

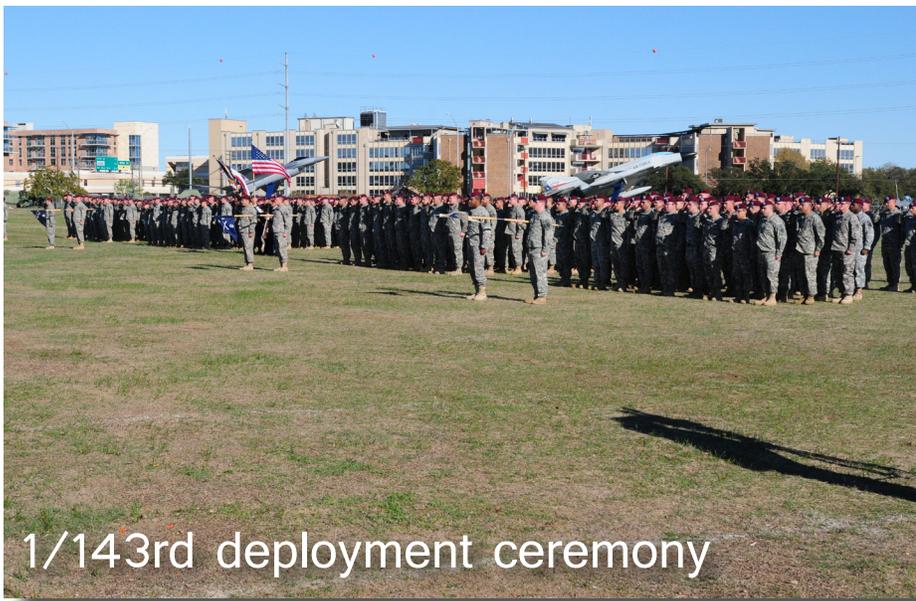
The DISPATCH

The monthly magazine of the Texas Military Forces

December 2011



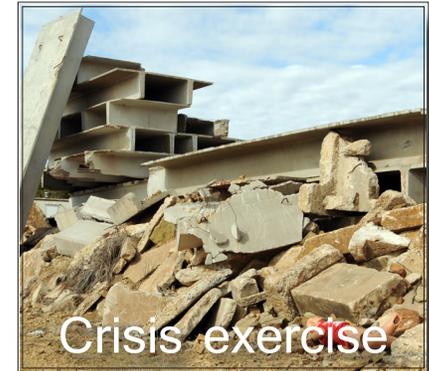
TF Raptor gun truck qualification
1/143RD DEPLOYMENT CEREMONY
Bosses get a lift to visit Airmen



1/143rd deployment ceremony



Looking forward



Crisis exercise

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ESGR visit



Holiday stress?

Cover- Soldiers from Task Force Raptor (3-124 CAV) up early getting their gun trucks ready for the ranges. The Soldiers qualified in preparation for their deployment to the Horn of Africa early next year. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Malcolm McClendon, Task Force Raptor Public Affairs)

The Bulletin Board

The DISPATCH

Vol. 6, No. 12 December 2011

Photography Project Announced

The Department of Defense is seeking donations of photographs of U.S. military service life overseas from current and former servicemembers for use in a photo recognition exhibition planned in conjunction with the State Department. Submissions will be accepted through Feb. 20, 2012. The project, called "Serving Abroad ...Through Their Eyes," will choose images that depict six specific categories: daily life, friendship, places, faces, loss or triumph. Rules, entry forms and submission guidelines may be found online. Entrants should consult with their public affairs officer before photographic submission is made. For more information go to www.ourmilitary.com/their-eyes/serving-abroad-through-their-eyes/.

Older Vets to Get GI Bill

The President signed the VOW to Hire Heroes Act into law on Monday, Nov. 21. The new law has several provisions that will have a positive impact on the veteran unemployment rate, including tax breaks for employers that hire veterans and improved transition assistance. One of the provisions that will help older veterans is a new program that will give veterans over the age of 35 a new shot at 12 months of the Montgomery GI Bill. This benefit can be used for finishing up a college degree, advanced professional certification, vocational training, On-the-Job Training and more. For more information go to www.veterans.house.gov/vow.

New VA Jobs Portal

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has launched its new "VA for Vets" website, with an online job search board, self-assessment tools, resume builder and military skills translator to help veterans identify jobs that match their skills. The new website currently has over 3,000 jobs listed. Visit www.vaforvets.va.gov/Pages/default.aspx for more information.

Long Dwell Times Hurt More than Help?

Servicemembers who spend more time at home between deployments may have a greater chance of being diagnosed with a mental health disorder than those with briefer dwell times. The study, conducted by the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center, revealed that the percentage of servicemembers diagnosed with mental health disorders after repeat deployments -- their second through fifth -- increased as dwell times prior to the deployments lengthened. These results were published in the Medical Surveillance Monthly Report. Servicemembers and their family members who need mental health care can access online resources at www.afterdeployment.org.

Applying ACE Credits

ACE was created in 1942 to recognize the educational value of military training and experience. Through ACE, you can take academic credit for most of the training you have received, including Basic Training. The ACE military evaluations program is funded by the DoD and coordinated through DANTES. In most cases, ACE recommended credits will be used to fulfill your free-elective requirements, but each college determines the number of credits they will accept, and how they will be applied toward your degree. In fact, some schools may even choose not to grant any credit for military experience. That is why it is critical to shop around to find the school that best fits your needs. Get more information on ACE at www.acenet.edu/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Military_Programs.



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To All Texas Military Forces Members and Their Families,

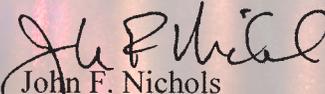
2011 has been a very successful year for our Texas Military Forces. In support of the Governor's priorities, Texas Guardsmen have performed superbly while responding to wildfires, natural disasters, and other Defense Support to Civil Authorities requirements across the State. Our Soldiers and Airmen continue to mobilize and deploy in support of Overseas Contingency Operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and other overseas locations. We have conducted very successful exchanges with our two State Partnership countries, Chile and the Czech Republic. Texas State Guard personnel have provided shelter management for wildfire victims, assisted in the State's rabies eradication program, and provided much-needed medical support to Rio Grande Valley residents through Operation Lone Star. Our Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP), Civil Support Team (CST), and Homeland Response Force (HRF) have undergone tough external evaluations, and have set new standards of excellence in operational readiness. We have continued to refine our interagency partnerships with numerous State and federal entities, and have realigned our force structure and community presence to better posture the overall force for future growth and expanded mission requirements. Through key leader engagements with community, State and federal elected officials, we have continued to showcase the professionalism, selfless service and value-added contributions of our force. As citizen-Soldiers, Airmen, Texas State Guardsmen, civilian employees, and family members of the Texas Military Forces, you have continued to accomplish your duties in an extraordinary manner, and I am honored to serve as your Adjutant General.

December is a month of national celebration, when Americans pause to enjoy the blessings of the Holiday Season and look forward to the start of the New Year. As you spend time with families and friends on Christmas and New Years, please keep our deployed service members and their families in your thoughts and prayers. Their selfless service, dedication and bravery help secure the freedoms and blessings that we continue to enjoy. If possible, I encourage you to share some special time with family members of deployed personnel to help ease the burden of separation.

I know many of our members will travel throughout the State of Texas and across the Nation to take advantage of the national holidays and visit with relatives and loved ones. Please ensure that you travel safely, alert and well-rested.

Denise and I thank you and your families, for the work you do every day in defense of our great State and Nation. You represent the very best our Nation has to offer.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!


John F. Nichols
Major General, TXANG
Adjutant General

Texas Guardsmen support emergency exercise in Oklahoma

**Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Griego
Joint Task Force 71 Public Affairs**

CAMP GRUBER, Okla. -- Former American Red Cross Director Judy White once said, "Preparedness is 90 percent of a disaster. The more prepared you are, the more likely that your response is going to be smoother and less costly and save more lives."

For the Guardsmen of FEMA Region VI and beyond, preparedness is the watchword of emergency response and the driving force behind an ever-evolving system of interagency cooperation. Operation Sooner Response, a joint training mission conducted, Nov. 12-18, across five sites in Oklahoma, built and capitalized on strong working relationships by bringing together six states for a series of natural disaster and terrorist incident exercises.

"The end state," said Army Brig. Gen. Walter Fountain, director of Sooner Response, "is to effectively leverage all the capability, all the agencies, all the resources that we have within the state, region and the nation to address a significant natural event that has become more complicated by terrorist activity."

Enhancing the participants' collective capability means challenging the command and control across the approximately 20,000 square miles that separate the different

sites. To achieve success, units needed to execute coordinated and constant communication throughout all levels of leadership.

"I think doing a larger exercise like this," said Air Force Maj. Rustin Wonn, Oklahoma Homeland Security Plans Officer, "with multiple states and different active duty units and the challenges that presents is helping us to redefine how we're going to move forward in domestic operations."

Oklahoma, Texas, Nevada, New Mexico, Louisiana and Georgia all participated in Sooner Response by contributing their respective civil support teams. These teams make up the military first responders able to react to a natural disaster or terrorist incident within one hour of impact with specialized containment capabilities.

"It's great to be working with fellow CSTs in a joint exercise," said Army Capt. Steve Schippers, deputy operations officer for Joint Task Force 71. "This helps us improve our responsiveness within FEMA Region VI and build relationships with our neighboring counterparts. Exercises like this will save lives down the line."

Also on site were civil authorities such as the Oklahoma State Health Department, Federal Emergency Management Agency and local police departments.

"The state health department has and manages the public health and the medical side of any type of response," said Shelly Aimes, Oklahoma State Health Department liaison to Sooner Response. "We have the contacts with the local hospitals and long term care facilities."

In addition to supporting the training event with the 6th Civil Support Team, Texas' Joint Task Force 71 also contributed brigade personnel to demonstrate the capacity and resourcefulness of the Defense Connect Online communication hub.

"We're able to get real-time information across to Texas Task Force 1," said Army Sgt. Jahsen Dilger, a JTF 71 battle NCO. "Anything that's going on, whether it be just like the Waxahachie fire, we were tracking in real time."

The JTF 71 successfully employed the DCO's common operating picture during its support of Super Bowl LXV and the external evaluation of its Homeland Response Force in October. The COP allows all connected users to see the same real-time updates across any distance, eliminated communication delays and guaranteeing a uniform situational awareness.

"That is what its greatest benefit is," said Dilger, "getting that information to the people who need it the fastest way possible."

The success of this operation highlights the commitment shared by civil authorities and military elements to protect and serve the community with swift and coordinated responses.

"When you build that relationship prior to that true incident," said Aimes. "Then you know what I can bring to the table, we know what you can bring to the table and it's a lot better than when you're in the middle of chaos trying to figure out who can do what."



Nevada Guardsmen engage a simulated disaster site during Operation Sooner Response at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, November 15, 2011. Texas Soldiers supported the mission by contributing the 6th Civil Support Team and personnel assets from the FEMA Region VI Homeland Response Force.

Opening ceremony bridges partnership and friendship

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Glenn Sierra
Task Force Roughneck Public Affairs

PROVINCE, Afghanistan- U.S. Army Lt. Col. John A. O'Grady, commander of U.S. forces operating within PRT Mananah Ghormach District, Regional Command North and the Governor of Faryab Province Mr. Abdul Haq Shafaq met to celebrate the record breaking completion of a low crossing bridge, named Lukenbach Crossing, in a remote region of northwestern Afghanistan outside Forward Operating Base (FOB) Ghormach. Engineers from Task Force Roughneck built Lukenbach Crossing across a narrow river valley, called a wadi, which has claimed many Afghan lives through the years in their desperation to cross-torrents of water during the wet seasons.

"I've had several talks with the people of the two villages on the south side of the wadi," said U.S. Army Capt. Matthew Calton, officer in charge

of the project for 111th Eng. Bn., TF Roughneck, TF Sword from Brownwood, Texas. "The village elders are extremely pleased about having a means to cross the wadi when the rushing water comes down the mountain. Two years ago, they had two sick young ones. They didn't make it. They couldn't cross the wadi to get to a doctor."

Lukenbach Crossing will have an immediate economic impact for the four villages in the area, as well. Now, they can cross the wadi year round to buy and sell goods and livestock. It will also be a tactical advantage for International Security Assistant Forces (ISAF), because FOB Ghormach located on the south side of the wadi will no longer be cut off from supplies during the flood season.

"I am very pleased how everyone worked together to get the job done," said O'Grady, commander of 1-84th Field Artillery Battalion, Task Force Thunder. "Soldiers from TF Thunder, engineers from TF Roughneck, the Afghan National Army and Police worked in partnership toward a common goal. Everyone will benefit from this project."

The people who live in this rough region have been promised many improvements through the years, such as paved roads, a permanent bridge, and more, which all resulted in failures. Lukenbach Crossing is an instance where actions speak louder than words.

"We must be patient. Afghanistan is moving forward," said Shafaq. "There are many challenges in the future but by the will of God and with our perseverance they will be overcome. This bridge is proof that there is improvements coming to you, your families, your villages and the rest of Afghanistan."



FARYAB PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Governor of Faryab Province Mr. Abdul Haq Shafaq inspects the water culverts during the opening ceremony of the newly constructed Lukenbach Crossing (fording site) outside Forward Operating Base (FOB) Ghormach. TF Roughneck built the site across a wadi to help Afghans and coalition forces have a safer crossing when floodwaters rise.

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Until Every One Comes Home.®

Task Force Raptor Soldiers set sights on gun truck training

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Malcolm McClendon
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

McGregor Range, Ft. Bliss, Texas – It was still dark outside when the Soldiers began boarding the bus. With a wake-up at 4:00 a.m. and formation an hour later, off they went down the long endless dirt roads at McGregor Range.

Texas National Guardsmen from Task Force Raptor (3-124 CAV) made their way to pick up their humvees for a day at the range to qualify on gun truck gunnery.

For four days, Soldiers from Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, Charlie Troop, and the 712th Military Police Company practiced and refined mounted maneuvers and shooting at targets from their HMMWVs.

“The Soldiers have to go through five tables before they get here.” explained Capt. Erik Alejos, officer in charge for the Task Force gunnery. “The first two tables are dry fire tables, with the crew learning to work with each other. The next two tables, they fire at five engagements with live rounds. And on Table V, which is a pre-qualification table, they need to hit 7 out of 10 to score a 700.”

On Table VI, qualification day, the training at the tables paid off.

“They are doing well,” Alejos continues, “we instituted the ‘crawl, walk, run’ concept out here. For a lot of these guys it’s the first time; they’ve never worked as a crew, so they’re going through that initial understanding of how to work in a gun truck crew. But like anything, as you continue to train, you get proficient at it.”

The gun truck crews consist of a gunner, a truck commander (TC) and a driver. Even though the gunner is the one who takes aim and pulls the trigger, it takes the whole crew to qualify.

“It’s very crucial for the driver to have a very steady platform for the gunner,” said Spc. Maricela Cardona from the 712th Military Police Company out of Houston, Texas. “If the driver hits the brakes, it throws the gunner’s whole sight picture off and results in targets not being hit.”

As the TC in her gun truck, Cardona is responsible for the entire crew’s success. She makes sure her gunner is up to speed on his gunnery skills, and that the driver knows the course he will be driving.

Cardona is no stranger to taking charge and leading personnel. In her hometown of Houston, she is a Human Resources Supervisor. She finds that the opportunities given to her by the Texas Army National Guard help her out there and vice-versa.

“Supervising almost one-hundred personnel in my civilian job, I get the gist of what it takes to get the word out, take care of, and mentor my Soldiers,” explained Cardona, “and likewise I can take the skills I learn

here to my civilian job.”

Once qualified, Cardona’s and the rest of Task Force Raptor’s crews will take these valuable skills on their deployment to the Horn of Africa early next year.

Alejos explained, “Our task force has been given the task to provide a security force over there. Gun trucks are a critical part of that force; and that’s why we have to do gunnery, to get our crews qualified for that mission.”

Task Force Raptor will join a larger Combined Joint Task Force in the Horn of Africa to promote partnerships with the region’s countries.

Back here on the ranges at McGregor, the crews anxiously wait their turn to qualify. The early morning wake-ups and the chilly desert air they provide are a welcomed change for Cardona.

“I love the opportunity to take a break from HR, get out of a stuffy office and shoot some weapon systems, I love it!”



Texas National Guard gun trucks from Task Force Raptor (3-124 CAV) lined up, ready to qualify on the range in preparation for their deployment to the Horn of Africa early next year.

Soldiers graduate high school with more than a diploma

Story by Capt. Kyle Key
National Guard Bureau

MUSCATATUCK URBAN TRAINING COMPLEX, Ind. — Soldiers who complete the U.S. military's first and only high school, liken the experience as an extreme makeover: lifestyle edition.

Over the past several months, 48 former high school dropouts received a second chance in life to catch up with their peers and surpass even the lowest expectations of those whom they left behind. Patriot Academy Class 12-01 graduated Friday, Nov. 4 with diplomas in hand and tools to help them succeed in the military and beyond.

Patriot Academy graduate Pvt. James B. Barker of Lubbock, Texas, was on a downward spiral before joining the Texas Army National Guard. In high school, Barker often got into fights, skipped classes and was more interested in street racing and "chasing girls" than he was getting a diploma. Barker dropped out of high school, and by the time he had a moment of clarity of what he had done, it was too late to go back.

"One day, I asked myself where I wanted to be in ten years and I realized my current path wasn't getting me anywhere," said Barker.

Barker began exploring his options and learned that the National Guard Patriot Academy was the only program that could help him earn an accredited high school diploma so he could transfer to the regular U.S. Army. Fearing disappointment, he kept his plans secret.

"It took me six months to get into the Patriot Academy," said Barker. "Then, it took me another six months to process paperwork and get cleared through the Military

Entrance Processing Station. I didn't tell anybody until I left for basic training," Barker said.

His family was elated to learn the news. Barker's father served as a judge advocate in the U.S. Marine Corps' Judge Advocate Division and both grandfathers made it to the ranks of command sergeants major in the U.S. Army.

When he took the oath of enlistment, Barker was transferred from the dropout rolls of his old high school to the Patriot Academy where an individualized degree plan was created. Barker completed basic training at Ft. Jackson, S.C., in the winter of 2011. During the initial transformation into a soldier, Barker increased his Army physical fitness test score from 142 to 252. He reported to the Patriot Academy in the spring and increased his score to 336 on the extended scale.

At the academy, Barker served as a mentor to at-risk youth, spoke to public high school students and church youth groups about his life experiences.

"Whenever I saw how the kids reacted to us, I realized from an outside point of view, just how far I've come with my life," Barker said. "I never thought about it until I talked about my past decisions and experienced their reactions. That made a big impact on me to push further and set my goals higher."

Barker also participated in the Patriot Academy apprenticeship program and worked at Radio Muscatatuck, an Internet radio station, which broadcasts news, sports, weather, music, and training information from the Muscatatuck Urban Training Complex. For all of his accomplishments, Barker has received the Army Commendation Medal, Army Achievement Medal and was awarded the Norwegian Road March Badge by the Norwegian Military Forces for completing an 18.6-mile ruck march with a 25-pound pack in October.

Eyes on West Point

Barker excelled in academics as well and is one of several Patriot Academy soldiers who is an applicant for admission to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. After graduation, Barker and 14 other soldiers listened to a briefing from Maj. Brian Wire, National Guard liaison for soldier admissions at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y. Wire discussed the Soldier Admissions Program for the USMA and the USMA Preparatory School as options for qualified Patriot Academy graduates. The Soldier Admissions



Pvt. James B. Barker from Lubbock, Texas, salutes Patriot Academy Commandant Lt. Col. Wm. Kenny Freeman as he receives his high school diploma, Friday, Nov. 4, 2011 at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Complex in Butlerville, Ind.

See **SCHOOL** on page 9

SCHOOL cont. from page 8

Program allows enlisted soldiers to receive a fully funded four-year West Point education, a bachelor of science degree and upon graduation, a commission as a second lieutenant in the Army. If a soldier is academically disqualified for admission to West Point, they are automatically considered for admission to the United States Military Academy Preparatory School at Monmouth, N.J.

During the next class orientation in mid-November, soldiers at the Patriot Academy who meet the general qualifications will be given the opportunity to work on their USMA application packets, SAT and ACT preparation and placed in a separate "West Point Track." Patriot Academy Commandant Lt. Col. Wm. Kenny Freeman said the Patriot Academy is uniquely suited to helping soldiers achieve their goals.

"Our soldiers have fewer distractions than they would at other high schools," said Freeman. "If they set a goal and want it bad enough, we will motivate and help them succeed."

Successful applicants from the Patriot Academy will receive a recommendation from the commandant. If soldiers are denied admission to USMA they may be selected for USMAPS to prepare for the rigors of West Point. Each year, only 85 cadetships go to Army National Guard or Army Reserve soldiers and according to Maj. Wire, not all cadetships were taken in 2011.

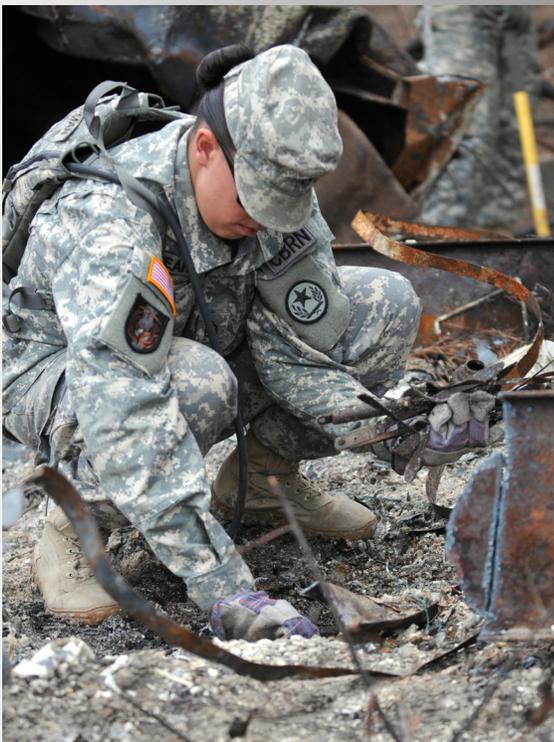
"By the time, they've earned their diplomas, our graduates are changed people," Freeman added. "Once they've achieved that goal, they are eager to reach higher and challenge themselves. Whether it's West Point

or Mountwest Community College, our teachers and counselors are there to help them along the way even after they leave the Patriot Academy."

Barker said whether or not he's accepted, he'll keep trying and will pursue other commissioning programs so he can become a helicopter pilot. As for now, he will serve on active duty orders at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Complex and is studying to retake his SAT test to become more competitive for college.

"If it wasn't for the Patriot Academy, I probably would have fallen into some of the same habits that got me into trouble," Barker said. "The Patriot Academy has changed me from a self-destructive person to wanting to serve as a role model to others. It has definitely turned me into who I am today."

LENDING A HELPING HAND CLOSE TO HOME...



Above- Staff Sgt. Nikki Shearman of the 436th Chemical Detachment assists with the cleanup of debris from the wildfires Nov. 19, in Bastrop, Texas

Right- Soldiers of the 436th Chemical Detachment assist with the cleanup of debris from the wildfires in Bastrop, Texas. (Photos by Sgt. Rachael Edmond, 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



1/143RD DEPLOYS TO AFGHANISTAN

Story by Cpt. Adam Musil
36th Infantry Division Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas (Nov 27, 2010) – At the Camp Mabry parade field, approximately 400 Soldiers of 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division participated in a deployment ceremony for their upcoming mobilization to Afghanistan.

“It’s going to be a dangerous mission, some of the areas that we are going into are literally like the wild wild west, but these Soldiers are well trained and I know they will serve confidently and with honor,” said Lt. Col. Shawn

McGrath, Commander, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment.

The unit’s primary mission will be to provide security for the Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan. Provincial Reconstruction Teams are civilian-military organizations designed to improve security, extend the reach of the Afghan government, and facilitate reconstruction in priority provinces.

The unit will conduct 10 weeks of additional training at Camp Atterbury, Indiana before heading to Afghanistan early next year.

The 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment is the only airborne unit of its kind in the Texas National Guard and has a lineage dating back to 1917. As the 49th Armor Division was transitioned into the 36th Infantry Division, leadership wanted to ensure the legacy of the 143rd Infantry Regiment lived on. As a result, the unit uncased its colors in 2009 and has companies in not only Texas, but Rhode Island and Alaska. This will be the first deployment for the current incarnation of the unit.

Left- A Soldier of the 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd, Infantry Regiment, 36th Infantry Division, gives his wife and son a kiss and hug after the deployment ceremony at the Camp Mabry parade field.

Below- The unit formed up for the deployment ceremony. (Photos by Sgt. Katie Danielson, 36th Infantry Division Public Affairs)



ESGR hosts employers of Texas Air National Guard

Story and photo by Senior Master Sgt. Elizabeth Gilbert
136th Airlift Wing Public Affairs

NAS FORT WORTH JRB, Texas-- Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) hosted more than 20 employers from various companies here in Texas to include City Council members from Fort Worth, Oct. 28, 2011.

The 136th Airlift Wing, Texas Air National Guard members brought their employers on base to get a greater understanding of what their service members do in the Guard. ESGR's goal is to gain and maintain support from employers of Guard and Reserve members and to recognize their outstanding support to these members.

The morning started with a briefing from Col. Timothy Malone, 136th Airlift Wing, Vice-Air Commander. Malone thanked the employers for allowing their Guard members to take time away from work when duty calls, often for extended periods of time.

"It's a win-win situation when employers hire a service member. They get a person who has undergone strict discipline, is skilled and motivated to do whatever it takes to get the job done and we get a service member who is committed to serve in the military," said Malone.

There are benefits for both the employer and the service member when a Guardsman is hired. The employer gains an employee who is disciplined and skilled in more ways than one. The employee gains experience, knowledge and a skill not necessarily associ-

ated with their Guard position to enhance their marketability and versatility.

The Wing employs more than 1,000 members and has actively deployed in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, New Dawn, New Horizon and border missions. Deployments can be as long as 30 to 365 days and in some cases up to two years for the border patrol mission. A large percentage of the Wing consists of traditional (part-time) Guardsmen who have full time jobs elsewhere.

ESGR actively increases awareness of applicable laws and resolves conflict between employers and service members when they deploy for extended periods of time. They promote a culture in which American employers support and value the military service of their employees. As a result, USERRA (Uniformed Services Employment and Re-employment

Rights Act), the latest in a series of laws protecting veterans' employment and reemployment rights going back to the Training and Service Act of 1940 was created in 1994.

The employers participated in a first-hand demonstration of donning the chemical suit and mask worn by service members during a chemical attack. They experienced training in various weapons, life support and flew on a C-130 aircraft in order to gain a greater understanding of what their service member goes through during deployments. The day ended with a luncheon and a certificate of appreciation.

"All this support is possible because of understanding employers...It's a great community based relationship and partnership," concluded Malone.



ESGR host employers from Texas and demonstrate what each Guard member goes through in training with weapons, chemical attack and a ride on the C-130.

HAATS off to Texas aviators during high altitude training

Story by Maj. Randall Stillinger
36th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

Power is everything in a helicopter. Well, almost everything, but without enough power, today's modern military helicopters wouldn't be able to transport troops on the battlefield, direct precision fires on a target, move needed supplies and equipment to remote outposts in the mountains of Afghanistan, or sling load a bucket of water to put out wildfires.

For most missions here in Texas, power is usually not a problem as the powerful twin engines of the Apache, Blackhawk, and Chinook helicopters can usually handle the loads Army aviators need. Unfortunately for the military, today's conflicts aren't on beachfront destinations where the temperature is pleasantly warm and the altitude is at sea level.

With the average July high temperature in Iraq exceeding 120 degrees, and the mountains of Afghanistan reaching up to 20,000 feet, today's Army aviators need to be prepared to work under less than ideal conditions. The High Altitude Army Aviation Training Site, or HAATS, is a premiere training site that teaches military rotary wing pilots to fly and survive flying in conditions that will test even the most experienced aviators.

Located in Eagle, Colo. with a base elevation of 6,700 feet, HAATS recreates scenarios that are currently being faced by those flying and fighting in hot desert locations like Iraq and Kuwait, and the mountainous regions of Afghanistan or Kosovo. While the temperatures in the snow-capped mountains of Colorado are drastically different from those of the summer in Iraq, the effects on helicopters and their engine performance are similar due to the thin air.

Aircrews from Det. 1, F Co., 1-171st MEDEVAC, based in



Crewmembers from a CH-47 Chinook exit the aircraft after participating in an exercise during HAATS training. (Courtesy photo)

San Antonio, are currently rotating aircrews through HAATS in preparation for an upcoming deployment to Afghanistan. Chief Warrant Officer Brad Asprion, a MEDEVAC Instructor Pilot who has deployed to the dessert of Iraq and the mountains of Honduras, and has recently returned from HAATS training said, "Never before were the techniques and material presented and demonstrated in such a realistic, dynamic, or challenging environment."

The challenge of flying helicopters in thin, mountainous air is primarily a result of two factors. First, engine performance is degraded as the oxygen level at the higher altitude makes the engine work harder than at sea level. Second, the rotor blades are less effective as they cut through the air that is less dense, making the aircraft controls feel sluggish as the aircraft doesn't respond very quickly. HAATS students are trained specifically how to fly within this lowered "power margin" and to recognize the hazardous situations that could arise.

While the primary focus of HAATS training is managing aircraft power and flying at high altitudes, other aspects of mountain flying present significant hazards to Army Aviators. With Landing Zones above 10,000 feet, and one at 13,500 feet, students are taught to be aware of, and look for signs that could be impact the success or failure of the landing:

- Mountain winds are unpredictable by weather forecasters, and often swirl around rock formation or "bounce" off of ridgelines.
- Snow on the ground can produce "whiteout" conditions that can bring an aviator's visibility down to zero during landing and takeoff.

- Physiological effects of thin air on the human body can incapacitate even the most experienced aviator.

- Unpredictable and changing mountain weather that can turn a simple flight into a dangerous emergency situation.

Army pilots are well-trained to recognize the various conditions and scenarios that could impact the flight, but also rely heavily on the assistance from the Crew Chiefs and Flight Engineers in the back. They provide a critical third set of eyes and ears to help alert the pilots to hazardous situations and to lighten their workload in stressful conditions. They often assist the pilots "on the fly" calculating ever-changing conditions like weight, weather, and wind that will effect aircraft performance during takeoff and landing.

Spc. Joel Hall, a Crew Chief who attended HAATS training with Asprion, also got a lot out of the training, and said that "it was a good experience to exercise my duties and be responsible for the air-

See HAATS, next page



A HOLIDAY SAFETY MESSAGE

The eve of Christmas and New Year's Holiday season is a time for us to be joyous as we celebrate with family and friends. It is also a somber time as we reflect upon the past year. It has been especially tragic for our Force due primarily to fatality POV and POM accidents.

Many of us will travel during this holiday season. Historically, both accident and fatality statistics peak during the Christmas and New Year's holiday period. None of us plan on having an accident but the potential is always there. Practice situational awareness and use backwards planning to be prepared for events that may occur. Keeping yourself and your family prepared and safe during this holiday season is important.

New Year's Eve is one of the biggest parties of the year. Designate drivers before you start your celebration, look out for your buddies, and plan appropriately for parties. You've worked hard, and deserve to play hard, but be safe when you do.

Enjoy this Season, make maximum use of time with family and friends, and prepare yourself for the challenges of the New Year. The successes we've had this past year are a direct result of your hard work and dedication. Be cognizant of our brothers and sisters who may not be able to celebrate with their friends and family. Happy Holidays, Merry Christmas, and have a Happy New Year.

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HAATS, cont. from previous page

craft, without the strain of an actual deployment to a combat zone."

While the training at HAATS is geared specifically for mountain flying and hot weather scenarios where external factors can create hazardous conditions, the lessons learned through classroom and in-flight training are applicable wherever Army aircraft are called to fly.

An aircraft loaded down at its maximum allowable gross weight, whether it be passengers, cargo, or a water bucket, has performance limitations similar to those in a high altitude environment. While the Active Duty Army makes it mandatory for all of its aviators to attend HAATS, the Army National Guard does not.

Lieutenant Colonel Jim Nugent, commander of 2nd Battalion, 149th Aviation based in Grand Prairie couldn't agree more with the critical lessons that are taught by the HAATS instructors. "This course saves lives. Army aviators now routinely operate in extreme circumstances that require our pilots and crew members to maximize their airframe's capabilities - in high, heavy, and hot conditions - and the HAATS is a golden jewel that provides our aviators

world-class training."

Nugent, who has commanded the 2-149th since 2009 and will oversee the upcoming deployment of units from this General Support Aviation Battalion (GSAB), believes that every aircrews deploying to OND and OEF should attend HAATS whenever possible. "Of all the pre-mobilization training events that are put before my aircrews, I consider this a top pre-mobilization training priority that gives our crews an edge in safely getting the job done," Nugent said.

Most Army aviators will agree that new pilots should receive initial high altitude training at HAATS early in their careers, and with follow-on currency training every few years thereafter, and not just before a deployment.

As the United States military continues to rely so heavily on Army Aviation during peace time and at war, it is critical that the training of our pilots be as realistic and as challenging as any scenario that they could face around the world. For those that have attended the training, there is a definite consensus that HAATS provides that challenge and realism.

Mama's Eggnog By Paula Deen, Food Network

Ingredients

- 6 egg, separated*
- 3/4 cup sugar
- 1 pint heavy cream
- 4 pints milk
- 1/2 pint Bourbon
- 1 tablespoon vanilla
- Nutmeg

Directions

In a bowl beat the egg yolks with the 1/2 cup of sugar until thick. In another bowl beat the egg whites with 1/4 cup of sugar until thick. In a third bowl beat the cream until thick. Add the cream to the yolks, fold in the egg whites, and add the milk, Bourbon, vanilla, and a pinch of nutmeg, if desired. Chill in freezer before serving. Serve eggnog in a large punch bowl. *RAW EGG WARNING

Spouse Telephone Support Program Demonstrates Improved Quality of Life

Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON – The Department of Veterans Affairs is implementing a telephone support program to help the spouses of returning Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans, after a pilot telephone support program showed significant reduction in stress for spouses.

“Returning to civilian life after living in constant combat readiness can be a shocking transition, and it is the immediate family, the spouses and children, who bear the brunt of that transition with those who served,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “The more support we can provide to the family, the better the outcome will be for our Veterans.”

The spouse telephone support program, which is part of VA’s Caregiver Support Program, builds spouses’ ability to cope with the challenges that reintegration to civilian society can bring, helps them serve as a pillar of support for returning Veterans, and eases the transition for families after deployments. Spouses in the pilot program reported decreased symptoms of depression and anxiety, with an increase in social support.

Spouses participate in 12 telephone support groups over six months. The focus is on problem-solving and communication, relationships, mental health and resilience. A trained, nationwide team of VA medical center staff members, including many caregiver support coordinators, will lead the support groups.

Typical issues spouses and Veterans face after

deployment include communication difficulties, the need to renegotiate family roles and responsibilities and the added stress of combat related injury. Spouses of Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan have reported feeling overwhelmed, depressed, anxious and frustrated.

“Providing support to family caregivers is the right thing for VA to do,” said Dr. Robert Petzel, VA’s under secretary for health. “A simple series of phone calls can do so much good. Certainly, those who fought for our nation and the spouses who allowed them to make that sacrifice deserve this support.”

The program is based on research by VA researchers Dr. Linda Nichols and Dr. Jennifer Martindale-Adams, of the Memphis VA Medical Center and the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. Both researchers developed and studied interventions for family members of Veterans and military personnel. Their work with spouses of post-deployed and deployed military personnel is funded through the Defense Health Program, managed by the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command.

Local caregiver support coordinators are available to assist Veterans and their caregivers in understanding and applying for VA’s many caregiver benefits. VA also has a Web page, www.caregiver.va.gov, with general information on spouse telephone support and other caregiver support programs available through VA and the community.

Texas State Guard dives into training to increase readiness

Story by 1st. Lt. Dale Laine
Texas State Guard Public Affairs

Five members of the Texas Maritime Regiment (TMAR) 2nd Battalion’s Dive, Rescue and Recovery (DR&R) teams achieved diver second class status by completing the requisite dive training evolutions as well as attaining the advanced open water civilian certification.

The stepped up recognition means two new elite teams have made a giant step towards fulfilling one of TMAR’s primary missions - supporting Texas Parks and Wildlife officers on state lakes and rivers.

Additionally, the DR&R teams will now be ready to respond during emergencies such as flooding that affects local communities and traps residents, or during search and recovery operations for missing boaters and swimmers.

Members of the teams must achieve a minimum of third class diver to be eligible to join, and then commit to train towards first class designation.

Applications for the teams are being accepted from qualified members of the Texas State Guard. If you think you have what it takes to make the teams, please contact the Maritime Regiment at (512) 782-5101 for full details and qualifications needed.



Petty Officer 1st Class John Arnn and Gunnery Sgt. Clayton Cormack adjust Senior Chief Petty Officer Gary Wilson’s equipment. Photo by Ensign Frank S. Hooton

VETERAN JOURNAL

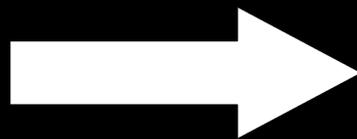
The Veteran Journal is dedicated to providing timely and relevant news of and information on veteran issues for veterans, active military personnel and their supporters. The Veteran Journal publishes articles on six primary topics: Military News, Veteran Benefits, Military Life, Community, Education and Careers.

[HTTP://WWW.VETARANJOURNAL.COM](http://www.veteranjournal.com)

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 military life and history 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

BAND OF BLOGGERS



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CHECK US OUT ON THE INTERNET!

Coping With Holiday Stress- Managing time and expectations

The Mayo Clinic

The holiday season often brings unwelcome guests — stress and depression. And it's no wonder. The holidays present a dizzying array of demands — parties, shopping, baking, cleaning and entertaining, to name just a few.

But with some practical tips, you can minimize the stress that accompanies the holidays. You may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would.

Tips to prevent holiday stress and depression

When stress is at its peak, it's hard to stop and regroup. Try to prevent stress and depression in the first place, especially if the holidays have taken an emotional toll on you in the past.

1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** If someone close to you has recently died or you can't be with loved ones, realize that it's normal to feel sadness and grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings. You can't force yourself to be happy just because it's the holiday season.

2. **Reach out.** If you feel lonely or isolated, seek out community, religious or other social events. They can offer support and companionship. Volunteering your time to help others also is a good way to lift your spirits and broaden your friendships.

3. **Be realistic.** The holidays don't have to be perfect or just like last year. As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Choose a few to hold on to, and be open to creating new ones. For example, if your adult children can't come to your house, find new ways to celebrate together, such as sharing pictures, emails or videos.

4. **Set aside differences.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are, even if they don't live up to all of your expectations. Set aside grievances until a more appropriate time for discussion. And be understanding if others get upset or distressed when something goes awry. Chances are they're feeling the effects of holiday stress and depression, too.

5. **Stick to a budget.** Before you go gift and food shopping, decide how much money you can afford to spend. Then stick to your budget. Don't

try to buy happiness with an avalanche of gifts. Try these alternatives: Donate to a charity in someone's name, give homemade gifts or start a family gift exchange.

6. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and then make your shopping list. That'll help prevent last-minute scrambling to buy forgotten ingredients. And make sure to line up help for party prep and cleanup.

7. **Learn to say no.** Saying yes when you should say no can leave you feeling resentful and overwhelmed. Friends and colleagues will understand if you can't participate in every project or activity. If it's not possible to say no when your boss asks you to work overtime, try to remove something else from your agenda to make up for the lost time.

8. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a free-for-all. Overindulgence only adds to your stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before holiday parties so that you don't go overboard on sweets, cheese or drinks. Continue to get plenty of sleep and physical activity.

9. **Take a breather.** Make some time for yourself. Spending just 15 minutes alone, without distractions, may refresh you enough to handle everything you need to do. Take a walk at night and stargaze. Listen to soothing music. Find something that reduces stress by clearing your mind, slowing your breathing and restoring inner calm.

10. **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, and unable to face routine chores. If these feelings last for a while, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

Take control of the holidays

Don't let the holidays become something you dread. Instead, take steps to prevent the stress and depression that can descend during the holidays. Learn to recognize your holiday triggers, such as financial pressures or personal demands, so you can combat them before they lead to a meltdown. With a little planning and some positive thinking, you can find peace and joy during the holidays.

Job Connection Education Program: Sgt. Zavala

Story by Mary Weaver

Job Connection Education Program

Sergeant Hugo Zavala has plans for his future and he knows what to do to achieve them. Last year, after a buddy told him about a new program located at the Sandage Armory in Fort Worth, Zavala reached out to the Job Connection Education Program (JCEP) to assist him in finding employment. Immediately after registering with JCEP Zavala was deployed to Afghanistan, and his counselor recommended that he reconnect with her about ninety days prior to returning home.

Zavala did just that. His return date was toward the end of July and Zavala reached out via email to the JCEP counselor he had previously worked with in the spring, asking for job search assistance while deployed. When asked about his first thoughts concerning the Job Connection Education Program, Zavala stated, "I thought the program would be like another veteran service agency, which tried to be helpful but was limited on what they can do." What he learned through the job search process with JCEP was very different, "My perspective changed with all the help I received, and when we met face-to-face. The one-on-one offered personal assistance and gave me motivation."

He went on to explain that the job blasts received while deployed provided encouragement that jobs would be available upon his return. Zavala provided a basic resume reflecting his education, work experience, and skills. Together, Zavala and the counselor created a

resume that identified his strengths and interests, which ultimately got him employed.

Another factor that encouraged Zavala, "They [counselor] were always checking up on me and took an interest in the jobs I was applying for and what I thought about the outcome." After returning from deployment, Zavala's Counselor recommended that he participate in a mock interview to prepare for the real deal. Zavala stated, "The mock interview and resume put me over the top!" He went on to say, "I'm sure that's why I was hired so quickly."

Zavala understands the importance of patience. He commented, "It may take time, but JCEP will help you get a job. Just give them a chance." Ultimately, Zavala had four job offers from JCEP employer partners to choose from in one week's time. He chose the position that would allow him to grow in his career interest – Information Technology.

Along the way, Zavala has encouraged others to reach out to JCEP for assistance. Zavala encouraged a friend to register with JCEP; the Soldier took his advice, and like Zavala was hired within one week of landing in Texas after returning from deployment. All in all, Zavala understands the importance of planning ahead and he is enjoying his new job.

The Job Connection Education Program (JCEP) is an employment partnership initiative designed to provide relevant and timely workforce training



Sgt. Hugo Zavala

and job-placement assistance to Texas National Guardsmen. The program's specialized education, training, and job-search services will enhance participants' abilities to obtain and retain meaningful employment.

JCEP's objective is to help participants identify aptitudes and abilities honed in the military, arrive at a plan for transferring them to a civilian job setting, and assist program participants in understanding and mastering key job-search resources and services for optimal job placement. For more information or to register for employment assistance, visit www.jcep.info

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NEWS BRIEF

Risk Factors for Posttraumatic Stress Symptomatology in Iraq and Afghanistan War Veterans

Similar to Those Observed in Vietnam Veterans- Women Veterans Face New Risk Factors

Department of Veterans Affairs

WASHINGTON – Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) researchers from Boston report in the November issue of the *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* that risk factors for posttraumatic stress symptomatology (PTSS, short of full-blown posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD) in Afghanistan and Iraq Veterans were found to be similar to those observed in Vietnam Veterans. This suggests that there may be generalized mechanisms and pathways, common to different Veteran populations, through which risk factors contribute to PTSS.

"This research underscores the vital importance of VA's outreach to Veterans, and their families, in helping them cope with posttraumatic stress," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

The study subjects were a national sample of 579 (333 female and 246 male) Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans exposed to combat operations who had returned from deployment in the 12 months preceding the study. Using data from

mailed surveys, the researchers assessed, as predictors of posttraumatic stress symptomatology, several risk factors which were previously documented among Vietnam Veterans. Examples include exposure to combat, predeployment stress exposure, dysfunctional family during childhood, lack of post-deployment emotional support from family and friends, and post-deployment stress exposure.

An interesting finding was that the women Veterans surveyed had new risk factors that were not seen in Vietnam-era women, such as exposure to combat and perceived threat. The authors ascribed that finding to the significantly different experiences of female Vietnam War and Afghanistan and Iraq war Veterans. Women Vietnam Veterans were primarily nurses or clerical staff. In contrast, women Veterans' roles in Afghanistan and Iraq have substantially expanded, with much higher levels of exposure to combat. Thus, women Veterans in these more recent conflicts may have more in common with their male

contemporaries, in relation to PTSS risk, than with their female counterparts from the Vietnam era. However, in terms of postdeployment readjustment, family relationships during deployment appeared to play a more prominent role in female compared to male Veterans.

"Our findings highlight the impact and role of family disruptions in increasing the risk for posttraumatic stress symptomatology, particularly for female service-members," said Dr. Dawne Vogt, the paper's lead author, from the VA Boston Healthcare System. "It is particularly noteworthy that women who experienced relationship problems during deployment, also reported less postdeployment social support."

Veterans who believe they are experiencing symptoms of PTSS or PTSD may call the crisis hotline number at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) and then push 1 on their telephone keypad to reach a trained VA mental health professional who can assist the Veteran 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

TXSG 2nd Reg. assists in coat distribution; more than 1,600 families get coats for kids

Story by MAJ Michael Quinn Sullivan Texas State Guard Public Affairs

ROUND ROCK, Texas – For nearly a decade, the Texas State Guard's 2nd Regiment has supported the work of the Round Rock Area Serving Center's "Coats for Kids" project. With winter approaching, more than 1,600 families received coats for their children.

"We're honored to stand alongside the Serving Center in making sure kids are ready for winter," said Col. Frank Woodall, commanding officer of the 2nd Regiment. "It's another way our men and women in the Texas State Guard can give back to our communities."

The coat distribution was made available to families facing tough economic choices this winter. And the weather for the distribution day at Dell Diamond set the tone.

"It was near freezing when the volunteers and TXSG personnel arrived, so it was no stretch to imagine the hardship the kids would be facing in a couple months without appropriate clothing," added Lt. Col. Peyton Randolph, who commands

the regiment's 2nd Battalion.

Throughout the morning, more than a dozen TXSG Soldiers helped shoppers find the right line to stand in, while also assisting the "Coats for Kids" volunteers with crowd control near the tables handing out coats, caps, scarves and stuffed animals. They also escorted families through the various stations where they picked up cold-weather clothing for their children.

"The Serving Center is all about practically helping families in a temporary bind, and that's something the Soldiers in the State Guard can identify with completely," said Randolph. "Supporting them annually in this way is frankly a highlight of our year."

When the event ended at 11 am, the TXSG Soldiers remained to reorganize the undistributed items, and box them for return to the RRASC's facilities. Central Texas families who could not participate in Saturday's giveaway are welcome to visit the RRASC offices before the end of December to pick up needed items.

Military History- Pearl Harbor

The 7 December 1941 Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor was one of the great defining moments in history. A single carefully-planned and well-executed stroke removed the United States Navy's battleship force as a possible threat to the Japanese Empire's southward expansion. America, unprepared and now considerably weakened, was abruptly brought into the Second World War as a full combatant.

Eighteen months earlier, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had transferred the United States Fleet to Pearl Harbor as a presumed deterrent to Japanese aggression. The Japanese military, deeply engaged in the seemingly endless war it had started against China in mid-1937, badly needed oil and other raw materials. Commercial access to these was gradually curtailed as the conquests continued. In July 1941 the Western powers effectively halted trade with Japan. From then on, as the desperate Japanese schemed to seize the oil and mineral-rich East Indies and Southeast Asia, a Pacific war was virtually inevitable.

By late November 1941, with peace negotiations clearly approaching an end, informed U.S. officials (and they were well-informed, they believed, through an ability to read Japan's diplo-

matic codes) fully expected a Japanese attack into the Indies, Malaya and probably the Philippines. Completely unanticipated was the prospect that Japan would attack east, as well.

The U.S. Fleet's Pearl Harbor base was reachable by an aircraft carrier force, and the Japanese Navy secretly sent one across the Pacific with greater aerial striking power than had ever been seen on the World's oceans. Its planes hit just before 8AM on 7 December. Within a short time five of eight battleships at Pearl Harbor were sunk or sinking, with the rest damaged. Several other ships and most Hawaii-based combat planes were also knocked out and over 2400 Americans were dead. Soon after, Japanese planes eliminated much of the American air force in the Philippines, and a Japanese Army was ashore in Malaya.

These great Japanese successes, achieved without prior diplomatic formalities, shocked and enraged the previously divided American people into a level of purposeful unity hardly seen before or since. For the next five months, until the Battle of the Coral Sea in early May, Japan's far-reaching offensives proceeded untroubled by fruitful opposition. American and Allied

morale suffered accordingly. Under normal political circumstances, an accommodation might have been considered.

However, the memory of the "sneak attack" on Pearl Harbor fueled a determination to fight on. Once the Battle of Midway in early June 1942 had eliminated much of Japan's striking power, that same memory stoked a relentless war to reverse her conquests and remove her, and her German and Italian allies, as future threats to World peace.

USS Maryland (BB-46) alongside the capsized USS Oklahoma (BB-37). USS West Virginia (BB-48) is burning in the background. (U.S. Navy photo)

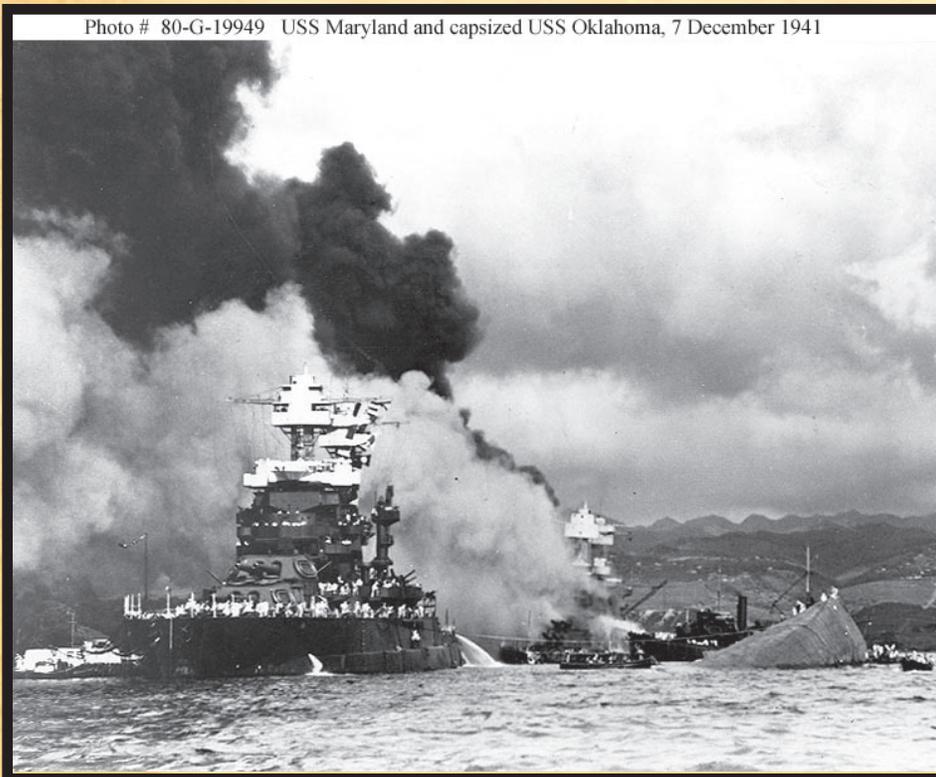


Photo # 80-G-19949 USS Maryland and capsized USS Oklahoma, 7 December 1941

Happy Holidays

From the Joint Forces Texas Public Affairs Office



*Malcolm, *Maria, Laura, Eric, Luke, William, Deborah, Amy, Jennifer, John

*Deployed