

# The DISPATCH



Remembering San Pietro 8  
36th ID takes command 10  
CSTBN at Swift 12



# The DISPATCH 12

## 5 Combat patch ceremony for ADT-VI Soldiers

The Soldiers were awarded the patch after serving overseas in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom for over 60 days.

## 6 March of the Toys for a Grand Prairie family

For 10 years, men and women of the Texas Army National Guard have played Santa to needy families in the Grand Prairie area, where they spend their days maintaining helicopters at the Dallas Army Aviation Support Facility.

## 15 To Iraq with love

City of Austin employees join forces with the Texas National Guard to send over 300 care packages to Texas Soldiers deployed with the 36th Inf. Div. in Basrah, Iraq.

## 16 New Years Resolutions? Tips to KEEP them!

Everyone gets mad. What you DO about it, though...that's the important part!

## 17 New feature! "Band of Bloggers"

Although mainstream media has long covered the nation, a new breed of "citizen journalist" is popping up, the blogger. Funny, irreverent, poignant and sometimes startling, the men and women journaling life at the pointy end of the spear give us a chance to hear what the Soldiers on the ground really think.



**Cover— Air National Guard Master Sgt. Carri M. Escalera, executive assistant to the Assistant Adjutants General, salutes after the wreath laying during the 36th Inf. Div. remembrance ceremony in San Pietro Infine, Italy (Photo by Staff Sgt. Daniel Griego, 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)**

# THE BULLETIN BOARD

## The DISPATCH

Vol. 6, No. 1 January 2011

### Commander in Chief

Gov. Rick Perry

### Adjutant General of Texas

TXARNG Maj. Gen. Jose S. Mayorga

### Public Affairs Officer

TXARNG Col. William Meehan

### Public Affairs Chief

TXANG Chief Master Sgt.

Gonda Moncada

### Public Affairs Staff

TXARNG Staff Sgt. Malcolm

McClendon

TXANG Staff Sgt. Eric Wilson

TXARNG Sgt. Jennifer Atkinson

TXARNG Spc. Maria Moy

John Thibodeau

Laura Lopez

### Managing Editor

TXANG Chief Master Sgt.

Gonda Moncada

### Design and Copy Editor

TXARNG Sgt. Jennifer D. Atkinson

### Contributing Writers

#### and Photographers

TXARNG Maj. Steven Keihl

TXARNG 2nd Lt. Laura G. Childs

TXANG Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada

TXARNG 1st Sgt. Javier Garcia

TXARNG Staff Sgt. Daniel Griego

USA Sgt. James Kennedy Benjamin

TXARNG Sgt. Jennifer D. Atkinson

TXARNG Sgt. David A. Bryant

USAF Senior Airman Courtney Witt

Mr. Jeff Hunt

Mr. Marc Ramirez

Articles and photography are welcome and may be submitted to JFTX-PAO, P.O. Box 5218, Austin TX 78763-5218, or by e-mail to [paotx@tx.ngb.army.mil](mailto:paotx@tx.ngb.army.mil). Deadline for submissions is the **10th day of the month** for the issue of the following month.

*The Dispatch* is a funded monthly newsletter published in the interest of the members of the Texas Military Forces. Contents of *The Dispatch* are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the Department of Defense, the National Guard Bureau, the State of Texas or the Adjutant General's Department of Texas. Content is edited, prepared and provided by the Texas Joint Military Forces Public Affairs Office, Bldg. 10, 2200 W. 35th Street, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas. 78703.

## • *COLA Tied to Social Security and Consumer Price Index*

WASHINGTON – The Social Security Administration has announced that no cost-of-living adjustments will be made to Social Security benefits in 2011 because the consumer price index has not risen since 2008 when the last Social Security increase occurred.

Like recipients of Social Security and other federal benefits, Veterans, their families and survivors will also not see a cost-of-living adjustment in 2011 to their compensation and pension benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Under federal law, the cost-of-living adjustments to VA's compensation and pension rates are the same percentage as for Social Security benefits.

VA provides compensation and pension benefits to about four million Veterans and beneficiaries. For more information about VA benefits, go to [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov) or call 1-800-827-1000.

## • *AF Changes Fitness Regs*

The Air Force recently issued an AF Guidance Memorandum (AFGM 2) that provides policy changes to AFI 36-2905, Fitness Program, with an implementation date of Jan. 1, 2011. Compliance with the program is mandatory and outlines notable clarifications from the original July 1 guidance, such as specified waist-measurement procedures, sit-up and push-up instruction and clarity of target-component values to achieve an overall passing score. For the complete AFGM 2, visit the Air Force e-publications website. An Air Force assessment video will be posted to the Air Force Fitness Program webpage at <http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/affitnessprogram/index.asp> this month.

## • *AF Marathon Registration*

Registration for the Air Force Marathon has opened on the U.S. Air Force Marathon website at <http://www.usafmarathon.com/>. The 15th annual event will occur September 17, 2011 at the National Museum of the United States Air Force here. In addition to a full 26.2 mile marathon, runners also can compete in a 13.1 mile half marathon, a 10K run or a 5K race. Marathon organizers are encouraging runners to register early this year.

## • *Affordable Child Care*

The National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) now works with more than 700 state and local child care agencies throughout the United States to ensure that 99 percent of families that live in populated ZIP codes have access to affordable child care. Various initiatives to assist the military population in finding affordable child care are available on the NACCRRA website. For more information on NACCRRA and how to tie-in to services of this nature, contact your local Army Community Service (ACS) office or base family services office.

## • *Fisher House Serves Thousands*

Although the 53 Fisher House homes around the world serve more than 11,000 families annually, many servicemembers do not know about the organization, which enables family members to be close to a loved one during hospitalization for an unexpected illness, disease or injury. The Fisher House Foundation donates "comfort homes," which are built on the grounds of major military and VA medical centers. There is at least one Fisher House at every major military medical center to provide families temporary housing when a servicemember or a family member needs extended medical care. For more information, visit the Fisher House Foundation website at <http://www.fisherhouse.org/>.

# VA Set to Verify Veteran Small Businesses

Washington – To further advocate for Veterans, VA announced that companies identifying themselves as small businesses or Veteran-owned businesses to gain priority for some Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) contracts must now provide documentation verifying their status within 90 days of receiving notice from the agency.

“VA is committed to doing business with as well as supporting and protecting Veteran-owned small businesses,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Although the verification process may initially be a challenge to some small business owners and to VA, it’s a necessary step to eliminate misrepresentation by firms trying to receive contracts that should go to service-disabled and other Veteran-owned vendors.”

The Veterans Benefits Act of 2010, signed by the President Oct. 13, expanded VA’s require-

ment to verify the status of businesses claiming Veterans preference to compete for VA contracts by being listed in VA’s VetBiz.gov “Vendor Information Pages” (VIP) database. Companies will have to submit an application to substantiate their status as owned and controlled by Veterans, service-disabled Veterans or eligible surviving spouses. Only companies that submit the information will be listed in the VIP database.

The law requires VA to notify currently listed businesses that within 90 days of the Veteran-owned business receiving the notice they must submit certain business documents. VA sent notices to more than 13,000 listed businesses by email and mail Dec. 10-11. Other companies, wanting to be listed in the database and considered for future set-aside VA contracts, also have to submit application packages. VA will work on those verifications after the existing listings are verified.

The department plans to post additional information at [www.VetBiz.gov](http://www.VetBiz.gov) in early February informing applicants how to submit their documents electronically. In the meantime, VA’s notice to currently listed businesses encourages them to submit their information on CD-ROM. Priority processing will be given to those Veteran-owned firms that are in line to receive a set-aside contract from VA, those that already conduct business with VA, and those that have already filed an application for verification.

For more information, visit the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization’s website at [www.va.gov/OSDBU/veteran/verification.asp](http://www.va.gov/OSDBU/veteran/verification.asp) or the main page at [www.va.gov/osdbu/](http://www.va.gov/osdbu/).



*Until they all come home.*  
<http://www.uso.org/howtohelp/>



# Combat Patch Ceremony for Texas ADT-IV Soldiers

By 2nd Lt. Laura G. Childs  
Ghazni Agribusiness Development Team IV

HAZNI PROVINCE, Afghanistan- As veterans and Americans around the world honored the memory of lives lost during the attack on Pearl Harbor 69 years ago, over 60 soldiers from Task Force Ghazni, Ghazni Texas Agribusiness Development Team-IV commemorated the day by receiving their combat patches during their combat patch ceremony at Forward Operating Base Ghazni Dec. 7.

The Soldiers were awarded the patch after serving overseas in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom for over 60 days. This patch validates the service members' status as a combat veteran. Unlike other branches of the armed ser-

vices, the Army authorizes a service member to wear the combat patch when actively participating in or supporting overseas ground combat operations against hostile forces.

TX ADT-IV is comprised of Soldiers from the Texas Army National Guard and is a detachment of C Company (Long Range Surveillance), 3rd Squadron 124th Cavalry (Reconnaissance and Surveillance), 71st Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, 36th Infantry Division.

"Today the Soldiers received the 36th Infantry Division 'T-Patch' with airborne tab which symbolizes not only serving with an airborne element of the 36th Infantry Division during combat, but also demonstrates the Soldiers of the unit are forever

bonded to the past and now share a visible statement of shared commitment, value, and hardship" said U.S. Army Maj. Anthony P. Flood, the TX ADT-IV Executive Officer from Austin, Texas.

The symbolism of the 36th Infantry Division "T-Patch" is the distinctive infantry blue arrowhead with an olive drab "T" for Texas superimposed. The T-patch was first adopted by the soldiers of the 36th Division during World War I when the division was formed from Soldiers from the Texas and Oklahoma National Guard. The Patch is in the shape of an arrowhead to symbolize the state of Oklahoma with a "T" for the great state of Texas. The airborne tab symbolizes their status as paratroopers in an airborne unit.

The "T-Patchers" of the 36th Infantry Division have a long and distinguished history of service to the nation, which includes campaign credit for Meuse-Argonne Offensive in World War I, Naples, Anzio, Rome, Southern France, Rhineland, Ardennes, and Central Europe during World War II. More recently, the T-Patch of the 36th Infantry Division has seen service in Bosnia, Kosovo, the Sinai, Afghanistan, and Iraq.

The Soldiers of TX ADT-IV now join a distinguished group of combat veterans who proudly wear the "T-Patch" as evidence of their wartime service to the nation.



**HAZNI PROVINCE, Afghanistan- U.S. Army Maj. Dwight Bryan from New Braunfels, Texas, Operations Officer for Ghazni Texas Agribusiness Development Team-IV places the "T-Patch" with airborne tab combat patch on the right shoulder of SGT Jeremy Barrett from Austin, Texas, supply noncommissioned officer in charge for TX ADT-IV, during the unit combat patch ceremony on Dec. 7 at Forward Operating Base Ghazni, Afghanistan. The Texas Army National Guard soldiers from the 36<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division are currently serving in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. (Photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Courtney Witt, Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team)**

# It's a march of the toys as National Guard delivers

Story by Marc Ramirez  
Dallas Morning News

GRAND PRAIRIE – One by one, Loretta Bell Wesley's children were taken away in a tragic series of unfathomable scope.

First came two young sons lost to a house fire; two decades later, a daughter brutally murdered; two years later, her last son hit and killed by a train. Myeshia Wesley, 27, her remaining child, quit school to help look after the children of her deceased siblings. But when Granny Loretta passed away in 2008, a struggling Wesley thought Christmas would never come again.

It would take a lot to bring joy back into the family's holiday. This was a job for the National Guard.

For 10 years, men and women of the Texas Army National Guard have played Santa to needy families in the Grand Prairie area, where they spend their days maintaining helicopters at the Dallas Army Aviation Support Facility. Last week, armed with two carloads of holiday cheer, they would bring joy to Myeshia Wesley and the eight children – ages 3 months to 13 years – that she cares for.

For the last four years, the guardsmen have worked with Lorenzo de Zavala Elementary, where 86 percent of students receive free or reduced-price lunch. With

the help of school staff, one or more needy families are chosen to benefit from the program.

"We do everything we can to make sure they have a good Christmas," said warrant officer candidate Ben Hale.

Soldiers buy wish-list items and solicit donations from their friends and families, then deliver the wrapped gifts while the kids are at school.

The guardsmen are just trying to give back to a supportive community, Hale said. It's to repay in some fashion the times they've been out for lunch in uniform and had people buy their meals just because.

"All of us are totally blessed," Hale said. "To help others who are not, that's one of the best gifts you can ever give."

## Tragic ends

Granny Loretta had made a cardboard display to illustrate the talks she'd give at prisons and halfway homes, a catastrophic mosaic of family photographs and news clippings.

"She would take me with her," Myeshia Wesley said. "People would cry. She would tell me, 'Maybe this is Jesus showing us that we can bless people with our story.'"

In 1977, Loretta Wesley's two sons, Timothy and Gerald, ages 6 and 7, died in a California house fire that a third son, Melvin, 9, escaped by jumping out a window. Daughter Shawanna, 5, wasn't home at the time.

For the family matriarch, the heartache had just begun. Neither Melvin nor Shawanna ever truly recovered from the loss, struggling to put together productive lives. By age 16, Melvin had begun a drug-addled journey in and out of jail.

"He was under a lot of pain and using drugs to ease that pain," Loretta Wesley wrote in a narrative she put together to accompany her talks. "He could not understand why his brothers had to die."

In 2000, there would be terrible news: Shawanna Bell, 29, had been murdered at her Duncanville home by a near-stranger she had met at a club.

"This was the day I felt I lost everything, in-



Warrant officer candidate Ben Hale hugs Dameontre Thomas (top), 4, and Melvin Bell, 8, while visiting the children's home with Sgt. Hugo Serrano (left) and Spec. Douglas Boynton. The Guardsmen chose the family with guidance from de Zavala Elementary in Grand Prairie. (Photos by SONYA N. HEBERT/DMN)

# ers Christmas to struggling Grand Prairie family

cluding my best friend," Granny Loretta wrote. "I would lose my mind when I was told she was set on fire alive."

Two years later, Melvin Bell was hit and killed by a train in Grand Prairie. The engineer told authorities that the 34-year-old did not react to the sound of the approaching train's horn.

## **Making sacrifices**

With everyone gone, Myeshia Wesley and her mother clung to each other fearfully. Each was the other's safe haven. "I didn't want anything to happen to her," the daughter said. "And she didn't want anything to happen to me." Together, they took responsibility for the shell-shocked children left by parents lost to death, prison or personal issues: Melvin's five children and stepchildren; Shawanna's son, Rickie, and daughter, Martavia; and eventually, Martavia's three young kids. Rickie and Martavia are now adults and living with Wesley.

Two years ago, Loretta Bell Wesley died in her sleep of a heart attack, at age 55. It was the day before Thanksgiving.

Suddenly, Myeshia Wesley felt utterly, inescapably alone.

"Now that she's gone, I don't know how I keep on going," she said. "I panic sometimes. I go into my closet and pray. It's all I can do. It's all I can do."

In the barely furnished three-bedroom house the family rents in Grand Prairie, they cook dinner together – mac 'n' cheese, or cornbread with pork and beans. They laugh and talk about old times. The kids act out skits.

"I like to keep them busy, keep their minds wandering," said Wesley, who gets some help from Martavia, who recently moved in with the family.

Inside, she worries about every dime, squeezing life out of her old car and lenience from her creditors. Most of the family's income comes from government assistance.

It's not that she finds no pleasure in life, "but it's been a long time since I focused on myself," she said.

For a decade, she's sacrificed her own desires to raise the children, all eight of whom are in her legal custody. There are clothes to wash, mouths to feed, forms to sign and homework to monitor. Dreaming of work

Occasionally, she'll grant herself a visit to a nearby chain restaurant, where she'll spend \$1.50 for an order of buttered rolls and water with a squeeze of lemon and sugar. For that brief pinch of time, she said, she can be alone with her own thoughts.

Sometimes, she imagines reclaiming the ambitions of her adolescence or the simple joys of work outside the home. Her mind wanders. She remembers a hospital job she briefly held once, and she dreams of sitting behind a desk. Of paperwork.

## **A big thank you**

On Friday afternoon, pleasure arrived in the form of 11 National Guardsmen and Guardswomen, who pulled up to the family's home in a pickup and minivan packed to the extreme.

The soldiers, along with de Zavala

school counselor Kimberly Belcher and secretary Maria Brooks, took repeated turns carrying in armloads of donated gifts that ultimately covered the floor of a living room furnished only with a Christmas tree.

There were 270 gifts in all, Hale said, and that wasn't including the food – breakfast cereal, mashed potatoes, juice boxes and more.

One by one, the children came home from school, awestruck, mouths agape at the bounty and the spectacle of men and women in military uniform.

Wesley had provided a wish list with clothing sizes and other gift ideas for the kids, from diapers to dolls to action figures. For herself, she asked nothing, but Hale presented her with a stack of gift cards that rendered her speechless.

Wesley said she felt like she hadn't yet wakened from a dream, and some of the children shared their gratitude. "Thank you for all the gifts you gave us, and for everything you do for us," said Evette, 7. "Thank you for protecting us."

There were hugs and photos, and the kids wandered through the forest of gifts, looking for their names. Said Ray, 11: "When I saw the presents, I was, like.... That's a lot of presents."

"We wanted to make sure those kids have everything they need," Hale said. "For a 27-year-old woman to do that, it says a lot about her. She took on the task of being mom for all these kids."

**(Reprinted with permission of the DALLAS MORNING NEWS.)**

# 36th ID in WWII— Remembering San Pietro Infine



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

SAN PIETRO INFINE, Italy - The cold winter air filled the lungs of the gatherers as they stood closely in assembly, the same chilling air that some 15,000 Texas soldiers endured almost

70 years earlier. They solemnly

watched the parade of honor guards, the band, the flag bearers and the wreath bearers. There to honor “the greatest generation,” they quietly whispered in Italian to each other about the significance of the event, reflecting on the sacrifices and nobility of those whom they honored on this day.

Three months following the first American combat landing on the continent of Europe, on the shores of Paestum in the Gulf of Salerno, the soldiers of Texas’ 36th Infantry Division bravely faced one of their most pivotal battles in World War II. On Dec. 12, 1943, these redoubtable infantrymen engaged the German army in the small town of San Pietro Infine, liberating the Italian citizenry from their hostile oppressors. Sixty-seven years later, veterans, descendents, dignitaries and military representatives met at the very site of deliverance and paid homage to those who lost their lives in defense of liberty.

“It’s extremely important that we honor their sacrifice so that we may live with the freedoms that we have as allied partners, both as Americans and as Italians,” said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Jerry L. Wood, commander of the U.S. Army NATO Allied Forces Southern Europe Battalion.

The ceremony, held Dec. 12, at the San Pietro Infine Memorial Park Historical Museum, featured the Commander Naval Forces Europe and Africa band, an Italian Honor Guard and the Texas Military Forces Honor Guard. Parade participants also included local and regional flag bearers, Italian military representatives and wreath bearers from the Italian and United States Armies.

“It was humbling to see how much respect and gratitude the Italian people held for Texas and the 36th ID,” said U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Cynthia Alvarez, who served as a wreath bearer. “It was an honor to have been selected to take part in their celebration.”



**Top left— Army Sgt 1st Class Lugo raises the Texas Flag at the Medaglia d'Oro al Merito Civile in Italy during the ceremony commemorating the 67th anniversary of the 36th Infantry Division's liberation of San Pietro Infine.**

**Above— The Texas Military Forces Color Guard performs marching maneuvers at the Medaglia d'Oro al Merito Civile in Italy during the ceremony .**

The Memorial Park, declared a national monument with the decree of March 18, 2008, houses a museum within the very caves used during epic battle. The museum features artifacts and relics of the war as well as a documentary video telling the story of San Pietro's role in World War II. On the main wall hangs a static display of the 36th Infantry Division's iconic T-Patch alongside a timeline of their period in Italy.

Also present was former U.S. Army Capt. Herman Chanowitz, World War II veteran who fought at the Battle of San Pietro Infine. Mr. Chanowitz praised the cooperative efforts of NATO and the progress attained in international peace efforts.

"And if you go there, you will see people from 30 different countries speaking 30 different languages, but all having the same objectives," he said. "To give us the freedom and liberty, which we want and need badly."

One cannot understate the historical significance of San Pietro Infine's liberation from Germany. Said Fabio Vecchiarino, mayor for San Pietro, "This annual meeting is very important for the town of San Pietro. It is an event that changed the life of the town; it changed also the life of Italy and the world."

Throughout the day's events, a common theme of brotherhood and community emerged as each speaker paid their respects to those among the fighting 36th. Army Col. William A. Hall, vice chief for the Joint Staff of the Texas Military Forces and



representative on behalf of Maj. Gen. Jose S. Mayorga, the Texas adjutant general, spoke of the pains and enduring natures of the Italian people before the arrival of the American troops.

"In spite of their suffering," he said, "they welcomed the soldiers of the 36th Division with smiles and open hearts as if they were all members of the same extended family. The living survivors of the battle of San Pietro here and in the United States, as well as their descendents and the younger generations of soldiers serving with the 36th Division, share a deep, spiritual bond formed in those terrible weeks in December of 1943."

For Texas veterans, the event held special meaning as each Italian representative took special care in conveying their gratitude not to the United States or its Army, or even the Allied Forces at large, but to Texas and its historic 36th Infantry Division. With memorials at Paestum, Cassino, Sant' Angelo in Theodice and San Pietro Infine, the Italian people have marked and lasting monuments depicting the globally recognizable T-Patch and tributes to those who wore it during World War II.

"It is very important," said Colonel Wood, "that we take time to remember those who came to fight for the liberation of the citizens of this great community, as well as all Italians."

*Left— Texas and Italian servicemembers lay wreaths in front of the memorial monument at the Medaglia d'Oro al Merito Civile in Italy during the commemoration ceremony.*

*Above right— The memorial wreath lies on the grave-site of Umberto Utili at the Mignano Monte Lungo Cemetary*



# A New Year, A New Division:

Story by Sgt. James Kennedy Benjamin  
United States Division-South

BASRA, Iraq – For soldiers of U.S. Division-South, starting the New Year meant more than just giving up old habits and starting anew. It marked the ending of a great chapter in their history books and the beginning of a new one.

The commanding general of the 36th Infantry Division Headquarters, a National Guard unit from Austin, Texas, assumed command of USD-S from the commanding general of the 1st ID. from Fort Riley, Kan., in a Transfer of Authority ceremony held at the chapel on Contingency Operating Base Basra, Jan. 2, 2011.

Maj. Gen. Eddy M. Spurgin assumed responsibilities of USD-S from Maj. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks, signifying the end of another successful overseas contingency operation for the "Big Red One" division and the start of another for the "Arrowhead" division.

"The 1ID has accomplished its two-fold mission of advising and assisting the Iraqi Security Forces in providing for the security of the Iraqi people," Brooks said to the roomful of Iraqi and U.S. military and political dignitaries, "and in supporting the efforts by the nine Provincial Reconstruction Teams in helping to advance Iraqi economic prosperity and civil society through good governance and the implementation of the rule of law."

Brooks commended Spurgin and the 36ID headquarters for "completing the preparatory journey... The best part of the

## 36ID takes command

experience awaits you. We are absolutely confident that you are ready to excel here in southern Iraq."

But above all, Brooks thanked his Iraqi partners for their bravery and persistent effort in ensuring Iraq and its people continue to move forward from their many accomplishments in 2010.

"The soldiers and commanders of the 'Big Red One,' 1ID are honored to have served side by side with you, making Iraq a beacon of hope," Brooks said. "Your success is our success, and we have been very successful indeed."

Spurgin offered thanks and congratulations to the soldiers of the 1st Inf. Div. "Permit me to say what an honor it is to share this day with



Above- United States Forces-Iraq commander, Gen. Lloyd J. Austin, and United States Division-South incoming commanders for the 36th Infantry Division, Maj. Gen. Eddy M. Spurgin and Command Sgt. Maj. Wilson L. Early, and outgoing commanders for 1ID, Maj. Gen. Vincent K. Brooks and Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne, salute the colors during the playing of the U.S. national anthem at the Basra Chapel on Basra Jan. 2 in a Transfer of Authority ceremony. (Photo by Sgt. James Kennedy Benjamin)

# of US Division - South



*Maj. Gen. Eddy M. Spurgin, left, commanding general of the 36th Infantry Division, and Command Sgt. Maj. Wilson L. Early, the division command sergeant major, unroll the Division Colors to formally symbolize the transfer of authority of United States Division-South from 1st Inf. Div. to the Texas Army National Guard unit. (Photo by Sgt. David A. Bryant, 36th Inf. Div. Public Affairs)*

you today," Spurgin said to Brooks. "Your inspired leadership of U.S. Division-South over the past year set a new standard of excellence."

Not only will USD-S continue to provide support and assistance to the Iraqi Security Forces, he said in his remarks, but to the PRTs and U.S. State Department as the division gradually transitions the U.S. role in southern Iraq over to a new consulate in Basra.

"This is the moment that we have all been planning and preparing for," Spurgin said to the soldiers of the 36ID, naming the many difficult and diverse training exercises the division underwent prior to deployment. "We have trained and prepared for this mission like no other in the recent history of our great division. Not only are the eyes of Texas upon us, as always, but the eyes of the United States and of the great peo-

ple of Iraq as well."

"Today we have the great responsibility of being among the last American units to leave Iraq," Spurgin said. "And we are committed to completing this mission with success and honor."

"Standing shoulder to shoulder, with perseverance and a clear sense of purpose," Spurgin said, "let us add a new chapter to the storied saga of the Arrowhead division."



*Photo by Sgt. David A. Bryant, 36th Inf. Div. Public Affairs*

# CSTBN: Tough, realistic training for deploying troops



*(Chief Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada)*

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

Camp Swift, Bastrop, Texas (5 Jan 2011) – Training at Camp Swift is intense, realistic, dusty, sweaty and exhausting and the Combat Skills Training and Evaluation Battalion trainers who put Soldiers through their paces do it over and over until they themselves deploy again.

What once added six months of training at Fort Hood to a year's deployment, now takes three weeks at Camp Swift or Camp Bowie, resulting in less time away from family and more importantly better training results.

"We pride ourselves on being efficient. We like

to personalize our instruction and ensure that each individual gets the most out of their training," said Maj. Theo Unbehagen, Commander of this specialized team of trainers.

Whether the Soldier is an admin clerk, cook, supply sergeant or chaplain's assistant, every Soldier goes through a rigorous training program that includes everything from buddy care to weapons training to escaping out of a crashed or rolled-over high mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV).

"If it is the first or even second time they have seen a certain weapons system, we will make sure that they have every opportunity to get hands-on familiar with that weapon because every Soldier on a convoy has to be trained in combat arms," Major Unbehagen continued.

"If the gunner is wounded, they have to be able to get on that gun and defend themselves and their team. We want to make sure that everybody who comes through here understands that."

Continuing, he said: "There are two very important things to know about overseas missions: One - How to identify areas on the road and prevent an IED attack, and second the battle drill of what to do when you are hit by an IED. Every Soldier should know his task and purpose after such an incident."

The current training team consists of 59 Soldiers who have received their credentials through combat, additional training and exposure to the latest and greatest in equipment, training and techniques. Camp Swift can accommodate a whole



*(Chief M*



*1st Sgt. Javier Garcia, 111th Eng. Bn.*

*(Continued on page 13)*

(Continued from page 12)

battalion and as many as 350 Soldiers train at one time. Every Soldier is trained in accordance with the country or area they are deploying to but it is not only those who deploy overseas that receive their training at Camp Swift. Soldiers or Airmen deploying to support the border mission here in Texas receive their pre-deployment training at Camp Swift as well.

“Those who have experienced the border mission through Operation Jump Start

gave us guidance as to what type of training these members need and a specific training package was developed and is being taught here. This of course is a different training program from those deploying

to OEF, OIF, New Dawn or the Horn of Africa.”

The training cadre consists mostly of Soldiers who volunteer and want to come back to the training team after a deployment, but Major Unbehagen also contacts commanders and

asks them to recommend Soldiers for the training team. As if anybody needs convincing, there are certain benefits to serving on this team, not in the least the leadership qualities exhibited by members.

Major Unbehagen concluded: “If you ask any one of our trainers to instruct a lane, he or she can do that and do it to standard.”

CSTEBN Command Sgt. Major Alfred Cordova, showed the upcoming training calendar and said: “In January and February we are training the replacements for the border watch mission at Camp Bowie while we train the 111th Engineers here at Camp Swift.

How does the team capture battle readiness? – The Sergeant Major explained that the data cell prepares an analysis of what percentage of a commander’s unit is ready to deploy and on



1st Sgt. Javier Garcia, 111th Eng. Bn.

All photos— Members of the 111th Engineer Battalion run through various segments of the PMT training at Camp Swift, to include land navigation, room clearing, rifle marksmanship and humvee rollover training. Each training session last approximately 21 days.

the rare occasion that Soldiers do not meet standards, they are reset and retrained during the latter part of training.

Sgt. Major Cordova explained that instructors generally stay two to three years because, he explained: “The situation in theater always changes for example there are always new IEDs so we capture that information from those who return from combat and revise the training program accordingly. Many of those returning Soldiers volunteer to become instructors so we can always teach the most recent battle strategies.



Master Sgt. Gonda Moncada)



1st Sgt. Javier Garcia, 111th Eng. Bn.



1st Sgt. Javier Garcia, 111th Eng. Bn.



1st Sgt. Javier Garcia, 111th Eng. Bn.

(Continued from page 13)

Capt. Jonathan Velazquez, S3 for the Combat Skills Training and Evaluation Branch, is equally passionate about the training that his team provides. He has an active duty background but said: "Our

This is an awesome responsibility that each of our team members takes very seriously. All of them stand ready to provide individual training even if it means taking away from their personal time. Training gets intense," he said with smile, and reading between the lines, it sounded a lot like he was saying that it might get loud sometimes, but all to ensure that the Soldier is mentally and physically ready to enter the combat zone as a leader.



1st Sgt. Javier Garcia, 111th Eng. Bn.

Texas National Soldiers and Airmen are equally or better trained than our active duty counterparts.

I am proud to be associated with this group. There is no more reward than to prepare a Soldier.



1st Sgt. Javier Garcia, 111th Eng. Bn.

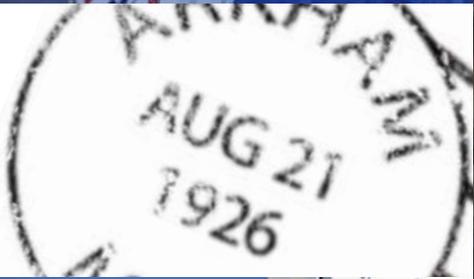
The cadre is comprised of men and women dedicated to the Texas National Guard Soldier or Airman and as Capt. Velazquez said: "We set the standard in Texas."

For more information on whether you would qualify to join this elite team, call (512) 782-5001 ext. 4942.



1st Sgt. Javier Garcia, 111th Eng. Bn.

# TO IRAQ, WITH LOVE



*Mayor Leffingwell, General Stevens, General Nichols, City of Austin employees and Soldiers from Camp Mabry at the final send-off of the care packages. Over 300 care packages were sent to the 36th Inf. Div. Soldiers in Iraq. Many city employees collected goodies to express their appreciation and support of the deployed Texans.*

**Military  
OneSource.com**

1-800-342-9647

A 24/7 Resource for  
Military Members, Spouses & Families

1.800.342.9647

# Keeping those New Year's resolutions

*Maj. Steven Keihl  
TXMF Resiliency Team*

I must admit to making numerous New Year's resolutions over the years. Some of these resolutions made positive changes in my life and world and others met with dismal failure. One year, I made the commitment to completely eliminate processed sugar from my diet... I say that as I sip on my sweet tea. Another year, I promised myself that I would gain 15 pounds of muscle... the following year I promised myself I would lose 15 pounds of fat. One year, I even dedicated myself to become a professional hockey player... that one didn't work so well either.

Don't get me wrong, New Year's resolutions are fun! They can be extremely motivating and they can lead to some wonderful positive changes in our lives. From a resiliency point of view, when we learn to see changes or challenges as new opportunities for growth and health, we are taking some monumental steps in the right direction. Instead of focusing on all the millions of reasons why we can't change or succeed, resilient individuals dedicate themselves to a passionate pursuit of positive growth and actually enjoy the challenge of overcoming the hurdles. The journey can be exciting, stimulating, and enjoyable!

So, if we are to make our New Year's resolutions stick, we could probably use a few quick suggestions that might nudge us in the right direction. First off, we need to seriously evaluate our own motivation for the resolutions we select. The motivation needs to be focused

on something lasting rather than something short term. In other words, let's just say you selected losing weight as your resolution along with a whole host of other individuals in our country. If your motivation is based upon a short-term goal like getting ready for family pictures or wearing your swimsuit, chances are you will struggle. Secondly, your motivation needs to be self-focused (not selfish). In other words, if you want to lose weight for a significant other, it could be an uphill battle. The decision to lose weight as with any other positive lifestyle change must be based on something that is personally significant to YOU!

With a healthy motivational foundation, I would like to suggest three tips to helping your New Year's resolution succeed:

- **Set REALISTIC goals.** Remember my hockey resolution... not very realistic. However, this year I decided to learn to ice skate. That seems like a realistic goal that I could likely accomplish in 12 months. I am even taking a few adult ice skating classes.
- **SCHEDULE/PLAN goals.** Saying we want to do something and doing it are two different things. We need to make our action steps non-negotiable. For me, putting a task on my calendar or things to do list is critical. Instead of debating if I want to skate today, I place it on my calendar at a consistent time and it becomes part of my routine.

- **Proceed NOW.** A lot of well-meaning individuals spend an eternity talking and debating the most effective plan to get started. Planning is good and it will assist in developing concrete goals. Even so, if you want to make a positive life change, make it! Don't wait for a more convenient time to begin the change. It won't happen. I have a friend who was going to kick her caffeine addiction as soon as school started, after Thanksgiving, after Christmas... and on and on and on. The time to act is now!

I am in your corner! I am cheering for your success! Make 2011 a year of overcoming obstacles, discovering new opportunities, and making healthy and positive life changes!

## **Resiliency Update**

The Peer to Peer training program continues! So far, we have held FIVE events at various locations across the state 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. Training in January will be in the El Paso area on 8-9 Jan 2010 and in Austin area 5-6 Feb 2010. For more information or to begin the registration process for your unit, contact the Resiliency Team NCOIC, SSG Penny Anderson at either 512-782-5069 or [penny.anderson@ng.army.mil](mailto:penny.anderson@ng.army.mil).

**NEW FEATURE**

Former Paratrooper and Army Officer, Matthew "Blackfive" Burden started Blackfive.net upon learning of the valorous sacrifice of a friend that was not reported by the journalist whose life he saved— he decided to tell the stories that the media wasn't, and became know for it. The most popular series of posts at Blackfive.net is "Someone You Should Know" which highlights the efforts of particular soldiers. Since 2003, Blackfive.net has had over 21 million readers and won numerous awards.



Today, more than ever, Soldiers rely on technology to bring the fight to the front lines. That technology doesn't just include high-tech weapons, body armor or Blue Force Tracker. It also included web logs, "blogs," that allow a more immediate glimpse into the front lines than ever before. Often funny, sometimes painful and poignant, these snippets of opinion, daily life, and commentary on war, the military, and life in general allow more people to see what our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines are thinking, experiencing and fighting for.

## **A VIEW FROM THE FRONT LINE**

# **RAND OF BLOGGERS**



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

**MORE ONLINE  
RESOURCES!**

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



# News Brief

## President Signed Improvements to Post-9/11 GI Bill:

### *Many Non-College Programs, State Service of Reserves and Guard Covered*

WASHINGTON – To bring the educational benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill closer to more Veterans and Service Members, President Obama signed legislation Jan. 4 that streamlines the 18-month-old education program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

“Since the first GI Bill in 1944, this unique educational program has adapted to the needs of America’s Veterans, active-duty personnel, reservists and Guardsmen,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “Like its forbearers, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is growing to ensure the men and women who serve this nation in uniform receive valuable education benefits from a grateful nation.

“On behalf of Veterans and the many who serve them at VA, we would like to thank the president for his support, as well as members of Congress and our Veterans service organization partners for helping make this bill a reality,” Shinseki added.

Among the provisions of the legislation are:

- Paying for on-the-job training, some flight training; apprenticeship training and correspondence courses;
- Allowing reservists and Guardsmen to have their time supporting emergencies called by their state governors credited to the time needed to qualify for educational benefits;
- Providing one half of the national average for the program’s housing allowance to students enrolled in distance learning;
- Pro-rating the housing allowance to exclude payments when students are not in class;
- Allowing students on active duty receive the stipend for books and supplies;
- Allowing people eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, but participating in VA’s Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) benefits to choose between the GI Bill’s housing allowance or VR&E’s subsistence allowance;
- Permitting reimbursement for more than one “license and certification” test;
- Reimbursing fees to take national admission tests, such as SAT, ACT, GMAT and LSAT; and
- Establishing a national cap of \$17,500 annually for tuition and fees in a private or a foreign school, not including contributions by educational institutions under the “Yellow Ribbon” program.

Information about the new provisions is available on the Internet at [www.gibill.va.gov](http://www.gibill.va.gov).

By the end of December 2010, VA issued nearly \$7.2 billion in tuition, housing, and stipends for more than 425,000 Veterans or eligible family members pursuing higher education under the Post-9/11 GI Bill.

## 2011 US Military Basic Pay Raise

On December 22, 2010, the congress sent the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2011 (H.R. 6523) to President Obama for his signature. The bill provides a 1.4% increase for military pay, effective January 1,

2011, and barring any unknown obstacles, the raise should be noticed the January 15th pay check. You can find more information on the basic pay tables at <http://www.dfas.mil/army2/militarypaycharts.html>.



# This Month in Military History: January

**Luzon**— After the conquest of Leyte the next target for the U.S. 6th Army was the island of Luzon, the most populous of the Philippine archipelago, as well as the location of the large city of Manila – capital of the Philippine Islands. When captured, Luzon would become an ideal staging ground for an American invasion of Japan. The enemy, determined not to lose Luzon, had 80,000 troops on the island.

U.S. forces invaded Luzon at Lingayen Gulf on January 9, 1945 and began an aggressive drive on Manila. The 112th Cavalry came ashore on January 27. Once again assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division, it was given the mission of protecting the flank and rear of American forces engaged in a brutal street-by-street battle for the Filipino Capital.

This task required the regiment to spread itself thinly over a wide area, establishing an outpost line facing a large Japanese force strongly entrenched in the mountains near Ipo Dam, northeast of Manila. Some 600 Filipino Guerrillas were attached to the 112th in February to aid in this effort. Although working with the Filipinos did present a few unique challenges, such as rivalry among various guerrilla units, the cavalymen and Filipinos made a very effective team.

Constant patrolling and watchfulness were the order of the day. There were frequent clashes between elements of the opposing forces. Throughout February the Japanese probed and struck at the regiment's line. A critical road

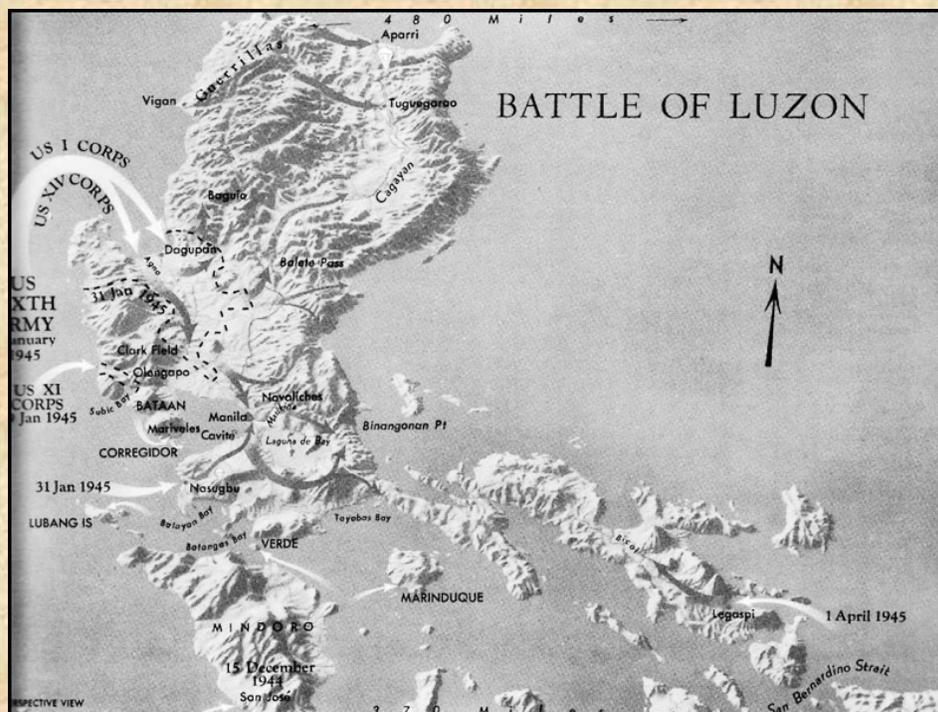
intersection nicknamed Hot Corner was a particular enemy target. Japanese artillery shelled the area vigorously, a relatively new experience for the 112th's troopers. On several occasions the Japanese launched night assaults on Troop C, defending the area. Although these were usually beaten off with ease, an attack by 300 enemy troops on the evening of February 15 was turned back only with the heavy support of U.S. artillery.

During the campaign, the 112th worked closely with the 348th Fighter Group to both defend its positions and strike concentrations of enemy troops discovered by its patrols. Guided by a Support Air Party assigned to the regiment, American pilots flew 1,422 sorties and dropped 1,149 tons of bombs to assist their cavalry comrades. This support, combined with the firepower of its own 148th Field Artillery Battalion, made the job of the 112th RCT much easier and more effective.

In early April, with the battle of Manila won, American forces turned their attention toward the Japanese forces the 112th had kept at bay. The regiment, reinforced by the 169th Infantry Regiment, conducted a reconnaissance in force to determine the strength of the Japanese main line of defense. It was during this operation, on the night of April 7, that the 112th experienced its worst day of the Luzon campaign. Enemy troops infiltrated behind its lines and cut off part of the regiment. Pummeled by shellfire and surrounded by attacking Japanese, Troops A and B had to fight their way out of encirclement, suffering serious casualties in the process.

Throughout the rest of April, May and June, the 112th continued the job of constant patrols to find and eliminate pockets of enemy stragglers and resistance. As the Japanese position on Luzon became more desperate, encounters with enemy troops willing to fight to the death decreased and the number of starving Japanese willing to surrender increased. By June 30, when the regiment was relieved from combat duty, it had killed 2066 enemy soldiers and captured 97 others – a sharp contrast to the 7 prisoners taken on Leyte. This success cost the 112th nearly 200 killed and wounded.

Many thanks to Jeff Hunt and the Texas Military Forces Museum.



# A “New Dawn” in Iraq for 36th Inf. Div.



*Maj. Gen. Eddy M. Spurgin, commanding general of the 36th Infantry Division, unrolls the Division Colors to formally symbolize the transfer of authority of United States Division–South from 1st Inf. Div. to the Texas Army National Guard unit. (Photo by Sgt. David A. Bryant, 36th Inf. Div. Public Affairs)*