

The DISPATCH

The Monthly Magazine of the Texas Military Forces

February 2008

Texas National Guard Recruits 19,000th Soldier

19,000 STRONG!

**NATIONAL
GUARD**

TEXAS

ALWAYS READY, ALWAYS THERE.

NATIONAL GUARD

The DISPATCH



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THE BULLETIN BOARD

TRICARE Reserve Select offers comprehensive coverage

TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS), the premium-based TRICARE health plan that qualified National Guard and Reserve members may purchase, offers comprehensive health coverage similar to TRICARE Standard and TRICARE Extra.

Enrollment into the TRS program is a two-step process. Current TRS members can monitor their TRICARE health benefit on the Beneficiary Web Enrollment Web site.

First Lt. Alexander Sanchez (alexander.sanchez2@us.army.mil) noted some key facts related to TRS:

- Selected Reserve members do not have to be activated in response to a contingency to be eligible for TRS.
- There is expanded survivor benefit for all TRS beneficiaries.
- There is not period of coverage time limits.
- There is continuous open enrollment.
- There is a one-year lockout for voluntary disenrollment.
- Nonpayment does not constitute cancellation of coverage. The lockout for nonpayment of premiums is one year or until the debt is paid in full, whichever is longer.

For more information, call Lieutenant Sanchez or Staff Sgt. Jesus Quintanilla at (512) 782-6852. Also visit the Humana Military Web site at www.humana-military.com or the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/index.jsp.

Family Readiness schedules Marriage Enrichment Seminars

The Family Readiness Office invites Texas Military Forces members and their families to participate in upcoming Marriage Enrichment Seminars. These two-day seminars provide time for couples to spend together and give them tools for a happier, healthier marriage.

Seminars are scheduled in different Texas cities every month of the year. The next one is scheduled for March 29 and 30 in Fort Worth. The cutoff date to register is Feb. 27.

To register, visit the Web site at <http://www.texasnationalguard.us/familyreadiness/>. Click on Marriage Retreats and then click on Register. For more information, contact Lynne Tucker at (512) 782-5666.

Grant program helps families deal with separation

Our Military Kids grant program helps children (kindergarten to 12th grade) of deployed and severely injured Guard personnel afford to participate in activities such as youth sports, fine arts and tutoring programs.

The nonprofit organization was formed in the realization that many National Guard families live far away from military installations where family support and youth programs are routinely offered for free to military families.

To apply for the program, go to www.ourmilitarykids.org, print out and fill in the application and send it in with a copy of deployment orders and printed information about the activity. If everything is in order, a check for up to \$500 will be sent to the organization conducting the activity for a period of up to six months.

Defense Authorization Act includes interesting provisions

The Defense Authorization Act for fiscal 2008, which was recently signed into law this week by the President, includes some provisions of special interest to Texas Military Forces. The new law:

- Requires the Secretary of Defense to submit a report to Congress no later than March 31 on the feasibility of establishing a Regional Disaster Response Center at Kelly Air Field, San Antonio. If such feasibility is established, it also requires the secretary to determine how it would leverage the capabilities of several organizations.
- Allows members of the armed forces and veterans to salute the U.S. flag even if not in uniform.
- Stipulates that at least one deputy commander at Northern Command will be a National Guard officer unless the NORTHCOM commander is a National Guard officer.
- Repeals all changes made to the Insurrection Act in October 2006.

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Tony Moore, office supervisor for the Texas Veterans Commission, counsels a Soldier during a post-deployment health reassessment on Camp Mabry Nov. 4. (Texas Military Forces photos by Sgt. Matthew Wester, 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

Screening Tool Provides Deployment Readiness Safety Net

**By Sgt. 1st Class Merrion P. LaSonde
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment**

Sgt. John Smith returned from deployment six months ago and has not had a decent night's sleep since. He tosses and turns for hours just trying to fall asleep, only to wake up startled an hour later drenched in sweat. He knows his buddy is gone; he saw it happen. He has tried everything he can think of to quiet his mind and make the visions stop. He does not like to get drunk and he does not want to get addicted to sleeping pills, so he ends up in the same state every night -- lying in bed, waiting for rest that will not come, hoping that tonight the nightmares stop. He needs help.

Prior to departing a combat zone, Soldiers participate in a Post-Deployment Health Assessment (PDHA) screening. They answer several questions about the type of situations they encountered, what they experienced and give an honest assessment of their current mental and physical health. If they feel they have any issues and would like assistance, they simply state that on the questionnaire and help begins immediately in the form of a one-on-one screening with a health care professional.

"The Post Deployment Health Reassessment [PDHRA] is a screening tool that provides a deployment readiness safety net," said Capt. Geoffrey I. Powell, a physician assistant and direct supervisor of the PDHRA team. "It was put in place by the Department of Defense [DOD] to help catch behavioral health and physical complaints related to deployments for both active duty and reserve component Soldiers.

"It is most important for the reserve Soldiers because they typically don't have the same access to health care that is available to active duty Soldiers," Captain Powell continued. "The program was begun in response to a large number of deployed Soldiers coming home with complaints that were not being addressed by the military. Exceedingly high divorce and suicide rates among previously deployed Soldiers spurred the DOD to do something to assist these Soldiers."

PDHRA is an expansion of the existing PDHA program and is based on lessons learned during the Global War on Terrorism.

The PDHRA mission is to provide a full range of services to Soldiers. It recognizes that deployment may have an impact on their health and wellbeing. The goal is to avoid or minimize any negative impact

deployment may have had on Soldiers' health and to do so by helping Soldiers to get help early, while problems are small.

Sometimes, problems don't arise until after a Soldier is home for a while. It can take several months for veterans to notice pains they never had before or experience nightmares that rob them of sleep.

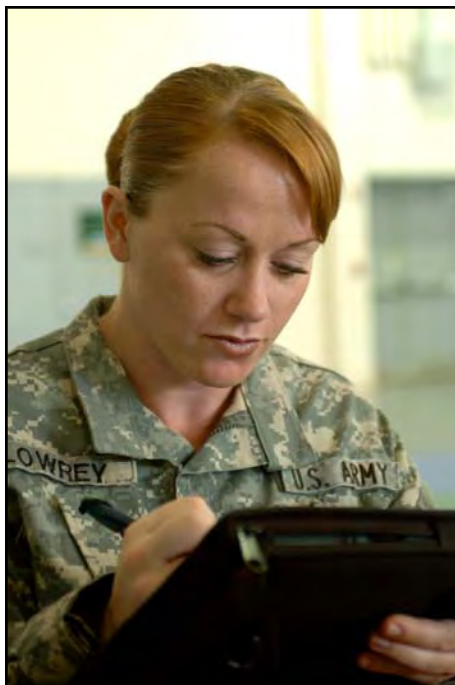
"PDHRA is ideally conducted 90 to 180 days after a Soldier returns home from deployment or after discharge from a medical treatment facility if evacuated from a combat zone," said Sgt. Ryan Harris, PDHRA coordinator for Texas. "It is a health screen and does not necessarily include a diagnosis. It does, however, refer a Soldier for a follow-on evaluation appointment and, if necessary, treatment thereafter. The purpose is to safeguard the health of those who serve our country by proactively identifying health concerns that emerge over time following deployments."

The PDHRA screening consists of four stations. At the first station, Soldiers view a video titled "Battlemind."

"The 'Battlemind' video is put out by the Department of the Army Surgeon General's office," Sergeant Harris said. "It was published by Walter Reed Army Medical Center and its purpose is to show different scripted scenarios to Soldiers regarding battlefield habits that they don't realize they carry back home. For instance, while in a combat zone, operation security is crucial, but when Soldiers get home and they withhold information from their family members, it is not OPSEC anymore; it is just that Soldier being withdrawn and the family does not understand. Soldiers don't always realize they are doing something like that until they see someone else do it."

Following the video, Soldiers move to station two, where they complete an automated self-report questionnaire using a tablet personal computer.

A Soldier is not required to answer the health-related questions on the questionnaire, according to guidance put out by Capt. Torrey Hubred, officer in charge of the National Guard Bureau PDHRA team. However, any Soldier who meets the Army's requirement for a PDHRA screen must complete the demographic portion of the form and take part in the one-on-one interview with the health care provider at the third station.



Spc. Cinthia Lowrey, a Santa Cruz, Calif., native, enters personal information into a tablet computer during a post-deployment health reassessment on Camp Mabry.

The fourth and final station of the PDHRA process is veteran services. Here, Soldiers can speak face to face with the subject matter experts from the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Texas Veterans Commission, and the Veteran Center, which provides counseling for behavioral health issues. There are also transition assistance advisers who help Soldiers who are having trouble finding work or making ends meet following return from deployment.

"At our PDHRA screening events, Soldiers get one-on-one face time -- not lecture -- with the people who can answer their questions because they do this everyday for a living," said Sergeant Harris. "Medically, it is a one-stop shop for veterans returning from deployment."

Once the screening is complete, the data is processed by the case managers of PDHRA. The mobile PDHRA coordination team of Texas consists of three case managers, an administrator and the program manager. All of them are combat veterans, and all have gone through the PDHRA screening that they coordinate, direct and support. Information packets are then e-mailed out to all participants, explaining the PDHRA program and in-

cluding points of contact for assistance in various areas of expertise.

"My team is made up of four medics that are responsible for the state of Texas," said Captain Powell. "They have screened close to 6,000 Soldiers through PDHRA since they started working together in 2006. This number includes Soldiers they tracked down who had either gotten out of the military, transferred to active duty or gone to another state."

"Although we have completed only 82 percent of our required screenings, we have completed more than any other state has required by approximately 1,500 Soldiers," explained Captain Powell. "The team is small in order to utilize more of our budget to send more troops to get the help they need. Each year we have spent about a million dollars with more than half of that going to fund orders to pull troops onto active duty for needed assistance. We have caught some serious health issues as a direct result of PDHRA. One Soldier screened expressed some suicidal [thoughts]. By the end of the day, she had been evaluated by a military psychologist and was admitted to a hospital for further care. That screening probably saved that Soldier's life."

Sergeant Harris relates another story of the life-saving capabilities of PDHRA screening.

"As a result of another screening, one Soldier was diagnosed with Leukemia that his blood test did not identify," Sergeant Harris explained. "He was put on active duty and received the assistance he needed."

"We have, on average, 40 to 50 screening events per year in locations ranging all over the state," said Sergeant Harris. "PDHRA is a commander's tool, and we will go pretty much anywhere a commander wants to set one up. Wherever a commander can give me power and a captive audience of at least 45 Soldiers, we will conduct PDHRA."

During one two-day PDHRA event, members of the Texas National Guard medical community coordinated and supported four different events running concurrently in Austin, Houston, San Antonio and Temple, screening 125 Soldiers per day at the Austin location alone.

"Everyone comes back from combat broken in some way, whether it is an ingrown toenail or psychological issues," said Sergeant Harris. "As long as Soldiers are released from active duty deployments, we will be here."

ORVP 08



First Sgt. Alfredo Rendon and Staff Sgt. Garcia of 2nd Battalion, 1st Regiment, Texas State Guard, help load vaccinated bait into a plane in Junction, Texas. This is the third year that the Texas State Guard has supported the annual Oral Rabies Vaccination Program. (Texas Military Forces photo by Capt. James M. Campbell)

Texas State Guard Helps Foxes, Coyotes Receive Help from Above

***By Capt. James M. Campbell
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs Office***

It's 6:30 a.m. in Junction, Texas, and a couple of old pick-up trucks and a van begin pulling into the local airport. A mix of twin engine pilots, state and federal employees, and Texas State Guardsmen park their vehicles and push their way into a small trailer to get out of the frigid weather.

"Man, its cold up here," said one Soldier.

"We were in Zapata the day before, and the weather was a little warmer," said another.

For the second year in a row, Soldiers from the Texas State Guard are supporting state and federal agencies in the annual Oral Rabies Vaccination Program.

The program, headed by the Infectious Disease Control Unit of the Texas Department of State Health Services, aims at eliminating rabies in coyotes and foxes by spreading vaccinated bait across south-central and far west Texas.

"We're trying to break the contact of infected [rabid] animals with other wild animals," said Bob Sims of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Wildlife Services. "If we can vaccinate them, it'll break the cycle and we can limit the areas in Texas that are infected with rabies."

Lt. Gen. (TX) Charles G. Rodriguez, Adjutant General of Texas, enlists Summer Kunard as the 19,000th Texas National Guard Soldier at the Recruiting Open House on Camp Mabry on Jan. 30. (Texas Military Forces photo by Spc. Jennifer D. Atkinson)



Texas Army National Guard Enlists

By Spc. Jennifer Atkinson
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

From the beginnings of the Texas Militia to the current day force, Texans have always stepped up to answer the call to service and current generations are no different despite mounting demands on Citizen-Soldiers. At the Recruiting and Retention open house at Camp Mabry on Jan. 30, Summer Kunard became the 19,000th Texas National Guard Soldier, following in the footsteps of many other Texans.

With a growing number of commitments, from wildfires, floods, and emergencies at home to operations in Iraq, Afghanistan and other places around the globe, the Texas National Guard is meeting the increased demand for more highly-trained and motivated Soldiers.

“The Texas Army National Guard is in the news a lot, and we quickly respond to disasters in our communities and deploy overseas in support of our nations security efforts and that gets peoples attention,” said Lt. Col. Greg Chaney, Texas Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion commander. “What most people don’t



see is the force required to maintain that level of commitment to our state and nation.”

The quality of young men and women joining the National Guard is increasing, said Colonel Chaney. Actively recruiting applicants with a high-school diploma means the Texas National Guard “is better educated today, with over 94 percent of the force holding at least a high-school degree,” he said.

“The National Guard has also gotten more selective about approving enlistment waivers,” said Colonel Chaney, and as a result, “less than 3 percent of enlistments have required a waiver” for legal violations.

There are some common misperceptions about recruiting, said Colonel Chaney, “but our country is very patriotic and there is no shortage of people who volunteer to serve.” The hardest part is finding qualified people among those who want to serve; less than 30 percent of Americans aged 17-29 are eligible to join after being screened against qualification standards, he said.

The National Guard is changing, and it’s changing for the better, said Sgt. 1st Class Ann M. Timmons, a National Guard member for 18 years, and a volunteer recruiter for

“The young men and women who are joining the Guard are motivated by a desire to serve their country....”

— Lt. Col. Greg Chaney

back from Basic Combat Training walking tall and standing proud is something Sergeant Timmons finds rewarding, but the benefits don’t stop after training, she said, and they’re not limited to just the Soldier. Instead, in true National Guard spirit, the Soldiers reach out and touch their local communities.

Texas is committed to helping those who volunteer, by offering great education assistance, and it’s a way of paying it forward, said Sergeant Timmons. “The population is better educated, and they get better jobs,” she explained. “They contribute more to their community and it cycles back around.”

A recruit today enjoys benefits unprecedented in past years, said Colonel Chaney. “An average National Guard recruit enjoys an enlistment bonus, student loan repayment, 100 percent tuition paid at a state college, the Montgomery GI Bill, some college fees paid, and a monthly paycheck,” he said. The benefits increase if the recruit is a member of both the National Guard and the Reserve Officer Training Program or is a critically needed professional like a chaplain, lawyer or medical professional.

Education benefits aren’t limited to new enlistees, either. Officers are able to take advantage of the tuition assistance, too, said Sergeant Timmons, and many are using it to get master’s degrees and further their civilian careers.

Becoming a recruiter and the work itself “changed a lot of things in my life,” said Sergeant Timmons, “but it’s worth it.”

Balancing out the potentially long hours is the chance to “really help change people’s lives,” said Sergeant Timmons. “The Guard opened up so many opportunities for me,” Sergeant Timmons continued. “I’ve had so many different experiences that I can really tell them I know what it’s like.”

As a local National Guard recruiter, Sergeant Timmons also knows she’ll be making an investment her own community for a long time. “I’m part of the National Guard. You’re going to see me around my neighborhood.”

Colonel Chaney added that enlisting someone who’s excited about being in the National Guard is the greatest reward

“As we grow into a larger force, we will be able to respond to more requests for assistance across our large state and play an increasing role in our nation’s security efforts,” said Colonel Chaney. “With a larger force, we will always be ready and always be there.”

19,000th Soldier

the last three. “The young men and women who are joining the Guard are motivated by a desire to serve their country, and they know what they’re looking at and what they want to do.”

For the volunteer recruiters, it’s a job filled with huge rewards, and some challenges, as well as a chance to really invest in the communities they live in by giving enlistees the chance to make a difference in their lives and the lives of those around them.

Many of her recruits come back from training with a new-found confidence, and seeing new recruits who come

436th Chemical Company celebrated before final departure



**By Retired Master Sgt. Adolfo Gonzales
and Tech. Sgt. Gregory Ripps
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs**

It was a season of hellos and goodbyes for members of the 436th Chemical Company.

Following their official departure ceremony in Laredo, Texas, Nov. 27, the Soldiers journeyed to Fort Bragg for training prior to their deployment to Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom in February. However, they got a break — just before Christmas.

Southwest Airlines flew 171 company members home to Texas. Thirty-five disembarked at Dallas Love Field, 34 landed at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (IAP), and the balance ended their flight at San Antonio IAP, with most of them continuing to Laredo by bus.

“My son wanted me to be home for Christmas,” said Sgt. 1st Class Paul Torres. “I told him I would if I could make it, and thanks to Southwest Airlines and the Family Readiness Group, I did.”

But on Jan. 1, the 436th Chemical Company returned to Fort Bragg to complete their pre-deployment training.

Then Texas Employer Support of the Guard and Reserved (ESGR) co-

ordinated a trip to Fort Bragg by Laredo business employers, Texas Army National Guard personnel, and Texas ESGR personnel. The 136th Airlift Wing from Fort Worth, Texas, provided the C-130 aircraft.

Twenty-six Texans made the trip, viewed the intense training, received briefings from ESGR personnel, and spoke with and ate meals with the Soldiers during their Jan. 15-17 visit.

The visiting U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) border patrol members presented to the 10 CBP agents and about 30 Operation Jump Start members in the chemical

company a brief message from Laredo Sector Chief Carlos X. Carrillo. Chief Carrillo expressed gratitude to the service members for their duty and wished them a safe return back home.

Laredo Mayor Raul Salinas and Assistant City Manager Horacio De Leon presented 200 CDs of the Laredo farewell ceremony to 1st Sgt. Esequiel Rodriguez for each member of the 436th Chemical Company. The mayor also read letters from U.S. Rep. Henry Cuellar and Texas State Sen. Judith Zaffirini.

Among members of the Texas





Left: A sign greets members of the 436th Chemical Company as they arrive in the terminal at the San Antonio International Airport Dec. 23.

Below: A Soldier of the 436th Chemical Company stows his gear on the bus that will take him to his home in Laredo for the holidays. (Texas Military Forces photos by Tech. Sgt. Gregory Ripps)



Below: Soldiers of the 436th Chemical Company listen as Zapata Independent School District Superintendent Romeo Rodriguez reads letters in English and Spanish written by 10 year old from Zapata Elementary Schools. (Texas Military Forces photo by retired Master Sgt. Adolfo Gonzales)



Military Forces who accompanied the civilians was Brig. Gen. Joyce L. Stevens, Texas Army National Guard deputy commander.

First Lt. Thomas Diaz de Leon, 436th Chemical Company commander, said that although their training was intense and filled with long days, "it is a must to ensure our Dragon Soldiers are prepared for the mission ahead. Here at Fort Bragg, the weather outside is frightful, for the days have been filled with low temperatures [that are] much different from the barbecue and shorts weather back home."

Left: **Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve** members from Laredo, Texas, depart Pope AFB after visiting 436th Chemical Company members at Fort Bragg N.C.

Top left: **Spc. Carlos Garza** from Eagle Pass, Texas, receives a departure hug from his mother before departing on the buses to the San Antonio on his return flight to Fort Bragg, N.C. (Texas Military Forces photo by retired Master Sgt. Adolfo Gonzales)

Texas Air National Guard Recruiting

He's Here, He's There

**By Tech. Sgt. Gregory Ripps
Texas Military Forces Public Affairs**

Sergeant Jeter covers a lot of recruiting territory. If you phone the Air National Guard (ANG) In-Service Recruiter at Randolph Air Force Base, he will answer. If you phone the recruiting office of the 136th Airlift Wing at the Fort Worth Joint Reserve Base, he will answer. How does Sergeant Jeter do it?

The answer is that there are two Sergeant Jeters – father and son. Master Sgt. Jim Jeter works at Randolph, in San Antonio. His son, Tech. Sgt. David Jeter, works in Fort Worth.

The older Jeter joined the Texas ANG in 1986 as a firefighter after transferring from the Air Force Reserve. He became a recruiter in 1991.

“The last four years I was at the 136th, I served as the Retention Office manager and was responsible for the volunteer family readiness group,” the master sergeant recalled. “During this time my wife and two sons came to several family events ... and when my youngest son [David] was in high school, he joined the 136th.”

The proud father related that his son first served in security forces, moving to combat arms, and has deployed to Bosnia for seven months and to Kuwait and Iraq for six months.



Master Sgt. Jim Jeter stands with his son, then Senior Airman David Jeter, upon the younger Jeter's graduation from Airman Leadership School. (Courtesy photo)

“While I was in the security forces, I heard a sergeant was going from recruiting to the Retention Office, so I applied for his position,” recounts the younger Sergeant Jeter. “I didn’t anticipate getting it, but I did.”

He completed recruiting school in 2001.

“Now he is working out of the same office I used to be in,” the master sergeant explained. “He has the same telephone number I had, and is covering the same territory.”

The technical sergeant says people call him, expecting to talk with his father. However, he doesn’t seem to mind too much.

“It’s great to follow in my father’s footsteps,” he said. “It gives me something to work for. It’s fun to live up to a legacy.”

By the way, if you have a referral for one of them, you can reach Master Sergeant Jeter at (210) 652-5202 and Technical Sergeant Jeter at (817) 852-3228.

Hazlewood Act Offers Educational Benefit

The Hazlewood Act offers a valuable educational benefit to qualified members of the Texas Military Forces.

First Lt. Kimberly Spires of the Texas Army National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion offers some information about the act in question-and-answer form.

What is it? The Hazlewood Act exempts qualified students at public colleges and universities in Texas from all tuition and fees (except for property deposits or student services fees).

Who is it for? Texas service members and the dependents of those killed in the line of duty. This includes veterans who were not United States citizens at the time of entry into the military. Details are available at the Texas Veterans Commission website at www.tvc.state.tx.us.

Is this like tuition reimbursement? Not exactly – the Hazlewood Act mandates that the public college or university absorb the cost of tuition. So, qualified applicants won’t get a reim-

bursement check because they don’t have to write a check in the first place.

Are Texas National Guard Soldiers eligible? Because the Texas National Guard is regarded as a state unit, only Guard Soldiers who have been called up to active duty and served at least 181 days of active military duty are eligible.

How do I apply? You can download the application by visiting the Texas Veterans Commission Web site at www.tvc.state.tx.us.

Sgt. 1st Class Juan Rendon (left) and Staff Sgt. Michael Faulk observe as 1st Lt. Melissa Macintyre and Chief Warrant Officer 4 David Torres prepare for another takeoff under rainy skies. (Texas Military Forces photo by Spc. Jennifer Atkinson)



Crew Rescues Four Flood Victims

By Spc. Jennifer Atkinson, Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

On May 27, 2007, during some of the worst flooding in recent memory, National Guard Soldiers were standing ready to help fellow Texans in need. While many of the evacuation efforts were concentrated on the ground, four members of C Company, 2-149th General Support Aviation Battalion found a higher calling.

At a ceremony At Camp Mabry on Jan. 24, 1st Lt. Melissa Macintyre, Chief Warrant Officer 4 David L. Torres, Sgt. 1st Class Juan J. Rendon and Staff Sgt. Michael L. Faulk were awarded the Lone Star Medal of Valor, the state's second-highest award, in recognition of their "extraordinary acts of courage" while in service to the military forces and citizens of Texas.

Launching the helicopter under stormy skies and close to sunset, the medical evacuation crew, along with a rescue swimmer, headed toward the Guadalupe River to help victims trapped by the rising water. The UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter was equipped with a rescue hoist and TriSAR, a high-resolution radar processor used in search and rescue work.

Arriving at the scene 15 minutes after the initial call, the crew found themselves facing a challenging rescue. The four victims were trapped at the bottom of a cliff, meaning visual contact between the rescue swimmer and helicopter crew could be limited at best, and non-existent at worst.

After making a thorough reconnaissance of the area to decide on the best approach, Lieutenant McIntyre, the newest medevac pilot-in-command in C Co.,

brought the helicopter to a steady hover high above the river.

Sergeant Rendon and Sergeant Faulk, a flight medic since 1992, guided the aircraft as close to the cliff and the victims as they could while keeping a safe distance from the rocky terrain.

For Sergeant Rendon, the hoist operator and a veteran of almost every type of mission the National Guard flies including floods, fires and a deployment to Kosovo, there was a little bit of added stress.

"I'd used it [the hoist] for about two years," he said, "but this was the very first hoist rescue in Texas — ever."

Using both visual guidance and information from the radar system, the rescue swimmer was lowered into the water and disappeared under the cliff overhang to reach the victims.

"It's a pretty tense moment when he goes under the water and you can't see him at all," said Sergeant Rendon. "You've got no visual observation of him at all."

Since visual contact would be so limited, the crew and the swimmer agreed on a 60-second delay after the swimmer hit the water to begin retracting the cable. After the 60 seconds had elapsed, the helicopter slid sideways away from the side of the hill, and the swimmer and a victim were hoisted up.

One issue facing Sergeants Rendon and Faulk was oscillation, or unexpected rotation, along the hoist cable. Oscillation can also damage to the hoist mechanism, the cable, the aircraft, and in a worse-case

scenario, the people on the hoist.

"If the cable spins too fast or too hard, you can injure the person down there," said Lieutenant Macintyre. A spinning cable can also hit the helicopter, or the ground, she said. The rescue swimmer and the victim had to wait for the two sergeants to stop the oscillation before continuing their upwards journey.

After the first rescue, the interval time was shortened to 30 seconds, and three more victims were lifted from the water. All four victims were safely lifted into the helicopter and transported to nearby rescue crews.

"Who's seen the Kevin Costner movie, 'The Guardian'?" asked Lt. Gen. (TX) Charles G. Rodriguez, Adjutant General of Texas, during the award ceremony. "It's a good movie, but these are the real guardians."

Many Guardsmen do the same kinds of things, in large and small ways, said General Rodriguez, but "this particular incident was very perilous, and it really is a watershed moment in the service of rotary aircraft we have in here in Texas."

For the medevac crew of aircraft TX-TF 1, helping fellow is the driving force behind everything they do in the air, and why they joined the Texas National Guard.

"It's always about helping someone in need," said Sergeant Faulk.

For Chief Torres, the end result is the most satisfying part of his whole Guard experience.

"The rescue itself, saving lives, that's why we do it," he said.

Texas State Guard Experiences Record Increase in Overall Strength

By Capt. James M. Campbell, Texas Military Forces Public Affairs

The Texas State Guard proudly announced an overall increase in troop strength of almost 15 percent as of Jan. 1.

An all-volunteer organization but one of the three branches of the Texas Military Forces, the Texas State Guard concentrates its efforts in supporting state and local authorities in homeland security and community service.

“We finally have a budget and a meaningful mission” said Brig. Gen. Raymond Peters, deputy commanding general of the Texas State Guard. “Since the Texas State Guard is a non-deployable force, we help free up the Texas National Guard to accomplish other federal and state obligations.”

The recent increase in strength can be directly attributed to the efforts provided by the men and women of the Texas State Guard during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. During this emergency, the Texas Army, Air, and State Guard were mobilized to provide relief and assistance to the citizens of Texas and Louisiana. The Texas State Guard assisted in shelter management, provided much needed medical care, bridged communication barriers, and basically filled in wherever they were needed.

“In order for *any* State Guard around the country to survive, it has to find its niche,” General Peters continued. “A State Guard has to ask itself, ‘How can we fill in the gaps and support

the National Guard?’”

As federal and state demands on the Texas National Guard increase, the Texas State Guard finds ways to fill in these gaps. Missions like Operation Lone Star, a two-week medical and dental program conducted in the lower Rio Grande Valley, were once a mainstay of the Texas National Guard. Now, this mission is handled primarily by the Texas State Guard.

“Operation Lone Star is just one of the missions that were supporting now,” said Chief Warrant Officer 5 David Hathaway of the Texas State Guard. “We’re also supporting the annual Oral Rabies Vaccination Program in south and west Texas and other missions as they come up.”

With the increases in responsibility, the Texas State Guard relies on word of mouth recruiting to draw people into their fold.

“Selfless service is the main reason people join the Texas State Guard,” said General Peters. “We generally have an older force comprised of people who miss the service

or never really had a chance to serve in their younger years. Now is their chance to give back.”

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the Texas State Guard may visit www.txsg.state.tx.us/txsg_web_site012.htm or call (512) 782-5101.



Chaplain's Message

Having had the privilege of being the pastor of more than one rural farming type congregation, I have learned some good lessons on humanity from my rural brethren.

For instance, once on visiting a young man who raised hundreds of hogs I was given a good lesson from his pigs. As I viewed his hog lot, I noticed one pig off in a cage by itself. At that point I asked him why the one pig was segregated. He replied, “because that pig has a bad leg. And when one pig gets sick, the healthy ones will pick on it until they kill it.” OK, so much for my lesson in animal husbandry. But then this young farmer cocked his head to the side and said to me in a sad, matter-of-fact manner, “kinda like people, isn’t it?”

Ouch! Sad but true. OK, so Tommy or Sue is acting like a jerk. Have you considered what might be going on behind the scenes? Maybe there is a divorce or financial disaster they are dealing with. Perhaps it is a challenging child. Maybe they are facing a job loss or a health issue. Unfortunately, life is not always packaged according to “Leave it to Beaver.” At times like that, the last thing they need to hear from us is “Oink, oink!”

“The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.” – Proverbs 15:4 (NIV)

— Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Stephen Vaughn



Postcards from Iraq

Dr. (Capt.) Logan McDonald (right) examines a boy from an Iraqi village with the assistance of another member of the 3rd Battalion, 144th Infantry Regiment. The injured child had been brought to the front gate of the coalition forces compound. The boy received initial care from the medics but was later evacuated to Balad air base for treatment of his injuries.



U.S. Commander in Iraq Gen. David Patraeus jokes with Spc. Zacharia Estrada, of the 3rd Battalion, 144th Infantry Regiment, during a coin presentation ceremony at Contingency Operation Base Ad-der, Iraq, Jan. 8. (U.S. Army photos by Sgt. 1st Class Gary Qualls, 82nd Brigade Combat Team)



Above: *Graduates of Seaborne ChalleNGe signal the ceremony's completion by tossing their caps into the air.*

Left: *Brian Newby, the governor's chief of staff, presents a diploma to one graduate.*

Changing Labels

**Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Ken Walker
Counterdrug Public Affairs**

Just four days before Christmas, 90 students from across Texas walked across the stage at Levin Hall in Galveston and received diplomas from the Seaborne ChalleNGe Corps (SCC). They were smiling and holding their heads high as their parents and friends cheered.

SCC provides education, training, career development, mentoring and volunteer service to the community for at-risk youth who are not performing well in high school. The Texas ChalleNGe program addresses the distressing economic and social problems that result when students drop out of school.

Some 70 young men and 20 young women changed their lives into productive citizens, becoming members of the military, college students, or entering the work force.

Brian Newby, chief of staff to Governor Rick Perry, gave the commencement address. Mr. Newby is also a colonel with the 136th Airlift Wing, Texas Air National Guard, where he

serves as the senior Judge Advocate General for the state's C-130 unit. "SCC program set out a time tested series of character shaping activities that frees a person's mind to think, learn and grow," Newby said.

"Standing here today, I am proud to look out at this entire group of Seaborne Cadets, a group of individuals who have recognized the label the world placed on you, grabbed hold of it, tore it off and replaced it with one you can be proud of. That label reads GRADUATE."

Col. Russell W. Malesky, Counterdrug commander, gave the oath of enlistment to 18 graduates into the military armed forces, one of the largest SCC groups ever.

The Seaborne ChalleNGe Corps, now in its 10th year, is operated by the Texas National Guard. Seaborne ChalleNGe Corps is funded by the Department of Defense, with matching funds from the State of Texas and private foundations.

Community Service

Airmen Deliver Items for Food Drive

By 1st Lt. LaDonna Singleton

254th Combat Communications Group Public Affairs Officer

Airmen from Garland Air National Guard Station volunteered more than 300 hours of their time during the week of Dec. 11 to pick up, transport and delivered more than 150,00 food items in support of the Salvation Army's Christmas food drive.

This effort was led by Tech. Sgt. Raymond Ivie, a communications specialist with the 254th Combat Communications Group. Military volunteers included members of the 221st Combat Communications Squadron as well as other members of the 254th CCG.

According to an article in the Garland Independent School District (GISD) Dec. 19 newsletter, GISD did its part to ensure that thousands of local families had food on their tables during the holiday season by contributing 153,801 food items to the 2007 Garland Christmas Association Canned Food Drive.

"It was great seeing the students excitement in giving back to the community and working with military personnel," said Capt Josh Lewis, a communications officer from the 254th CCG.

The GISD news article explained that each year, GISD stages a friendly competition between its campuses in an effort to see which group brings the most food items. The contest divides schools into grade levels – elementary, middle and high school – resulting in one winner from each group. The winning campuses were chosen based on the number of items brought in per student enrolled. This year's winner was Sachse High School, with 22,636 items, averaging 9.2 items per student.



Airmen from Garland Air National Guard Station join students from a local school in loading boxes onto a truck for a food drive. (Photo courtesy Garland Independent School District)

"Garland Air National Guard Station continues to be dedicated to serving the community through efforts like this food drive and many other community programs," said Col. Will Allen, 254th CCG commander.



Veteran visitors

Al Cantu Jr. (left), Veterans of Foreign Wars Texas commander; George Lisicki (third from left), VFW commander-in-chief; and Dan West, VFW Texas assistant adjutant, meet with Lt. Gen. (TX) Charles G. Rodriguez, Adjutant General of Texas, at Camp Mabry on Jan. 24, prior to the beginning of the VFW Mid-Winter Round-Up. (Texas Military Forces photo by Spc. Jennifer Atkinson)

News Briefs

Team Pegasus deploys to train Afghan forces

CAMP MABRY, Texas -- On Jan. 4, the Texas Army National Guard's 36th Infantry Division bade farewell and good luck to Team Pegasus, the division's first Corps Embedded Training Team, as it mobilized for Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

The approximately 20 Soldiers who make up Team Pegasus are serving as combat advisors for the Afghan Security Forces — an advisory role previously re-

served for active duty Special Forces elements.

For the mission, the Guard Soldiers will be attached to Afghan combat units and will mentor their leaders on mission-specific tasks and help to develop the Afghan security forces into a self-sustaining organization, ready to defend their country.

The selection process for Team Pegasus was based on the individual Soldier's

expertise and ability to adapt to the needs and demands of the mission.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the 36th Infantry Division has deployed more than 10,000 Soldiers for the Global War on Terrorism, for peacekeeping operations, and for the border security mission Operation Jump Start.

The division is also instrumental in training allied fighters from Eastern Europe, and Central and South America.

Post-mission side trip



CAMP VICTORY, Iraq — Members of B Company, 3rd Battalion, 144th Infantry Regiment, pose before Al-Faw palace, which currently serves as headquarters for Multi National Corps Iraq. The Soldiers visited the site after completing a mission to Baghdad International Airport. Saddam Hussein had the multi-room palace built to celebrate a victory and used it when he went duck hunting in the area. The artificial lake that surrounds the palace boasts bass and carp. Pictured are (from left) Spc. Michael Villa, Spc. Misael Canales, Spc. Luis Siasrios, Spc. Brandon Burney, Capt. Patrick Fugere, Spc. Damien Aguado, Sgt. 1st Class Greg Irvine and 2nd Lt. Daniel Garrison. (Texas Military Forces photo by Capt. Kristin Hutchinson, Multinational Corps Iraq-Information Operations Cell)



Members of the Texas Military Forces Marksmanship Team pose with their trophies from the 2007 Winston P. Wilson Combat Arms Matches. (Texas Military Forces photo)

Marksmanship team blasts way to victory in annual competition

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, Ark. -- Texas Military Forces again won the Winston P. Wilson (WPW) Combat Arms Matches held at Camp Robinson here Oct. 8-11.

Outstanding stars included Sgt. 1st Class Charles W. Blackwell, Joint Force Headquarters (JFTX HQ), who placed third overall in the open competition, and Senior Airman Ryne Chaney, 136th Air-lift Wing (AW), who placed second overall as a novice. Five of the team members -- Sergeant Blackwell, Airman Chaney, Capt. James Grady III, Staff

Sgt. Tom Campbell, JFTX HQ, and Tech. Sgt. Scott Fuller, 136th AW -- made the Chief's Fifty, which is awarded to the top 50 competitors in the WPW competition. This year saw more than 364 Guardsmen and 72 teams compete for top awards.

In the Team competition, Texas placed second or third in four team events. Teams were required to engage targets at various distances out to 600 yards in limited time frames. They were also required to fire crew-served weapons as well as endure physical obstacles

making target engagement more realistic.

Chief Warrant Officer-4 Rick Tanner, JFTX HQ, and Sergeant Blackwell were responsible for training the Texas team and preparing them for the event.

Other team members included Lt. Col. David Patten, JFTX HQ; Staff Sgt. Troy Proctor and Senior Airman Chris White, both of the 136th AW; Spc. William Allen and Spc. James Tucker, both of the 124th Cavalry, and Spc. Christopher Cole, 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry. Texas State Guard Lt. Col. Donald R. Tryce served as team adviser.

TriWest contributes \$15,000 to support Texas Guard families

EL PASO, Texas—TriWest Healthcare Alliance presented \$15,000 to the Texas National Guard Family Support Foundation, which helps support the needs of the Texas Military Forces and their families.

Alice Demarais, market vice president for the mountain region at TriWest, presented the check to Joe Hansen, executive director of the foundation, on Dec. 14, at the Hondo Pass Armory.

"TriWest continues to be a steady partner that recognizes the realities of military service and its impact on our families," Mr. Hansen said. "We are grateful to TriWest for this contribution, which can help make life easier to bear for Guard members and their families."

TriWest's contribution is part of its "Giving to the Guard" campaign, in which the company is providing support to the National Guard throughout its 21-

state west region.

"As members of civilian communities, National Guard families don't always have convenient access to the support available at military bases like Fort Bliss," said TriWest President and CEO David J. McIntyre Jr. "TriWest made the contribution with the hope that we can help to bridge that gap for the Guard families of Texas."



Lone Star
Medal of Valor

Extraordinary
while in service to the
Military Forces of Texas

Charles [Signature]
Adjutant General of Texas

The Lone Star Medal of Valor was presented to the 1st Lt. Melissa Macintyre, Chief Warrant Officer 4 David Torres, Sgt. 1st Class Juan Rendon, and Staff Sgt. Michael Faulk for extraordinary acts of courage while in service to the military forces of Texas. (See story on page 13.) (Texas Military Forces photo by Spc. Jennifer Atkinson)