraq to be able to work past their differences," said Sgt. David A. Franco, Company D, 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, 72nd IBCT from Fort Worth, Texas.

Sergeant Franco said, "the mission has to get done, it's not glorifying but at the end of the day we follow our orders and we serve our purpose as professional guard force for the future of Iraq."

Opposite page (top)-Sgt. Matthew L. Scroggins, Company C, 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team stands guard during the final days of over watch of detainees at the Cropper Theater Internment Facility. Cropper TIF and approximately 1,500 detainees were handed over to the Government of Iraq on July 15, 2010.

Opposite page (middle)- U.S. Forces conduct final perimeter and security checks on the catwalks that surround the facilities at Cropper Theater Internment Facility.

Opposite page (bottom)- Spc. Cindy Garces, Company Delta, 536th Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team offers assistance on tracking detainee movements to her Iraqi corrections officer counterpart in preparation for the turnover.

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http://www.flickr.com/photos/texasmilitaryforces/

Division West trains 36th Infantry Division for Iraq deployment

By Jay R. Adams
Division West Public Affairs

CAMP MABRY, Texas — First Army Division West provided the Texas Army National Guard's 36th Infantry Division a Texas training trifecta here Aug. 15-29.

Elements of Division West – some from its headquarters at Fort Hood, Texas; some from its 402nd Field Artillery Brigade at Fort Bliss, Texas; and its senior Army advisor to the Texas National Guard – converged on Camp Mabry to conduct a rigorous command post exercise to train the 36th ID to serve as U.S. Division South in Iraq later this year.

"This may be the best the 36th Division has been exercised, including warfighter exercises," said Maj. Gen. Eddy M. Spurgin, the 36th ID's commanding general. "My expectations have been exceeded from what I thought I was going to see."

More than 250 unique scenarios and responses to scenarios during the exercise forced the 36th ID staff to execute battle drills and conduct deliberate planning.

"This exercise was fully supported and fully synchronized across all the battle command systems," said Col. Donald E. Gentry, Division West's senior Army advisor to the Texas National Guard who also served as chief observer controller and trainer for the exercise. SRAAGs are full-time, active-duty Army liaisons to the National Guard in every state who facilitate training and resourcing of Guard units.

During the 36th's exercise, the unit faced notional attacks on subordinate units, key leader engagements with Iraqi role players, a visit from a national U.S. representative, and simulated media engagements. The adjutant general of the Texas National Guard, Maj. Gen. Jose S. Mayorga, even served as a role player during a "TAG visit."

"One area we have to continue to look at is how does the 36th analyze and disseminate information," said Maj. Gen. Charles A. Anderson, Division West commanding general, who also served as the exercise director. "We see that in the products coming out of current operations, future operations and plans."

Maj. Gen. Eddy M. Spurgin, left, commanding general of the 36th Inf. Div., talks with a notional Iraqi military leader, right, as Maj. Gen. Charles A. Anderson, First Army Division West commanding general, observes during a command post exercise at Camp Mabry, Aug. 24. Division West is training the 36th ID to serve as U.S. Division South in Iraq later this year. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Merrion LaSonde, 36th Inf. Div. Public Affairs)

The 36th Inf. Div. conducted a command post exercise in August at Camp Mabry, in this large complex of tents called a deployable rapid assembly shelter. The division is training to serve as U.S. Division South in Iraq later this year. The 36th will not operate out of the DRASH in Iraq, but will retain the capability for use in possible disaster relief operations. (Photo courtesy Texas Army National Guard)

"What was important to me was that we got the basics right," Spurgin said about the division's progress.

Lt. Gen. Thomas G. Miller, commanding general of First Army, and Lt. Gen. Frank Helmick, commanding general of XVIII Airborne Corps and Fort Bragg, N.C., attended the final after-action review of the exercise. The XVIII Airborne Corps is expected to replace Fort Hood's III Corps in theater early next year and will serve as the higher headquarters for the 36th as part of U.S. Forces - Iraq.

"When God created a division headquarters, he said, 'Let them issue coherent orders,'" quipped Miller, as he stressed the critical role the 36th ID will play as the last U.S. division in Southern Iraq.

The 36th, in turn, expects to serve as the higher headquarters for Fort Hood's 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment and 3rd Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division during the Texas unit's deployment.

The command post exercise was unique for Division West, as it was conducted during pre-mobilization training, or before the 36th actually mobilizes Sept. 26 with a departure ceremony at the Frank Erwin Center in Austin. Division West's 191st Infantry Brigade will conduct the 36th ID's post-mobilization training at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington.

The 36th conducted the CPX out of a large complex of tents called a deployable rapid assembly shelter. The division will not operate of the DRASH in Iraq, but will retain the capability for use in possible disaster relief operations.

Conference Addresses Issues, Builds Guardsmen Camaraderie

Story and photos by Officer Candidate Micah Barnes
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

AUSTIN, Texas - Army and Air National Guard officers from all 54 states and territories descended upon Austin, Texas, Aug. 21-23, for the 132nd National Guard Association of the United States conference. The attendees ranged from single bar officers to a four-star general, with many bringing their families to share the experience.

The conference, designed to bring together officers of all grades to discuss the issues currently facing the Army and Air National Guards, provides a meeting point for NGAUS to ensure their voices are heard on Capitol Hill in Washington.

"NGAUS is one of the 10 recognized military associations that the Department of Defense can participate in," said Army Maj. Jeffrey Larrabee, a National Guard Bureau Strategic planner. "They're advocates for the guardsmen, who lobby in Washington for their specific interests."

The discussions and resolutions of the conference move up to the National Guard Bureau for review, ensuring that the coming year's agendas reflect the intentions of NGAUS members.

"These could be anything such as better equipment, better health care and retirement benefits, " said Air Force Maj. Gen. Tod S. Bunting, NGAUS chairman and adjutant general of the Kansas National Guard.

Keynote speakers included Texas Governor Rick Perry, Gen. Craig R. McKinley, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and Senator Leticia Van de Putte, District 26 state senator for Texas.

"One thing I learned in my time in the Air Force is that the squeaky wheel gets the grease," said Gov. Perry. "I'm going to keep calling for the Guard for any job because I know that it's going to be done right."

In addition to the business meetings, the conference also featured events aimed at further strengthening the camaraderie of the Guard community. The events, which brought together spouses and children to bond over common interests, included the exhibit hall, youth programs, a rodeo, the spouse luncheon, and several dinners and mixers.

The exhibit hall housed more than 400 vendors showcasing everything from military equipment to coffee mugs designed for different branches, installations, and services. Some booths featured interactive activities, including the National Guard Formula racecar, a simulated combat environment wherein players cooperatively engage a mission, and several fixed and rotary wing simulations.

"These groups span really the spectrum of companies that do everything from sustainability for the Guard, to helping the families of the Guard," said Richard Goldberg, senior vice-president of Public Affairs for DRS Technologies.

The children of the attending officers had a chance to experience practical exercises in public affairs through the backpack journalist program. Throughout the conference, the kids attended many events, such as the opening ceremony where the MacArthur High School drill team performed in front of the more than 1,000 audience members, a visit to the Texas Army National Guard Airfield in Austin, Texas, and a press conference with Bunting and Texas Army National Guard Commander Brig. Gen. Joyce Stephens.

"I think this whole thing was awesome," said Gian Carlo Morales, 12, from Dallas, Texas. "I got to use everything from the video camera to the microphone that records everything."

The officers and their families enjoyed the nightlife offered by Austin, the live-music capital of the world. Evening events ranged from mixers for the warrant and company grade officers to a true Texas rodeo.

"Some people don't know that we have rodeos in New Jersey, but it is not quite the same as being at a Texas rodeo, and I'm pretty jazzed to the be there for it," said Mr. Goldberg.

The final night concluded with a cocktail reception and states dinner at the Austin Convention Center.

"Texas has been a wonderful host of this event," said Goldberg. "It's more about the people, building a relationships, and knowing what the needs are."

Left— An interactive test drive simulation of the National Guard Formula 1 race car was on site during the National Guard Association Conference.

CST trains at Camp Mabry and Disaster City

Story and photos by Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas (11 Aug 2010) – While training elsewhere in Texas, the unthinkable happened at Camp Mabry when a dirty bomb exploded here August 6, killing one and injuring four.

Fortunately the "dirty bomb incident" was a mock incident, the response was everything but.

The 6th Civil Support Team landed on the parade ground at Camp Mabry after being air lifted via CH-47 helicopter from Arlington, Texas.

The Austin Police and Fire Department as well as the FBI participated in the exercise. The fire department radiation readings were transmitted to the inbound CST team, and the team started making the appropriate decisions while still in the air.

Once on the ground, the five-person CST team donned appropriate gear, deployed their survey equipment, identified the isotopes and removed the body from the scene. The wounded, previously removed from the area, as well as rescue personnel were thoroughly decontaminated before leaving the "hot" zone for transport to the nearest hospital.

Next the contaminated area was mapped and restricted from use.

As if this air mobile insertion training had not produced enough adrenaline, a two-person CST team together with two Chilean Partners, were called to respond to an unknown chemical spill in Disaster City.

The team identified four leaks and two suspicious packages, surveyed five cars and conducted a site-survey for other unknown contaminants.

The Chilean officers were able to observe the Austin Fire Department's mass decontamination line as well as integrate with the Texas National Guard personnel as they made five separate entries into the contaminated areas.

The 6th CST is an immediately deployable, active duty, Texas National Guard unit created in 1999 to respond to terrorist incidents involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, as well as other disasters and catastrophic events, both natural and man-made.

The 6th CST is comprised of Air and Army National Guard personnel and will respond when activated by the Federal or State Government.

The Czech officers observed and participated in the exercises under the State Partnership Program concept that links U.S. States with foreign nations to not only promote and enhance bilateral relations, but more importantly to foster training opportunities.

Disaster City is a Texas Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) facility, in College Station. The city specifically resembles an area of mass destruction, used by Fire Fighters, Urban Search and Rescue teams, Texas Forest Service, Texas Taskforce 1, Police Departments and Incident Commanders from all around the world.

Dave Dickson, USAR Advisor U.K. Civil Resilience Directorate, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, said about the facility: "We looked at several training facilities worldwide specializing in search and rescue, but none compared to what we found at Disaster City. http://www.teex.com

"Continued training with civilian and foreign nation partners will make us a better prepared Texas team when our neighbors need us," said Col. William Hall, Vice Chief of the Joint Staff, Texas Military Forces, after the conclusion of the exercises.

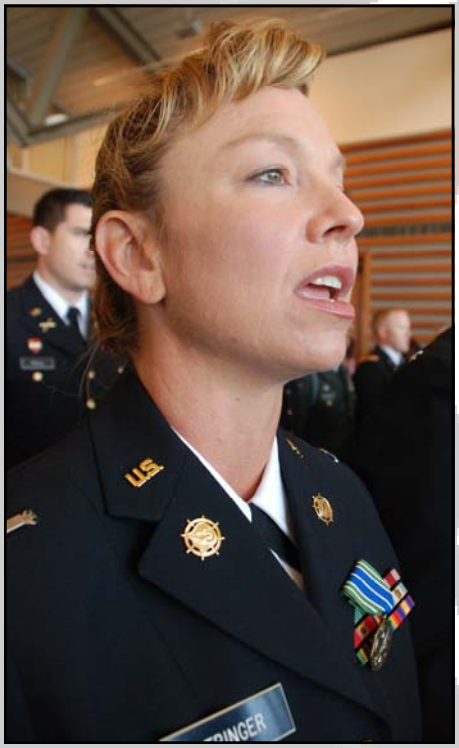
Left— As part of an exercise, the 6th Civil Support Team is "ready to roll" minutes after the CH-47 helicopter touches down at Camp Mabry to respond to the Aug. 6 "dirty bomb incident".

OCS Class 53 Crosses the Finish Line to Graduation

Story and photo by Laura Lopez
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

AUSTIN, TX (August 28, 2010) It was an emotional day for those in Class 53 of the Officer Candidate School (OCS), as their walk across the stage symbolized not only the next generation of leaders in the Texas National Army Guard, but also the next chapter in their military career, now as commissioned officers.

"It's amazing; we've been waiting for this moment for such a long time and are ready to get on to our units, establish our command and become platoon leaders while doing the best that we can as officers," said 2nd Lt. Travis Hall, of the 141st Infantry out of San Antonio.



2nd Lt. Jennifer Stringer of the 111th Engineers out of Brtownwood takes parts in the singing of the Army Song following taking the oath of office for a commissioned officer.

Another graduate, who is a Geometry teacher by day, not only proved that determination and support can make anything possible, but that overcoming obstacles can make one stronger.

"It's been a very hard process and has been a tough summer," said 2nd Lt. Jennifer Stringer, of the 111th Engineers out of Brownwood. "My house got robbed my first week at OCS; I got bronchitis two weeks into the program; and my father got really sick and passed away while I was here at OCS and insisted I stay and finish."

Said to be marked as a milestone and a culmination of the challenging, yet rigorous training program that has taught the next generation of leaders for the Texas Military Forces leadership skills, tactical abilities and professionalism; it was Texas Adjutant General Jose S. Mayorga who personally praised the family members for their selfless service and support of the

"Military service is a family affair and I know that many of you traveled considerable distances to join us last night and this morning. Whether you're a parent, spouse, child or relative of one of these officers thank you for you do everyday," said Mayorga.

Not only leaving his family, but an emergency technician position behind at the Uvalde Memorial Hospital, 2nd Lt. Daniel Garcia spent two months in Alabama taking the next step and says that one of the hardest things in the National Guard is maintaining the separation between civilian and military life.

"My wife and I have already been through a 16-month deployment to Afghanistan, so she is somewhat used to my being away, so two months wasn't horrible," said Garcia of the 449th Aviation Support Battalion. "But when you are separated from your family that's all you think about."

Stressing the importance of remaining a deployable asset to the Texas Military Forces and maintaining physical fitness throughout their entire career, Mayorga left OCS Class 53 with some words of advice.

"I ask that you remain a fair officer and that you apply that fairness consistently," said Mayorga. "I ask that you lead from the front and set the example for your soldiers," and "I ask that you set high standards for yourself and the soldiers that you lead."

Other graduation festivities included a reception with Maj. Gen. Mayorga, a class social, as well as a military ball.

The recipient of this year's Distinguished Honor Grad Award and the AUSA Leadership Excellence Award was 2nd Lt. Frank L. Johnson, with 2nd Lt. Thomas Spurlock receiving the Academic Excellence Award. Those receiving the Physical Fitness Award included 2nd Lt. Jennifer Stringer (accelerated) and 2nd Lt. Jose Pena Jr. (traditional). Those on the Commandant's List included 2nd Lt. Frank L. Johnson, 2nd Lt. Jose Pena Jr. and 2nd Lt. Kevin E. Van Winkle. Receiving the Texas Medal of Merit and Platter for the McNeil Award was 2nd Lt. Margaret Rock.

To view more photos from the OCS Class #53 Graduation, visit the Texas Military Forces page on Flickr at www.flickr.com/photos/texasmilitaryforces/ .

Tech Industries support National Guard

Story and photo by Spc. Suzanne Carter
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

A mariachi band struck up a song as Texas Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Jose S. Mayorga snipped the red ribbon stretched across the entrance in two. The doors to the exhibit hall swung open Aug. 21, marking the official opening of the 132nd National Guard Association of the United States General Conference exhibit hall at the Austin Convention Center in Austin, Texas.

Army and Air National Guard officers and their spouses from across the U.S. and its territories flooded the exhibit hall floor for three days, interacting with more than 400 vendors. The exhibitors showed their support for the Guard by demonstrating a variety of products and services, while conference attendees told vendors directly what they needed.

Mark Saturno, Simulation Systems Division business development director for Cubic Defense Applications in Orlando, Fla., said that the NGAUS convention is not the place to make sales, but a place to show support and appreciation for the National Guard and its mission.

"We have been dealing with the Guard for about a dozen years with our products," Saturno said. "The Guard has been very supportive of our company and our products, so we want to come out and show our support for the Guard."

With products ranging from combat training simulators to portable latrine devices and services from continuing education programs to custom coin and tag manufacturing, the exhibit hall offered officers of all ranks the most up-to-date technology, equipment and services available to their Guardsmen.

"There's a lot of new technology," said Guam Air National Guard Capt. Josephine Blas. "As you know, technology changes quickly, every day, so whatever they have that can help improve what we do for ourselves, for our troops, it's always great to see what they have."

By interacting with the vendors, attendees can discuss what improvements they want to see to best service their home units.

"It's an incredible opportunity for junior leaders to interact directly with folks in the industry," said Oregon Army National Guard Capt. Jonathan R. Tipton. "We can explain to them what we need, what we like and what we'd like to see happen."

Vendors in the exhibit hall said they use the feedback they receive to help guide the futures of their products and services as they relate to the National Guard.

"We talk to everybody from soldiers all the way up to the adjutant general about what the needs are for the Guard, where the Guard is trying to go," said Arthur C. Wright, business development and marketing manager for the Washington-Harris Group, a health services and information technology group from Greenbelt, Md. "If we don't know where they're trying to go and what their needs are, we won't know what services we need to provide."

Exhibitors also said they enjoyed hearing from the family members in attendance as much as the officers.

"The Guard is certainly very family-oriented," said Cora Jackson-Chandler, the Management Support Technology vice president of Defense Department programs, a research, evaluation and planning company from Fairfax, Va. "Because we do some work in the areas of sustaining, training, life-cycle support and transition of soldiers, it's good to hear from the family members."

Jackson-Chandler went on to say that having this interaction with the servicemembers and their families helps give her the full perspective of everyone who needs her company's services.

After a year of planning, a week of set-up and three days of marketing and networking, Exhibit Promotions Plus Director of Business Development Kevin M. Horowitz praised the conference for making available so many resources to which military leaders might otherwise not have exposure.

"They don't know what products and services are out there and what's available and what's the most modern technology," Horowitz said. "They need to see it, feel it, touch it, use it."

Nina Zielke of Kansas checks out a self-constructing tower with her dad, Lt. Col. Christ Zielke, Aug. 22 at the 132nd National Guard Association of the United States General Conference in Austin, Texas.

Standing shoulder to shoulder, preventing suicide

Story by Laura Lopez
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

Ranked as the 11th leading cause of death among Americans by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; a recent report released by the United States Army reports that suicides in the military continue to increase with suicide claiming the lives of more than 80 Guard and Reserve soldiers last year.

While the creation of both the Battle Buddy system and the Wingman program is designed to enable soldiers to look out for one another and intervene during times of stress, members of the Joint Family Support Services Resiliency Team are hoping to raise awareness about the importance of available resources for suicide prevention.

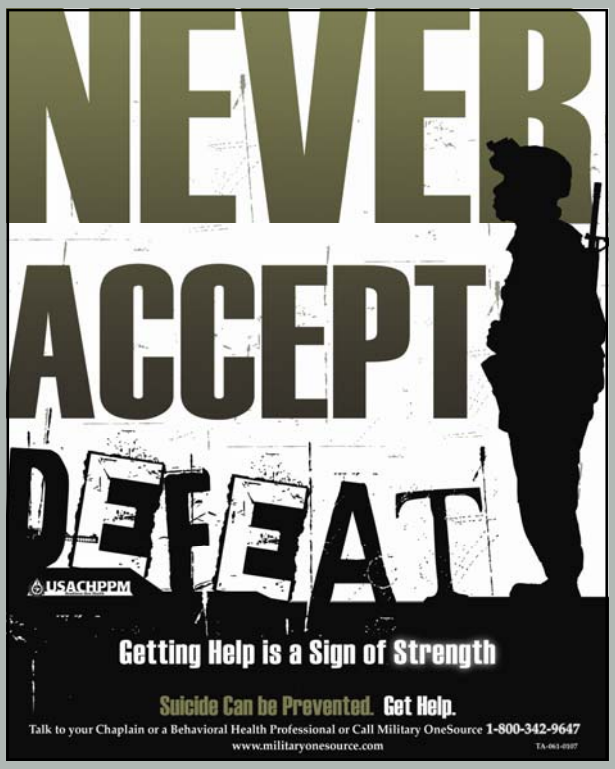
"If we don't build our knowledge here, then they can't implement over there or here," says Cpl. Donald Boland, Suicide Prevention Program Manager.

Currently reporting a total of 12 thoughts of attempted suicide and four actual acts of suicide among Texas service members since last October, actual statistics for these incidents continue to be underreported across the nation, an increasing concern for behavior specialists. In fact, one service member returning from Afghanistan last November after a 10-month tour says that suicide is just as troubling in theater, as it is here and even has even overcome his own mental health issues related to war.

"When I returned from Desert Storm in 1992, I had a problem with depression," said Capt. James Delgado, a chaplain with the 36th Infantry Division Rear Detachment. "We have much better processes in place now and when I came home this time I had no problem, as I returned with a lot more tools than before."

With peer-to-peer counseling, referral programs, crisis intervention, and an embedded program that attaches a person to a unit or battalion that is designed to provide mental health care during times of need, one disadvantage those in the behavioral health arena face focus around the lack of time service members spend with their units.

"The majority of our troops going over there are M-day soldiers so we really only see hem one weekend a month and two weeks during the Summer, so if the soldiers aren't reaching out to us or their units when they are at drill, then it's difficult for us to have good tracking of what's going on," said Social Worker for the State Sandi Valdespino.



As further resources include chaplain and NCO lead courses, restoration centers in theater, as well as extensive training and assessments pre and post deployment, those with the Resiliency team emphasize the importance of family members getting involved and being observant of warning signs and understanding that a transition and adjustment period is very common after returning from a deployment.

Warning signs for suicide can include:

- **depression**
- **withdrawal**
- **sudden changes in mood and personality to include anger and violence**
- **self-medicating with alcohol or other substances**
- **talk of suicide**
- **loss of motivation**
- **a change in sleeping patterns**

Currently operating in Austin and Fort Worth those with the Resiliency program hope to expand into San Antonio, Houston and the Valley in the near future.

To contact the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, call 1-800-273-TALK or visit their website at www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Resources and other information regarding the various programs and contact personnel, as well as resources to help identify and prevent suicide; visit the Joint Family Services Resiliency Team page on the State Family Services tab of the TKO homepage. To view the *Shoulder to Shoulder: I Will Never Quit on Life* video, visit http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/.

To contact the chaplain's crisis hotline, call 1-800-443-2985.

To obtain more information about Military OneSource, call 1-800-342-9647 or visit their website at www.MilitaryOneSource.com.

Wanting to stress that suicide is preventable and that the resources available will benefit a soldier of any rank; those on the Resiliency team hope to spread the message that National Suicide Prevention Month does not just mean that help is available one month a year, but rather is available year round.

"Some soldiers feel getting help is a sign of weakness, but the opposite is true: going to get help is actually a sign of strength," said Captain Delgado.

Texas Guard participates in Easter Island medical exchange

Story and photos by Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas (Aug. 14, 2010) – A medical exchange program on Easter Island provided free medical care to the islanders earlier this month when Chilean and Texas National Guard medical personnel joined forces to diagnose and treat a myriad of conditions.

Medical personnel from the Texas Air and Army National Guard participated in Operativo Médico-Dental Rapa Nui 2010, an annual exercise sponsored by the Chilean Air Force (Fuerza Aérea de Chile, FACH) and medical professionals on Easter Island.

"This is the Chilean Air Force's 15th year of providing care to the inhabitants of Easter Island," said Col. Marco Coppola, Texas Medical Commander," but "this was the first time the Texas Military Forces participated."

The concept for the State Partnership Program with Chile's medical professionals is to provide joint opportunities to test innovative medical readiness practices, perform screening and preventive health services, and to render medical and surgical care in an isolated region of the world.

"Last year two Chilean Air Force surgeons participated in Operation Lonestar* in Texas", he said. "They were assigned to the Texas Medical Command and saw patients in Brownsville and Laredo, and," he added "these two doctors saw more patients than most other providers there, because they spoke to patients in their native language and did not need interpreters. One of the two surgeons who accompanied us last year, Lt. Col. Alger Rodo, also participated in *Operativo Médico*-Dental Rapa Nui. He met us in Santiago and took excellent care of us. Because we worked together last year, our relationship was one of respect and collegiality."

"It is hard to say how many patients we saw during the time we were there, because *Operativo Médico* is so much more complex than Operation Lonestar which mainly deals with school physicals, blood pressure and diabetic screenings, vaccinations and dental care. In contrast during this mission the Chilean Air Force offered mammography, ultrasonography, endoscopy, optometry, dentistry and various surgeries such as laparoscopic cholecystectomy (gallbladder removal), hernia repair, varicose vein stripping, knee reconstruction surgery and hysterectomies. Because I am an emergency physician and we were accompanied by active duty Lt. Col. (Dr.) Richard Sorensen who is also an emergency physician and currently stationed in Santiago, Chile, we ended up seeing quite a few patients in *Urgencia,* the Chilean equivalent of the emergency department.

Colonel Sorenson, an emergency and flight medicine physician, said: "Working at Easter Island is different from working in the U.S. because resources are limited but being so geographically isolated, they have learned to adapt quite well.

The two main medical concerns, I saw," he continued," were dengue fever and because it is present on the island they spend a great deal on education and prevention measures. They also have excellent protocols in place for detection of dengue in any patient presenting with a fever. I commend their efforts, because there have only been two cases of documented dengue this year. Second: any major illness, whether medical or traumatic, is always a concern in an area so geographically isolated. This includes access to both needed immediate care of a complex or "higher level" type nature, or routine specialty care. The issue of specialty care is one of the things that this particular operation helps to address since we arrived with personnel from various medical specialties normally not to the inhabitants of the island. The particular specialties selected," he said," varies from year to year.

Dr. Sorenson described one of his personally most rewarding experiences when he met an elderly gentleman, who turned out to be the last surviving inhabitant of the old leper colony on the island.

"He had leprosy as an adolescent, and still lives with the deformities and secondary results of the disease. A few days before our arrival, he burned his hands, or what is left of them. He had severe burns and I was able to accompany the ER nurse to his house on three consecutive days and change his dressings. I taught them some improved techniques that, in the few days there, resulted in better removal of nonliving tissue in and around the wounds and saw noticeable improvement

(Continued on page 17)

Using an interpreter, Dr. Rogalinski speaks to a patient at the optometry clinic.

(Continued from page 16)

in his injuries which, when I first saw them, had given me great concern for possible life-threatening infection."

Overall," he said "this was a phenomenal experience. I enjoyed having the company of the folks from Texas because it is always nice to see people from back home."

Colonel Coppola explained that the hospital has a staff of physicians, surgeons, family practitioners, urologists, obstetricians, and pediatricians who either live on the island permanently or are there through a multi-year contract. "However," he said "Rapa Nui is more than 5-1/2 hours from the mainland and the population outnumbers medical providers." He added that with the addition of the new hospital currently under construction and a growing tourist industry, he does not see any problems attracting more physicians to the island.

One of his observations during this mission was that on the island, diseases that are no longer common in the U.S. are still prevalent here. "For example," he said "cancer of the gallbladder is the number one killer of women in Chile, whereas in the U.S. cardiovascular disease and breast cancer rank at the top and gallbladder cancer has become relatively uncommon. We were also on the look-out for dengue fever, a mosquito-borne illness, which is non-existent in the U.S."

Lt. Col. (Dr) Tamara Gray-Henk, 136th Airlift Wing Medical Group dentist, and Col. Coppola, were just two of the six Texas Military Forces medical professionals who treated patients, sometimes under the watchful eye of a wild horse wandering onto the hospital grounds.

Lt. Col. Chris Tabatzky, 147th Reconnaissance Wing Flight Surgeon, said of the mission: "This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and if given the chance I would participate again." .

"It was of course an exciting opportunity and the emphasis for this particular exercise was emergent and preventive care. A lot of the equipment was brought in by the Chilean doctors and because the equipment was available, some of our doctors were able to scrub in on multiple procedures," she said.

"The current facility," she said, "was originally intended to function as a MASH or Mobile Army Surgical Hospital during the Vietnam conflict but as the conflict wound down, the unit was bought for Easter Island."

She recounted that in optometry, Maj. Rogalinski saw over 200 patients and dispensed over 130 pairs of donated spectacles. Most of these spectacles had been collected by Texas Lions Clubs, and filled two suitcases which Maj. Rogalinski brought with him to the island.

She added, "Colonel Grey-Henk assisted in over 30 oral surgeries. She also performed pediatric dental procedures and oral hygiene counseling at the local school."

Although medical personnel worked hard during their time on the island, there was a cultural exchange at the end of their stay. "We were very lucky to have former Governor Sergio Rapu as our guide. Mr. Rapu is an archeologist who took part in the original dig and who led the 1978 restoration and re-erection of seven of the island's gigantic carved moai," she said, continuing "it brought us so much closer to the local population, its culture and history."

The Chilean territory known as Easter Island is one of the most remote locations on earth. Located between Tahiti and South America, the island is renowned for the huge stone statues, or moai, which once lined its shores. Although many moai were toppled during previous tribal conflicts and hurricanes, numerous statues have now been re-erected as part of a restoration project. Easter Island is a volcanic landform that spans 66 square miles and has a total population of approximately 4,000 people. Inhabitants are predominantly Polynesian. Principal occupations include farming, sheep raising, fishing and tourism.

http://berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2002/11/peace/rapu.html

The island is also known by its Spanish name *Isla de Pascua*, however its Polynesian inhabitants call it *Rapa Nui* http://www.mapsouthpacific.com/easter_island/index.html

Medical personnel arrived on a Chilean Air Force (FACH) Boeing 767 following a short lay-over in Santiago, Chile. The Texas Military Forces medical professionals, Capt. Tyler Carruth, Physician Assistant; Col Marco Coppola, Emergency Medicine and Commander; Lt. Col. Chris Tabatzky, Flight Surgeon, ENT; Maj. Joseph Rogalinski, Optometrist; Lt. Col. Tamara Gray-Henk, Dentist; Capt. Steve Young, Physician Assistant and USAF PEP Officer to Chilean Air Force, Lt. Col. Richard Sorensen, MC, FS Emergency Medicine and Flight Surgeon, were greeted with the traditional leis when they arrived and left the island knowing that cultural bonds were forged and life-long friends made.

Dr. Gray-Henk works on a pediatric dental patient on Easter Island.

News Brief

Hunting Season Begins on state training areas

From October 02, 2010 through January 16, 2011, the hunting seasons for the State of Texas, Texas Military Forces will open Camp Bowie Training Center, Camp Maxey Training Center and Fort Wolters Training Center for limited hunting of Whitetail Doe and spike horn deer. Nuisance animals, such as feral hogs may also be hunted during the season.

Texas Military Forces personnel, their family members, DOD civilians of all military services, Active and Reserve personnel, Retired military and family members, all other Adjutant General's Department employees without a DOD ID card, are eligible to register for the 2010-2011 Hunting Season.

Hunters will have the following items when they arrive at the Training Center for their scheduled hunt:

- Proof of a State Approved Hunter Education Course (MANDATORY REGARDLESS OF AGE!)
- Valid Texas Hunting License
- Valid Military (DOD) and State ID

(Hunters 17 or younger ***must*** have an adult escort who meets the above, no exceptions.)

- Cell Phone
- Hunter Orange / Florescent Vest
- Whistle
- Watch or Time Keeping Device
- Functional Flashlight
- Functional Firearm that is sighted in
- Game Processing Equipment (knife, saw, cooler, bags etc.)
- Plan / Equipment to Transport Game Animal

Open dates are as follows:

- Archery season: October 2-November 5, 2010
- General: November 6, 2010-January 2, 2011
- Late Antlerless and spike: January 3-16, 2011

Hunting will be done on a registration basis at each one of the sites. The POCs for each of the sites are as follows:

Camp Bowie- Staff Sgt. Noah Crownover, 512-782-7362 or email noah.crownover@us.army.mil

Camp Maxey- Sgt. Keli Gain, 903-732-3792 ext. 2586 or email keli.j.gain@us.army.mil

Fort Wolters- Capt. Benjamin Garcia, 512-944-2991 or email benjamin.p.garcia@us.army.mil, or Chief Warrant Officer 4 Eric Olson, 940-325-6872 ext 11 or email eric.n.olson@ua.army.mil

Registration dates for archery are September 10, 2010 to September 27, 2010.

Registration dates for the rifle seasons are September 10, 2010 to October 20, 2010 on a first come, first served basis for the rifle seasons.

When registering, hunters need to provide to the POC a good contact number, preferably two numbers, mailing and email addresses, and the names of all the hunters in their party.

For Archery hunting at both Camp Maxey and Fort Wolters, there will be an additional fee of $7.00.

For questions, contact 1st Lt. William Willett at 512-782-1959, or email at william.c.willett@ng.army.mil.

149th Fighter Wing Airman earns top honors

By Master Sgt. Mike Smith
National Guard Bureau

WASHINGTON – The Air National Guard recognized the accomplishments of its top honor guard members during its recent 2010 Outstanding Airmen of the Year celebration.

Among the honorees was Master Sgt. Velia Mireles of the 149th Force Sustainment Services Flight as the Honor Guard Member of the Year.

An honor guard's duties an include pall bearer, firing party, color team, the playing of Taps, flag folding and flag presentations, among others.

Air Guard honor guard units at the states and territories provide those honors in their regions, often to support requests and tasks from the active duty Air Force.

"I'm really proud to be a part of it," Sergeant Mireles said about her honor guard service.

Sergeant Mireles works full time for the Headquarters Security Forces Center, where she supports operations for the military's working dog program.

About nine years ago, she joined her team on Lackland Air Force Base and went through a week's worth of training on how to post colors, how to fold the flag and how to present the flag and other details, including the 21-gun salute.

"I thought I would enjoy it, and I liked it," she said.

She provided military funeral honors, presented the national flag at sporting events, and set up and presented the Prisoner of War/Missing in Action table. She has also volunteered for countless honor guard details at retirement ceremonies, base functions, flag presentations and changes of command.

"It's one of the hats that I wear," she said. "I am also a mother, a student, and I work full time in the military."

"For us to honor them makes the most sense in the world to me," said Chief Master Sgt. Christopher Muncy, Air National Guard command chief. "If you read the [accomplishments] that they submitted from across the nation – the amount of ceremonies and events that they have done are huge."

This Month in Military History: September

In **September** 1835, the Mexican commander at San Antonio, Colonel Domingo de Ugartechea, called upon the citizens of Gonzales to return a cannon they had been lent earlier for defense against Indians. When the townspeople did not comply, De Ugartechea sent a company of cavalry to take the cannon. Gonzales was reinforced by Texans from nearby towns. "Come and take it" a banner hung over the cannon read. On October 2, 1835, fighting broke out between the Texans and the Mexican cavalry. After brief shooting, the Mexicans retreated back to their headquarters at San Antonio de Bexar, and the fortress just outside of town, the Alamo. The Texans followed. The cannon, which the Mexicans never got back, would prove to be very expensive.

Stephen Austin, then serving as Chairman of the Texas Central Committee of Safety, declared, "The people of Texas are informed that their fellow citizens at Gonzales have been attacked - the war has commenced."

(Thanks to www.militaryhistoryonline.com)

WELCOME HOME!

In these images released by the Texas Military Forces, Soldiers of 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry Regiment reunite with their families in Rosenberg, Texas, Monday, August 16, 2010. Soldiers from the unit's Charlie Troop returned to the Houston-area after successfully completing a nine-month mission in Iraq. As part of the redeployment process, the unit's leadership focuses on assisting Soldiers in reintegrating with their families, rejoining their civilian jobs, and reconnecting with their communities. (Photo/72nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, Army National Guard Capt. Brandon Hohm)