

Prairie Soldier

THE JOINT NEWSPAPER OF THE NEBRASKA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Tim Kadavy to become 31st adjutant general

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Colonel Tim Kadavy, 43, has been selected by Gov. Dave Heineman to be the 31st Nebraska adjutant general, succeeding Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke who plans on retiring from the position on Nov. 3.



Kadavy

Heineman made the announcement Oct. 10 at the Governor's Hearing Room in the State Capitol as Kadavy, his wife Laurie and their youngest son Peter sat in attendance.

"I selected Colonel Kadavy because he is a military leader, he has combat zone experience, he is respected by his fellow Soldiers and he has both extensive national and state National Guard experience," said Heineman.

"He possesses Nebraska common sense and a Nebraska work ethic. I am impressed by Colonel Kadavy and I am confident that he will be an exceptional adjutant general for our state."

As adjutant general, Kadavy will lead the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard and the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency. He currently serves as the senior operations officer for the Army National

Guard Directorate, headquartered at the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Va.

A native of Omaha, Neb., Kadavy began his military career in Nebraska after receiving his commission in 1984 from the Reserve Officer Training Corps at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He served in a number of positions within the 1-167th Cavalry, including tank and scout platoon leader with Fremont's Troop A, executive officer and commander of Omaha's Troop B, and assistant operations officer and personnel officer.

In 1994, Kadavy switched from traditional part-time National Guard service to become
See KADAVY on 7.

Making A Difference In Kyrgyzstan



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Keeping The Scores Straight: Members of a Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Team look over 2nd Lt. Jeff Frazey's shoulders as he consults a score book during a Top Gun competition for members of the new Kyrgyz counter narcotics interdiction teams that were trained by members of the Nebraska National Guard and Drug Enforcement Administration this summer.

Nebraska teams with DEA to stem flow of narcotics through Central Asia

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan – Score one for the good guys.

In mid-September, the international community welcomed a valuable new group of law enforcement officers to the effort to combat the worldwide distribution of illegal drugs when a unique counter narcotics team made up of

Prairie Soldier Exclusive

officers from various law enforcement agencies in Kyrgyzstan graduated from a month-long course conducted by members of a joint interagency task force made up of Nebraska National Guard Counter Drug Special Operations Detachment, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, and a U.S. Drug

Enforcement Administration Foreign Advisory Support Team.

According to Lt. Col. Tom Brewer, commander of the Nebraska National Guard Counter Drug Task Force who served as commander of the U.S. Central Command Counter Narcotics Task Force, a joint interagency team that conducted the

See KYRGYZSTAN on 12.

Evans takes command of air refueling wing

By Tech. Sgt. David Brumley

Staff Writer

As a slow, warm breeze whispered around them, hundreds of members of the 155th Air Refueling Wing stood tall as they watched Col. Steven Adams end his tenure as the wing commander by handing the wing's colors to Col. Richard Evans, Sept. 8.

"The change of command today is for what many would call

the best wing in the National Guard," said Maj. Gen. Roger P. Lempke, Nebraska National Guard adjutant general who presided over the event. "I dare say that we might be so bold as to say (this is) the best wing in the entire United States Air Force."

Lempke praised Adams for his leading the unit since 2004. "You've served your country, your state and your fellow Airman well."

Then he challenged the new commander: "You've been se-

lected to lead the wing in conquering those challenges, whatever they might be, and your responsibility from this point forward will be to take the wing into a new level of excellence; if indeed that's possible."

A visibly emotional Adams told the crowd the wing's greatness was more than just its people, but the core values that each individual member brings to the wing.

"The core of the wing is going out to a family in need, just like

an individual is going to do tonight, and bringing popcorn and t-shirts to some little boys whose dad is really suffering."

"It's being there when the Army National Guard is asking for help to bring its Soldiers home for the holidays and we have a collection effort to raise money to help them do that. It's that hard to define thing that makes this wing just so special."

Adams also praised how hard
See WING COMMANDER on 5.

New joint Guard unit takes next step

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Members of a new joint Nebraska Army and Air National Guard emergency response team took another major step forward Sept. 29-30 at Camp Ashland and the Mead Training Site.

Working to locate and save people trapped beneath rubble while also decontaminating and providing medical treatment for victims of a potential terrorist attack, for members of the Guard's new CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP) the exercise gave them an opportunity to work together for the first time while also learning how to set up and use their new equipment.

CBRNE stands for chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high explosive.

"It's been going pretty good so far," said Spc. Lindsey Marie Loftis, a member of the 754th Chemical Company as she and Spc. Kelli Marie Razor of the 126th Chemical Battalion worked
See CERFP on 6.



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Working Together: Staff Sgt. Jeff Davis and Sgt. Andrew Swanson work to break through a block of concrete, Sept. 30, at the Mead Training Site to rescue a trapped "victim."

Guard works to bring back prior-service Soldiers

WASHINGTON (AFPS) – The Army National Guard has launched a new recruiting effort that officials hope will tap into a market that has steadily decreased since the War on Terror began — prior-service Soldiers.

Dubbed "Active First," the program targets new recruits who want to serve on active duty but then are willing to return to the Guard to finish out the remainder of their initial military service obligation.

Officials hope to recruit as many as 2,000 Soldiers into the program this year, said Lt. Col. Gregg Bliss, branch chief for the National Guard Bureau recruit sustainment program.

Of those, National Guard leaders hope to see as many as 1,400 return to the Guard,

See RECRUITING on 8.

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NEWS DIGEST

■ Nations must unite against terrorism, Bush tells UN

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Nations of the world must unite against terrorism, which denies fundamental rights, President Bush told the United Nations General Assembly, Sept. 25.

Terrorists are a threat to all civilized people, Bush said at the opening of the assembly's 62nd session. "All civilized nations must work together to stop them by sharing intelligence about their networks and choking off their finances and bringing to justice their operatives," he said.

"In the long run, the best way to defeat extremists is to defeat their dark ideology with a more hopeful vision, a vision of liberty that founded this body."

The president said the United Nations must encourage leaders attempting to build free institutions that fight terror, enforce the law and respond to the needs of their people.

The president spoke against the dictators of Belarus, North Korea, Syria and Iran as nations that deny their people the fundamental rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Bush called the declaration, negotiated 60 years ago, a landmark achievement in the history of human liberty.

Bush said the United Nations helps to build a world where "people are free to speak, assemble and worship as they wish, a world where children in every nation grow up healthy, get a decent education and look to the future with hope, a world where opportunity crosses every border."

"America will lead toward this vision where all are created equal and free to pursue their dreams," he said. "This is the founding conviction of my country. It is the promise that established this body. And with our determination, it can be the future of our world."

■ Gates: 'Getting next part right' in Iraq critical to America

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — "Getting the next part right" in Iraq is critical to America, and forthcoming steps there must capitalize on opportunities created by the troop surge, project U.S. might and show long-term commitment, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates said Sept. 15.

During a briefing at the Pentagon with Marine Gen. Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gates told reporters that he has worked closely with top military and National Security

Council officials to define the United States' upcoming moves in Iraq.

"It has been my view over the last several months that the next steps in Iraq had to address multiple objectives," he said. "They would need to maximize the opportunity created by the surge to achieve our long-term goals of an Iraq able to sustain, govern and defend itself, and be an ally in the war on terror."

Gates voiced confidence in the recommendations Gen. David H. Petraeus, commander of Multinational Force Iraq, outlined earlier that week during congressional hearings on the troop surge and U.S. operations in Iraq.

He added that he supports President Bush's decision to consider bringing home an Army combat brigade by Christmas.

In the near-term, the United States should take measures to ensure it's perceived as winning the War on Terror, the secretary said. "(Those steps have) to avoid even the appearance of American failure or defeat in Iraq," he said.

Gates noted that Islamic extremists were emboldened after they successfully helped defeat the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1980s. In 1993, only five years after the last Soviet service member withdrew from the country, terrorists originating from Afghanistan bombed the World Trade Center in New York City. U.S. failure in Iraq, the secretary said, would hand over an ideological victory to extremists fighting coalition forces today and could encourage future terrorist attacks.

"Should the jihadists be able to claim victory in Iraq over us — the sole remaining superpower — it would empower them worldwide far, far more than their victory over the Soviets," he said.

■ New pledge to help balance active Army, National Guard

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — A new agreement between the active Army and Army National Guard represents a big step toward achieving the force structure balance Army Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr. calls critical to the Army's transformation.

Senior Army leaders signed a memo of understanding Oct. 9 during the Association of the U.S. Army convention here to firm up a plan to rebalance force structure and resources between the active and reserve components. Under the plan, the Army National Guard will have 112 brigades: 28 brigade combat teams, 46 multifunctional brigades and 38 functional brigades. It

... to help seek a secure and stable Iraq," Bacon said. "When we find a Quds force operative that is instrumental to the shipment of these weapons and funding and training of these extremists, we have no choice but to fulfill our responsibilities."

Farhadi heads the so-called "Zafr Command," which trains and smuggles Iranian insurgents and weapons across the border into north-central Iraq, Bacon said.

"The area they oversee here in Iraq is an area that we have found a lot of explosively formed penetrators. Those come from Iran," Bacon said.

"We've also had a lot of indirect-fire attacks involving weapons that come from Iran, missiles, in particular, and 240mm rockets."

Bacon also announced that a cache of 120 mm mortar rounds was discovered Sept. 30 in Baghdad. "We know from our experts that they were of Ira-

nian origin," Bacon said. "You wouldn't think so because it has English markings on there, but that's the way they market them. And you can actually look at the Iranian Web site and actually look at the weapons that they market on their Web site... they have the same kind of markings."

These and other recently discovered stashed weapons belong to "rogue elements" associated with Shiia extremists, the colonel said.

Bacon noted some success stories in deterring foreigners from assisting insurgents, including a particularly effective campaign involving a would-be Saudi suicide bomber who was badly burned in his unsuccessful attempt in Iraq.

"We gave him medical care," Bacon said. "Over time he's been sent back to Saudi Arabia where he is now fairly visible on TV talking about: 'Hey, this is wrong. I made a mistake.'"

Aviators salute Lincoln



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Final members return from Iraq

Welcome Home: (Top) A flight of UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters assigned to Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, fly over Lincoln, Neb., Oct. 6, after returning from Texas.

Lined Up: UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters line up as they roll toward their parking spots at the Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in Lincoln, Neb. The helicopters were flown back to Nebraska from Texas where the aircraft had arrived aboard a ship after completing their final journey back to the United States following a year-long mission in Iraq. "It was great to fly back today because we brought the rest of our unit home," said Sgt. McKenzie McCarter, a flight medic with the unit who logged numerous combat missions aboard the helicopters while in Iraq.

is slated to grow by more than 5,000 troops to 358,000 in 2013. Almost 321,000 of those Soldiers will be in the operational force.

The plan also ensures Guard units, many under-equipped after leaving their best equipment in the combat theater for follow-on units, receive replacement equipment on par with their active duty counterparts.

Gen. Richard A. Cody, Army vice chief of staff, joined Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, director of the Army National Guard, and Maj. Gen. Bennett Landreneau, Louisiana's adjutant general and chairman of the Adjutants General Association Force Structure Committee, at the signing ceremony at the Washington Convention Center.

Cody called the plan a "necessary journey" that will "make our Army stronger."

Vaughn said the plan will reduce

stress on the force by providing more formations in the deployment cycle. "It's more capacity for the Army," he said.

He pointed to the talks that led to the agreement as a model for the future. "This is the way we need to go in (addressing) some of the hard things," he said.

Casey called adapting the reserve components a key element in the Army's transformation and its ability to confront what is expected to be an era of "persistent conflict."

"Our reserve components are performing magnificently, but in an operational role for which they were neither designed nor resourced," he said during an address to AUSA attendees Oct. 9. "They are no longer a strategic reserve, mobilized only in national emergencies. They are now an operational reserve deployed on a cyclical basis," enabling the Army to sustain operations.

Coalition forces uncover more evidence showing Iran supporting Iraq insurgents

WASHINGTON (AFPS) — Coalition forces are finding more evidence that Iran is directly supporting insurgents in Iraq, a U.S. military officer said Oct. 3.

"We know that they do have official involvement," Col. Donald Bacon said during a conference call from Baghdad.

"When you actually have captured Quds Force operatives and leaders in country and you know that they're involved in it, ... there is no doubt that there's official involvement."

Bacon is chief of strategy and plans for Multinational Force Iraq. He spoke with online journalists and "bloggers" shortly after the command announced the detention of Mahmud Farhadi, an Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force officer accused of providing weapons to Iraqi criminal elements.

"We would like to see Iran live up to their commitments that they have stated publicly

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We Did It: Maj. Rick Gray, commander of Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, raises his hands in triumph while Sgt. Curtis Cattau waves the company guidon after members of the 2-135th GSAB arrived back in Lincoln, completing a year-long mission to Iraq.

Proud Homecoming

■Aviation Soldiers return to Nebraska after recording numerous accomplishments during Iraqi deployment

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

In the end, the members of the 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion really couldn't wait to get home.

Arriving nearly 30 minutes early, the Lincoln-based Soldiers' airplane actually touched down on the runway in Nebraska as many family members were just making their way from a nearby parking lot, causing many to start running so they wouldn't miss their Guardsman's arrival.

Still, for the Soldiers and family members involved, the early arrival on Aug. 24 was taken in stride. The Soldiers were finally home after serving more than a year in Iraq where the Guardsmen maintained and refueled American and Coalition aircraft, and treated and moved over 5,600 American and Iraqi patients — including 1,374 patients directly from the battlefield — during their tour in the Persian Gulf.

According to Chief Warrant Officer Keith Osterhoudt, a medevac and instructor pilot with Company C, 2-135th GSAB, who was met by his wife Crisie, son Zachary, daughter Emmali and other family members, the

reception was nearly overwhelming.

"I'm ready to be home," he said. "I'm a little surprised... I didn't expect that (the crowd) would be this big."

According to Crisie Osterhoudt, the last days leading to the welcome home ceremony, were some of the longest of the entire year.

"Emma slept in her clothes last night so she would be ready this morning," Crisie said.

Major Rick Gray, commander of the unit, said that the approximately 90 members of the battalion returned to Nebraska with the knowledge that they accomplished much while in Iraq.

For example, he said, the four unit members who worked in the battalion tactical operations center helped plan 111 night-time air assault missions and the 11 Soldiers assigned to Detachment 1, Company D, were responsible for maintaining the battalion's 48 helicopters that logged more than 23,000 flight hours in some of the most challenging conditions imaginable.

"This is a tremendous feat considering the austere environment that wreaked havoc on aircraft engines, rotor blades, avionics...



Happy Faces: Chief Warrant Officer Keith Osterhoudt makes faces with his daughter Emmali after arriving back in Lincoln on Aug. 24 after spending a year in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

frankly everything on the helicopter," Gray said.

Gray said that members of Co. E's vehicle maintenance section were able to maintain an "outstanding" 95 percent operational rate while the company's refueling section were responsible for refueling Special Operations, Marine Corps, Air Force, Navy and all U.S. Army aircraft.

Gray said the 67 members of Company C also made a tremendous contribution to the Iraq war by serving as the "backbone" of aerial medical evacuations in Iraq, recording more than 5,300 combat hours



Welcome Home: A family member holds up a hand-made sign for the Soldiers of 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, Aug. 24.



Heartfelt Hug: Sgt. Nordman hugs his daughter Hope, 4, on the tarmac in front of the Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in Lincoln.



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Addressing The Crowd: Maj. Rick Gray, commander of Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion, addresses a packed hanger during the welcome home ceremony for members of the 2-135th GSAB, Aug. 24, in Lincoln.

during the deployment.

"Many of these missions were very dangerous. Our flight crews encountered enemy fire on a routine basis," he said.

"The greatest compliment that we earned came from the infantry Soldiers who fought near our area," said Gray. "These ground troopers said, 'We fight harder and put ourselves at greater risk because we know the medevacs are only minutes away.'"

According to Sgt. Curtis Cattau, a flight medic with Co. C, the medevac crews knew that they had an important mission to do while in Iraq.

"You'd be surprised how much the whole war is based on us," said Cattau, who was named the battalion and brigade Soldier of the Year while in Iraq and was given the honor of carrying the unit's guidon off of the plane when the Soldiers returned to Nebraska. "If we can't go out and fly, everything stops."

"It lets us know that we are important in the whole scheme of things," he added.

Gray agreed, saying the Soldiers should be proud of the

work they did.

"The outstanding Soldiers who deployed with the 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion are true patriots and they courageously answered the call of duty," Gray said during his welcome home speech. "You know something... some people live their entire lives and wonder if they made a difference in the world. The Soldiers who returned here today know that they did."

Later, Cattau's mother Sheryl said she was proud of her son and simply overjoyed to have him home again.

"We're very honored to have a son who took pride in being there and really did a good job," she said.

"It's an excellent day," Sheryl Cattau said. "It's the best day of my life...well, maybe the second best day. The day he was born (gave me) about the same feeling."

Crisie Osterhoudt echoed that sentiment, saying she was just happy to have her family all together again.

"It's great to have him home... have him home safe," she said. "We're blessed."

"We'll probably just hang out, spending some quality time with each other and get to know each other again."

An interview with the new wing commander

'We must be ready to do our mission, anytime, anyplace'

By 2nd Lt. Camara Minks
Staff Writer

Leaning forward has always been a hallmark of the 155th Air Refueling Wing in Lincoln, Neb.

Whether it be taking the lead in aircraft modifications or setting benchmarks on major inspections, the 155th ARW has led the way while also adapting to change and looking to the future.

The unit will continue to move and look forward. That's the message from the new commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing, Col. Richard J. Evans III.

The *Prairie Soldier* sat down with the new commander during his first week of command in early September. The following are excerpts from that interview:

Prairie Soldier: You were previously commander of the newly designated 170th Group. What prompted your decision to seek command of the 155th ARW?

Evans: I'm glad to be back first of all. In 1998 we put a group of forward-thinkers together in Lincoln to look for new missions the Nebraska ANG could pursue. Col. Steve Adams ran that "Tiger Team."

One of ideas I championed was integrating Air Guard personnel into active duty operations at Offutt AFB. It took us over three years to take an idea from concept to reality.

When that finally happened in 2002, it made sense for General Lempke to send me to Offutt AFB to help start up the new unit. We took our organization from a detachment, to a squadron and earlier this summer achieved group status with two squadrons assigned.

That small effort has gained national prominence as one of the best and most-successful examples of an integrated associate unit anywhere in the Air Force.

During my time there I watched six active duty wing commanders come and go. Change is the norm on an active duty base. We always knew that the time would come for me to step aside and turn over the unit to the next generation of leaders.

That time came this month as I relinquished command of the 170th to a fine officer in Lt. Col. Mark White. Although I will miss my daily interaction with the members of the 170th and 55th Wing, after five years it was about time for me to make a move...

I look at this move as the next logical step in the career ladder, if you will, moving from commanding a group to commanding a wing. This is a great opportunity for me to come back to Lincoln and the 155th where I have spent most of my career.

Prairie Soldier: The 155th ARW has accomplished many things over the past three years, including outstanding ratings from inspections, successful global operations and leading edge aircraft modifications. What are your goals for the next three to five years?

Evans: When I interviewed for the wing commander position with General Lempke and the selection board, one of the things I talked about was defining the next level of success as an organization. When you are a high-

'The bottom line is that all of our members need to understand the environment we're operating in, what the expectations are for volunteerism and what the potential of an involuntary mobilization might be. We must be realistic and honest with our members. Everyone needs to know what they are signing up for.'

achieving organization like the 155th, it can be a challenge to sustain your excellence while at the same time finding ways to improve and move the unit to even higher levels of performance.

I have no doubt we have a great team in place here and it is poised to do even better things down the road.

What we have to do is define that next level for us to target and then find ways to get there...

The mission must come first. We must be ready to do the mission, anytime anyplace. That's why we will focus daily on readiness of our equipment, systems, aircraft and of course people.

We must have enough people to do the mission and they must have the right skills and right training to get the job done. They must also be available to answer the call of the Governor for a state mission or the President to perform a federal mission.

Job one is being ready to do the mission and then getting it done successfully when we're called upon.

We have an Operational Readiness Inspection, or ORI, in January of 2009. Between now and then we will have numerous exercises to prepare for the inspection. My basic thought on inspections is that if you're ready to perform the mission everyday, you'll be ready when the formal test comes. I have no doubt we'll excel during the inspection, but we have lots of work to do in the next 16 months to ensure every unit member is ready for the test.

The ORI is certainly something that will have all of our attention over coming months, but basic mission readiness is an enduring challenge that doesn't ever expire. I ask our members to always keep that in mind.

The second area I want to focus on is resources. We are entering a time where resources are going to be tight. On the money side of it, we need to make sure that our focus is on those things that affect mission readiness and ensuring our members are ready when needed.

We'll have to look at our processes, products and procedures and find new and innovative ways to better utilize our resources to get the job done. I don't see us getting more resources down the road, in fact we may actually get less. We must focus on smart use of our resources to produce mission capability and adequately support our members.

The third area is a resource in

itself and that's our people. We all know that without great people we can't do the mission. We need to stay focused on recruiting and retention. The Nebraska Air National Guard as a whole is 100 percent manned and we're the only state in the nation that's considered "green" for both recruiting and retention. We are at the top of the heap on both metrics and we've got to keep it that way.

Our recruiting must also recognize that diversity is an asset we can use to our advantage in meeting the challenges of the future.

We also need to look at all of the things that enable our members to go out and do the mission, like training and family support. We need to seek new ways to accomplish training, to include use of technology. Our full-time staff must do everything they can to make the time spent at the base by our traditional members productive and focused on the things that keep them ready for the mission.

Prairie Soldier: The 155th ARW has always been driven to be ready and relevant, as shown by taking the lead in aircraft modifications and deployments. What will the 155th ARW need to do in order to maintain that relevancy in the future?

Evans: The tanker mission is relevant today and it will be relevant for the coming years, there's no question about that.

The issue becomes what's after the tankers and that's what our transformation strategy will focus on, what's next. It may be another air refueling mission. We would love to have the Air Force's new KC-X tanker based here and that may very well be an option for us. But we've got to look at the whole portfolio of mission requirements out there, to include non-flying missions.

We know there are capabilities like civil engineering, services, communications, public affairs and cyber operations for example, that are not tied directly to a flying mission. We must look at all of the missions assigned to the Air Force and figure out a mix that provides the capabilities our state and nation need.

Any new mission we take on must be recruitable in terms of personnel skills and numbers. It would make little sense to take on a mission that cannot be adequately staffed.

We also need to ensure our Air Guard missions are compatible with and complement those of our Army National Guard. The Governor will expect the entire Nebraska National Guard to be ready with the right people, skills and equipment to support the citizens of Nebraska.

The Air Guard must be a good teammate and partner with the Army Guard and I will stress the importance of our state missions and joint operations during my tenure.

Prairie Soldier: What do you see as the greatest asset the 155th ARW has?

Evans: I think I have already alluded to that. Obviously it's our people.

If you look at the awards and recognition we've received over the years, we have a lot of star



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Changing Of The Guard: Col. Rick Evans (right) accepts the colors of the 155th Air Refueling Wing from Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke during the wing's change of command ceremony Sept. 8.

performers. There are a lot more star performers behind the scenes that didn't get recognized with individual awards.

The results that we have seen on inspections and other operational tests are proving that we have a top team in place here.

My job is to keep that team operating at that same high level while at the same time managing the turnover and change that's natural in any organization. We will do that by bringing in good people. We then mentor them, give them opportunities to excel and publicly recognize them for their great work. We will prepare our successors to step into leadership roles when called upon.

Prairie Soldier: We've increased our operations tempo since 9/11 and it seems to be continuing to increase. What do you see as some of the challenges our traditional members will face in the future?

Evans: The change from strategic reserve to an operational force is essentially what we are in the process of doing right now. That inherently impacts the traditional Guard member the most because the full-time folks are out here everyday doing the mission.

Our full-time force provides a solid foundation for our mission capability. We must never forget, however, that two-thirds of our members are traditional Guard. Any change to our OpsTempo or to how our missions are assigned has the potential to impact volunteerism.

A good example is a change from 15-day rotations to 30 or 45 days on a deployment. Longer tours tend to reduce volunteerism. When volunteerism goes down, your mission capability goes down.

We have asked active duty leaders to give us maximum flexibility in how we do the missions assigned to us. Don't tell us how to do the mission but tell us what the mission is and let us maximize the potential of our assets and resources, including our people to go do the mission.

Another thing I am concerned about is the potential for partial mobilizations. Right now we have been able to meet our requirements, for the most part, with volunteers. But we are starting

to see more partial mobilizations of Air Guard members to do Air Force missions of longer duration than we're used to.

A good example of that is our Security Forces Squadron deploying 28 people to Kyrgyzstan. They are partially mobilized now and will be out of the country for many months doing a very important mission. If partial mobilization becomes the norm, that's going to be a major change for all of our members, with our traditional members and their civilian employers getting hit the hardest.

The Secretary of Defense has established a policy that limits involuntary mobilizations to one year out of every six. That policy can be looked at two ways. It can be looked at as a constraint to the Air Force... we can only have you mobilized for one year out of every six. It can also be looked at as developing a resource pool for the Air Force... we will plan on mobilizing you one year out of every six. Whether it's a "we can" or a "we will" situation is still to be determined. Either way, the Air National Guard can expect to change and adapt with our Air Force as the Total Force team works together to meet the needs of the nation.

The bottom line is that all of our members need to understand the environment we're operating in, what the expectations are for volunteerism and what the potential of an involuntary mobilization might be.

We must be realistic and honest with our members. Everyone needs to know what they are signing up for.

Prairie Soldier: Is there anything you would like to add?

Evans: I am excited about being back on the 155th ARW team. As I stated in my change of command remarks, the title of wing commander is a nice one.

As a professional title, however, I am more honored by the title of "member," member of the Nebraska Air National Guard.

We all share that same title and working together we will boldly take this fine organization to new heights.

I look forward to working hard every day on behalf of our members and their families to ensure that we are successful in every endeavor.

New commanders take over at Offutt-based group

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The changes keep on a coming for members of the 170th Group at Offutt Air Force Base.

Slightly less than two months after reaching group status, Lt. Col. Mark White assumed command of the organization from Col. Rick Evans who assumed command of the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing.

According to White, who had assumed command of Offutt's 170th Operations Support Squadron in July as part of the stand-up on the 170th Group, he relishes the opportunity to command the new group.

"I do stand here humbly and thankful for being given the chance to command the 170th Group," said White, Bellevue, who became the second commander in the short 61-day history of the 170th at Offutt Air Force Base. "I can't imagine a greater Total Force integration than what we have going on here in Nebraska and at the 55th Wing. It's a partnership that was envisioned back in the late 1990s and I think it's been a success."

According to White, that success is based upon a combination of the mission, people and leadership of both the 55th Wing and the Nebraska National Guard.

"We will continue this fine tradition that's been set forward today," he said.

The 170th Group is the Nebraska Air National Guard headquarters organization at Offutt Air Force Base, overseeing operations of two squadrons and all

Guard personnel assigned to support the active duty 55th Wing. White, a native of Indiana, served on active duty for 14 years before joining the Guard in 2002.

In assuming command of the 170th, White exchanged command of the organization's 170th Operations Support Squadron with Lt. Col. Tami S. Thompson, also of Bellevue. Thompson, an intelligence officer, had served as the director of Operations for the unit.

According to Thompson, she too is excited at the opportunity to serve as a commander at Offutt Air Force Base.

"Members of the 170th Group are integrated throughout the squadrons in the 55th Wing and have been for over five years," said Thompson, a graduate of Iowa State University who earned her master's degree from Bellevue University. "I look forward to continuing our strong relationship as we work together to accomplish our

mission."

"I consider myself truly fortunate as I assume command of the 170th Operations Support Squadron," Thompson said a few moments later. "We truly have attracted some of the very best people and I have no doubt that we will continue to successfully accomplish our mission and great deeds."



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

New Challenge: Lt. Col. Mark White (right) accepts the colors of the 170th Group from Brig. Gen. Robert Bailey as White assumes command of the Nebraska Air National Guard unit located at Offutt Air Force Base. White, who had served as commander of the 170th Operations Support Squadron for less than two months, follows in the footsteps of Col. Rick Evans.



Thompson

Commander's Last Flight



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes



Touch Down: (Above) Smoke fills the air behind a Nebraska Air National Guard KC-135R Stratotanker as Col. Steve Adams completes his last flight as commander of the Lincoln-based 155th Air Refueling Wing, Sept. 7.

Wetting Down: A thoroughly soaked Col. Steve Adams carries a ceremonial bottle of champagne as he walks away from the last KC-135R Stratotanker he flew as commander of the 155th Air Refueling Wing. Wetting down a pilot is a customary way of saluting long-time aviators after they complete their final flights.

WING COMMANDER continued from page 1.

the unit works to ensure it remains one of the top Air National Guard Units in meeting its recruiting goals. "The Nebraska Air National Guard is one of eight wings (in the country) that consistently meets its recruiting and retention goals."

Adams gave credit to the unit's ability to get consistent referrals from within the unit to meet these goals. "For example in July (2007) we recruited 12 individuals; of those, 10 were referred by members of the wing."

Adams began his career in 1972 as an Air Force enlistee. Later he joined the Nebraska Air National Guard and in 1977 was commissioned as a second lieutenant upon graduation from Officer Training at the Air National Guards Academy of Military Science and in 1981 graduated from pilot training.

After becoming a pilot Adams filled many leadership roles that culminated in 2004 when he took command of the 155th Air Refueling Wing. Prior to that, Adams had served as commander of the 155th Weapons System Security Flight and air operations officer-in-charge of the Air National Guard's Operational Support Aircraft Program for the National Guard Bureau.

Later he became the 173rd Air Refueling Squadron commander, followed by a promo-



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Standing Tall: (From left) Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke, Col. Steve Adams and Col. Rick Evans salute during the playing of the National Anthem at the start of the 155th Air Refueling Wing change of command ceremony, held Sept. 8 in Lincoln. The 155th Air Refueling Wing is the largest Air National Guard unit in the Nebraska National Guard.

tion to the helm of the 155th Operations Group.

Under Adams' leadership the wing faced many new challenges with deployed members serving all over the world, including deployments in support of Iraqi Freedom, Enduring Freedom, securing the nation's borders, numerous air expedi-

tionary missions, exercises, support of numerous training missions for other units all over the world, and a recently completed and highly praised Air Show.

In assuming the helm of the 155th ARW, Evans brings with him a tremendous resume of past leadership experience be-

ginning in 1984 as a distinguished graduate from Officer Training at the Air National Guard's Academy of Military Science, and then later graduating from navigator training.

Evans previously was the commander of the 170th Operations Group stationed at Offutt Air Force Base, where,

as commander, he was responsible for integrating Guard members into the 55th Wing, Air Combat Command's largest flying wing.

In taking command of the organization, Evans spoke directly to the many members of the wing. "How proud I am today to stand before you as the commander of the 155th. I'm honored to be the commander of this wing. I will do everything I can everyday to earn your trust and confidence."

Evans acknowledged the many challenges that the unit has been able to overcome over the many years and that those expectations for the unit will continue to grow.

"We dare not rest upon our laurels and let ourselves drift with the current. We must move forward boldly with vision and purpose."

"Let no one mistake the purpose we have here as an organization. Job One is always strengthening our readiness and being ready to meet all challenges anytime any place in the air and on the ground," he said.

Evans later explained that in order to meet those challenges the unit must continue to find new ways to meet the Nation's call. "We'll take new thinking, innovation and action to remain the best of the best and I know the 155th Wing is up to the task."



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

What's In There? (From left) Pfc. Charles Wilkins, 181st Fire Fighting Detachment from Norfolk, and Pvt. Andrew Harper, 623rd Vertical Engineer Company, use a Snakeeye II camera to peer into a hole in search of trapped people.



Shoring Duty: Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen work together to build braces to shore up the side of a building that had been "damaged" during the exercise.



Important Business: Members of a decontamination team work together to decontaminate a patient injured in a simulated terrorist attack during the Sept. 29-30 exercise at Camp Ashland and the Mead Training Site.

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together to decontaminate patients who had been wounded during a fictitious explosion at the University of Nebraska, following which an airplane flew overhead dousing the injured fans with a strange powder.

"We've been through a lot of the stations so we know each and every one of them, which helps a lot," she said.

According to CERFP officials, the exercise was designed to provide the new 186-person organization with a wide variety of training in its new mission in the areas of casualty search and extraction, casualty/patient decontamination and medical support.

Even though the organization, which is made up of four separate Army and Air Guard units, had trained as individual sections, the exercise marked the first time that the entire organization had trained together.

For example, at the Mead Training Site, members of Wahoo's 623rd Vertical Engineer Company, Norfolk's 317th and 181st Firefighting Detachments, and firefighters from the Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Civil Engineer Squadron, worked around a massive rubble pile near an abandoned missile silo to locate and rescue casualties trapped beneath the concrete.

According to Capt. Dale Burrage, commander of the 623rd Eng. Co., the exercise gave the Army and Air Guardsmen the opportunity to work together as part of several different teams.

"We've basically built the teams based upon the different peoples' expertise," said Burrage. "We have an Air Guardsman who is a rope expert, so it just made sense for him to be part of the extraction

team that ropes in to holes to rescue patients from underneath the rubble. At the same time, we have an Army Guardsman who owns his own construction company, so it just makes sense for him to head up our shoring team."

"What this exercise is doing, is giving us the opportunity to learn how to work together as a team in a safe environment before we have to do this for real," he said.

The Guardsmen involved in the training at Mead agreed.

"We want to train like we fight," said Tech. Sgt. Duane Eivins, a Nebraska Air Guard firefighter shortly after roping into a hole with Sgt. Katherine Jones of the 623rd Eng. Co. to rescue a "patient." "If we train very little, then when it comes time to fight, we revert back to our training."

"If we try to train as realistically as possible, then it's not as much of a shock in the real scenario," he added.

And training in realistic conditions, said Jones, means not only gaining confidence in ones' own skills, but also in other members of the teams. "It's very important," said Jones. "This way I can go down into a hole with my partner and we can do what we need to do almost without thinking. You know what you need to do and you know how to do it."

"I think it's wonderful...it's just helping so much," Jones said.

The exercise also provided many of the Guardsmen at Mead a chance to practice working with recently arrived hi-tech equipment that most had only read about in books. Pfc. Charles Wilkins, a firefighter with Norfolk's 181st Firefighting Team, spent much of the weekend learning how to look

for trapped casualties using a variety of equipment such as the Snakeeye II camera that can peer into tiny cavities, a seismic listening device that can detect even the slightest scratching sounds and a heat/thermal imaging device that can detect body heat from beneath a pile of rocks.

While working with the equipment, Wilkins said he couldn't help but think about what his high school classmates would think if they could see him now.

"The people that made the most fun of us for being computer nerds and geeks in high school, well, now it's our time to shine," Wilkins said.

"It's good training...just getting ready for anything," he said. "If another 911 happens, they'll call on us to go in first and find out where the victims are."

While the extraction teams were busy at Mead, members of the decontamination and medical squads were equally challenged at Camp Ashland where they had to work on an ever increasing amount of patients, working as teams to decontaminate the casualties before moving them to the medical tent for treatment.

According to Airman Katie Score of the 155th Medical Group, the exercise proved both challenging and fun at the same time.

"We really don't get to see each of the other members of the CERFP too often," she said, "so it's kind of nice to get around each other to kind of know how each other works, both together and separately."

"It's definitely and interesting mission...it's a lot different than what we usually do during Guard drills," added Score. "It's fun"



Triage: Senior Airman Krystal Yambor, a dental technician with the 155th Medical Group, conducts triage on a patient during the CERFP exercise at Camp Ashland.



How Are You Doing? Dr. (Lt. Col.) John Majerus examines a patient in a medical tent. The Sept. 29-30 exercise was designed to test all aspects of the new CBRNE Enhance Response Force Package (CERFP). CBRNE stands for chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high explosive.



Photo by 1st Lt. Carlos Van Nurdan

New Boss: Lt. Col. Anita Curington (center) accepts the colors of the 110th Medical Battalion from Col. Roma Amundson.

Medical Battalion sees changing of Guard

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

Members of the 110th Medical Battalion witnessed a changing of the guards, Sept. 9, when Lt. Col. Anita Curington assumed command of the Lincoln-based battalion from Lt. Col. Rick Dahlman.

According to Curington, who previously commanded the 72nd Civil Support Team, she's excited by the opportunity.

"I will do my best and I will always give you 100 percent," she said, adding that the organization has accomplished much during its service as an evacuation battalion and will face equal challenges as it transforms into a multifunctional medical battalion. "I know that you're ready for this challenge and I expect you to excel."

Dahlman said that he leaves the battalion with pride that the organization has accomplished much during the past year. He said it was also a tough day to leave an organization he feels such emotion for.

"Giving up command is an emotional day for me," said Dahlman, who was presented with the Meritorious Service Medal in acknowledgement of his work as commander of the

battalion. "For me, taking command was the best of times."

"Every single month we got together, you never ceased to give everything you had. We've had some awesome training opportunities here and you really excelled," said Dahlman to the assembled battalion staff members as well as the members of the 313th Medical Company (Ground Ambulance) and Company C, 2-135th General Support Aviation Battalion (formerly known as the 24th Medical Company (Air Ambulance)).

Dahlman said he enjoyed serving as commander of some of the finest Soldiers in the world.

"I'm clearly a much richer man for having worked with all of you," he said.

According to the presiding officer, the members of the battalion have worked hard and valiantly in some of the most extreme situations imaginable.

"You are defending our nation. The colors of the 110th Med. – as well as the 313th and 24th Med. – have all gone forward in this long war. You have conducted, all of you, with great dignity and dedication and we are so proud of your service," said Col. Roma Amundson, commander of the 92nd Troop Command who presided over the ceremony.

These Colors Won't Run



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Hang On: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard hold onto a massive American flag hanging from a North Platte Fire Department ladder truck in an attempt to keep it from flapping wildly in the wind as part of the preparations to welcome home members of the Nebraska Army National Guard's 1074th Transportation Company, Oct. 12, in North Platte. The Soldiers were returning from a year-long deployment to Iraq as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Look for photos and story on the welcome home ceremony in the December 2007 Prairie Soldier

KADAVY

continued from page 1.

an active duty Guardsmen when he accepted a position as an operations officer with 5th Army at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where he served for more than two years before transferring to other posts with the U.S. Army and National Guard Bureau in Georgia and Virginia during the years that followed.

Kadavy returned in Nebraska in 2001 to become the commander of the 1-167th Cavalry and served as commander of the squadron during the organization's eight-month deployment in support of peacekeeping operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Following that mobilization, he returned to Virginia where he completed a U.S. Army War College fellowship with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency before returning to the National Guard Bureau.

Kadavy deployed to Camp Victory, Iraq, in April 2006 where he served as chief of the Reserve Component Support Division, acting as the senior National Guard advisor to the Corps commander there. After returning to the U.S. in September 2006, Kadavy assumed his current post.

In accepting the position, Kadavy said he's excited to return to his roots.

"I'm extremely excited about the opportunity to be returning home to Nebraska with the honor of leading and serving with the men and women of the Nebraska National Guard," he said.

"To you Governor Heineman, thank



Photos by David Nore

New Adjutant General Selected: Col. Tim Kadavy thanks Gov. Dave Heineman for his confidence shortly after Heineman named Kadavy to succeed retiring Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke as the 31st Nebraska adjutant general on Oct. 10.

you for your trust and confidence in my abilities to lead the Nebraska National Guard during this period of unprecedented national use and relevance," Kadavy added. "It is indeed my honor to serve a Governor who understands the sacrifice of military service, having been a former Army officer and graduate of the United States Military Academy."

According to Heineman, Kadavy's national experience will undoubtedly benefit the Nebraska National Guard.

"It is absolutely critical to the state of

Nebraska that we have an adjutant general who has those contacts at the Pentagon level," said Heineman. "Colonel Kadavy...General Lempke...those contacts make an enormous difference in terms of missions, in terms of force structure and how the Guard works."

Kadavy said that he's ready to return home to tackle a variety of on-going challenges, such as maintaining recruiting efforts and providing the support to Guardsmen and their families as they continue to mobilize around the world in



Heading Back To Nebraska: Col. Tim Kadavy, his wife Laurie and their youngest son Peter pose for a photograph shortly after Kadavy was selected by Gov. Dave Heineman to be Nebraska's 31st adjutant general. Kadavy currently serves as the senior operations officer at the Army National Guard Directorate, National Guard Bureau, in Arlington, Va. The Kadavy's eldest son, Seth, is currently a student at Virginia Tech University and was unable to attend the announcement.

support of the Global War on Terror.

"Obviously the challenge to the National Guard is to continue to sustain readiness in both personnel and units as the Global War on Terror continues," he said. "We need to make sure that we have ready personnel and units to both reply to the call of the governor and the president of the United States."

"I look forward to getting back here and getting to know the team – of which I know most of the players – in the Nebraska National Guard," Kadavy said a short time later.

"I'm just ready to come back and move forward."

On the Border

Cavalry Soldiers make impact during deployment to New Mexico

By 1st Lt. Cole Kilpatrick
Staff Writer

Approximately 60 Nebraska Army National Guard Soldiers from Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry (Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition), answered the call to assist U.S. Border Patrol agents in slowing the flow of drugs and undocumented aliens.

On July 22, members of Troop A arrived in Santé Fe, N.M., for a week of train-up for their mission. According to Capt. Timothy Cass, Troop A commander, the Soldiers went through a variety of training such as mission orientation, intelligence briefings, Spanish classes, border patrol system of operations, combat life saver training and combative training.

"Our training as (cavalry scouts) was perfect for the mission," said Cass. "The Soldiers handled doing observations, reconnaissance, and detailed situation reports very professionally. They did an excellent job."

The mission was part of Operation Jump Start, which was initially introduced by President Bush during a national speech addressing border security and immigration reform on May 15, 2006. At that time he requested the National Guard to help support the U.S. Border Patrol in the four states that make up the nation's southern border: California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas.

Cass said that Troop A was a part of Joint Task Force Zia, which was responsible for over 180 miles of border.

"Mostly the Soldiers did observations and recon of tactical areas of interests where the Border Patrol thought there might be some illegal activity taking place," said Cass. "We were not involved in actual detaining of the undocumented aliens, but helped with the in-processing of them and sometimes we were involved in the security of the transportation of them."

Troop A Soldiers spent part of their time at the border providing security in detainee centers, but a majority of their



New Mexico Training: Members of 1st Platoon, Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, pause for a photo after conducting a room clearing exercise while training to serve on the New Mexico border in July as part of Operation Jump Start.

mission was spent deployed as entry identification teams (EIT) observing key crossing locations.

"(At) most sites Soldiers had an eight-hour shift, but other locations were much more difficult to get to, taking almost three hours to get there and three hours to get back," said Cass.

"Those Soldiers had a twenty-four hour shift, but were never in teams less than three. Most of the time there were four of them."

In the 180 miles of border included in JTF-Zia's zone of operations, almost 74 miles was covered by 25 EIT sites that Troop A was a part of. Also there were five additional sites for night operations that were constantly moved night tonight.

"Essentially we were there for observation," said Cass. "We were the eyes and ears of the Border Patrol and if we saw something suspicious we had direct radio communication with the border patrol and we would guide them in on the scene and if they needed our support we would go in."

The Guard benefits because Soldiers enter their Guard units trained, experienced and ready to fill leadership positions.

Recruits can receive bonuses as high as \$40,000, officials said. Recruits who enlist under this program serve in the Army National Guard until completing their initial entry training and then serve 30, 36 or 48 months on active duty.

After completing their active-duty tour, recruits can re-enlist or return to the Guard.

Under the new Active First program, recruits receive as much as \$20,000 after finishing initial training. Up to \$20,000 more can be paid once Soldiers return to the Guard after active service, National Guard officials said.



Observation Work: A member of Troop A, 1-167th Cavalry, shows Maj. Gen. Roger P. Lempke, adjutant general for Nebraska, how members of the unit use a TOW launcher's optical system to look for people attempting to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in the rugged mountains of southern New Mexico. The Nebraska Army Guardsmen were serving in New Mexico as part of Operation Jump Start.

JTF-Zia was composed of more than just Nebraska and New Mexico Army National Guard Soldiers, according to Staff Sgt. Chad Rowe, Troop A operations noncommissioned officer. There were also several Soldiers from the Virgin Islands

attached to Troop A. The unit also worked with approximately 130 soldiers from Guam in performing border patrol tasks.

Rowe went down to New Mexico several days before the rest of Troop A as an advanced party to act as a liaison officer

between several other units involved, including the Arkansas and Georgia Army National Guard.

"The Soldiers of A Troop loved the mission," said Rowe. "Being able to work with Soldiers from other National Guard units across the country just made it that much more enjoyable. You had all these other elements there and also working with civilians."

According to Rowe, a favorite part of the mission was preventing narcotics from being transported across the border along with preventing the transportation of undocumented workers. Troop A was involved in the seizure of 500 pounds of marijuana and other narcotics. The unit was also involved in 20 percent of all the apprehensions made during their time spent in New Mexico.

Rowe also reported that Soldiers earned commendations outside of their mission.

2nd Lt. Joseph R. Schepers received a commendation award for breaking up an assault on a civilian while the unit was in a restaurant. Sgt. Cory Walcott along with Cass received impact awards for heroism for saving the life of an 11-year-old girl who was having seizures in their hotel.

Rowe said he believes that Nebraska Guard Soldiers could hold their heads a bit higher after successfully completing the mission.

"Our A Troop Soldiers performed to the highest of standards. We received several commendations from the state of New Mexico."

According to Col. Barry F. Stout, JTF-ZIA Commander, the partnership between the Border Patrol and the National Guard elements has been instrumental in helping secure our nation's border and improve our defenses.

The achievements, in large part, are a tribute to the hardworking men and women of the National Guard.

Since the beginning of the year 2007, JTF-Zia it has apprehended 5,408 undocumented aliens. It is estimated that JTF-Zia has seized over \$4,340,000 worth of narcotics including 5,441 pounds of marijuana and 2.96 pounds of cocaine.

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he said.

"A lot of Soldiers like the opportunity to serve their nation and come back and serve their community, as well. We think we're offering them both options in a manner that really benefits them," Bliss said.

Most initial active duty enlistments are followed by a remaining service obligation in the Individual Ready Reserve.

For example, four-year active duty enlistments typically are followed by four-year IRR obligations, in which Soldiers are not paid and are no longer required to perform any duty, but are subject to be called back into active service.

Under the new program Soldiers return to the Guard to fulfill the remaining obligation.

Because bonuses are based on length of enlistment and are not job or qualification specific, recruits who don't mind finishing their initial military service obligation in the Guard can earn big bucks. The average bonus for an active-duty enlistment in 2006 was \$16,500, officials said.

In addition, recruiting officials hope the Guard-turned-active duty Soldiers will promote the National Guard during their active service and persuade more prior-service Soldiers to sign-up once their initial enlistments are finished, Bliss said.

"It spreads our good news story that Guard Soldiers support their community and support their nation. We think for all parties — the Army, the

National Guard and the Soldier — it's a very positive opportunity," he said.

Traditionally, many active duty Soldiers have transitioned into the Guard after finishing their enlistments. In the past, the Guard filled its ranks with about 60 percent prior-service military.

Guard officials noted that percentage has dropped by half as deployments have dramatically increased for Guard units in the past five years, making separating active duty Soldiers wary of signing up.

In fact, the Guard now is giving the active component more than it is getting. In 2006, the Guard received 3,378 Soldiers from the Army, but released 4,309 Soldiers to active

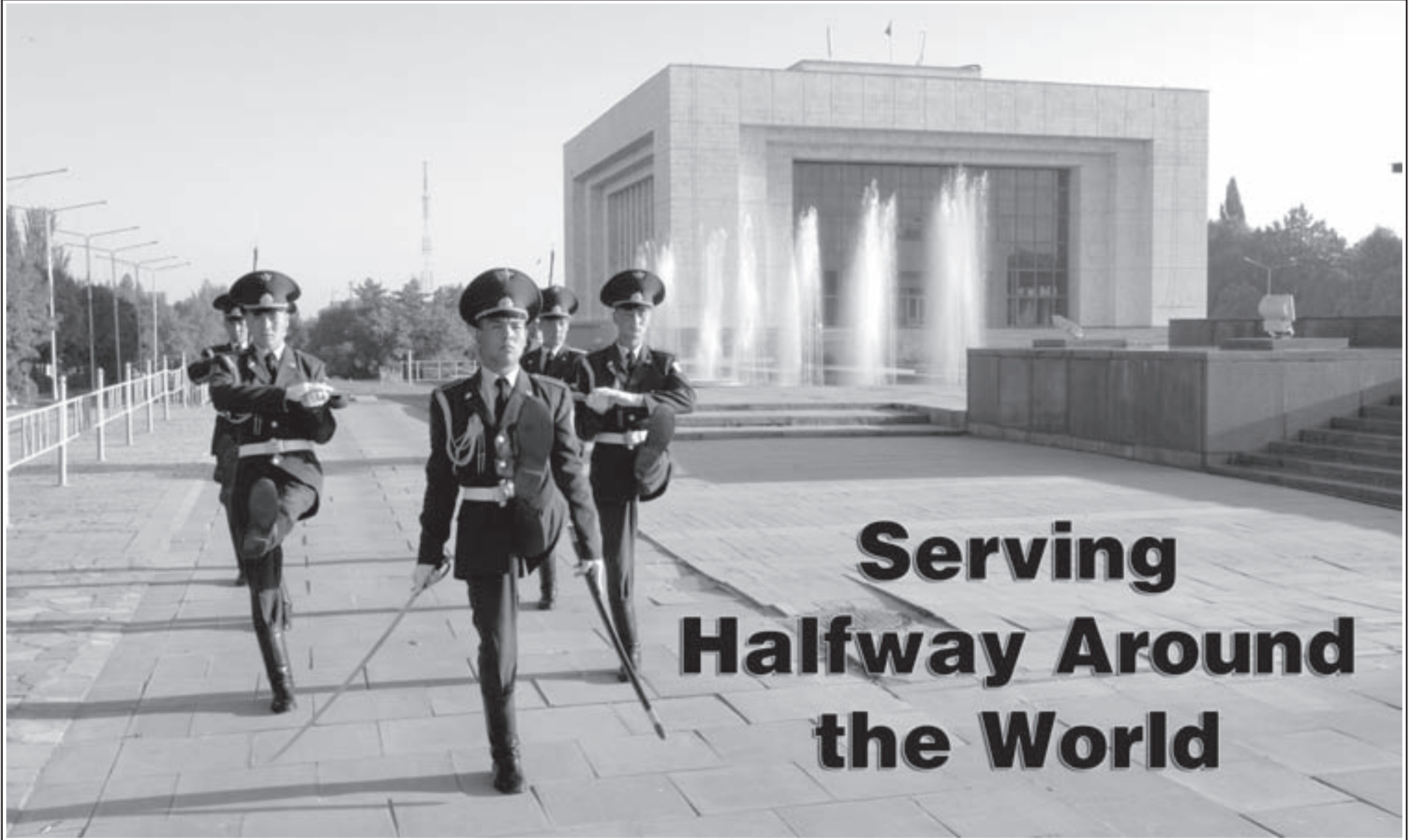
duty. Bliss said the Guard always has provided Soldiers to the active component, allowing them to be discharged for enlistment into active duty. But this program puts in place a process for returning those Soldiers to the Guard.

"All we're doing is formalizing the process, not only to team more effectively with the Army, but to also take care of these Soldiers a little bit better, as well," Bliss said.

Army National Guard officials reported finishing fiscal 2007 at 101 percent of its planned end-strength, nearly 3,000 troops above its planned 350,000-Soldier end-strength and with almost 6,500 more troops than it started the year with.



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes



Serving Halfway Around the World

High Stepping: Members of a Kyrgyz military honor guard prepare to raise the flag of Kyrgyzstan in front of the National Museum in Bishkek, the capital of the tiny Central Asian nation on Sept. 16. (Above): Various images of Kyrgyzstan.



Preparing To Train The MOBITS: Sgt. Steve Brewer loads ammunition before the start of the Top Gun competition at a military training range on the outskirts of Bishkek, Kryrgyzstan, Sept. 15.

Marching On: Members of the newly trained and uniformed Krgyz Mobile Interdiction Team march toward their graduation ceremony at the Drug Control Agency in Bishkek, Kryrgyzstan.

Starting The Shift: A Nebraska Air National Guard security forces specialist carries his gear toward a waiting line of Hum-Vees at the start of his shift at Manas Air Base, Kryrgyzstan.

Nebraska Army, Air Guardsmen serve in important missions in Kyrgyzstan

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

The tiny country of Kyrgyzstan has often been referred to as the Switzerland of Central Asia. About the size of South Dakota, this country is home to some of the most beautiful and relatively unknown mountain ranges in the world.

Recently, however, Kyrgyzstan could probably be known by separate name – Nebraska East due to the fact that for several months, teams of Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen have been deployed to this remote country to do two incredibly important missions.

From guarding an extremely important base at Manas

International Airport to helping train a revolutionary Kyrgyz police special operations force to combat the growing drug international trade, Nebraska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are making a difference in this former Soviet Union republic.

In September, the *Prairie Soldier* had an exceptionally rare opportunity to travel to Kyrgyzstan to cover both the operations of the Nebraska National Guard Counter Drug Special Operations Detachment as they completed the final days of training the new Kryrgyz Mobile Interdiction Team as well as visit Manas Air Base to see how Nebraska Airmen are making a daily impact at this tiny air base.

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Manas Beat

Nebraska Air Guard security forces guarding critical base

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

MANAS AIR BASE, Kyrgyzstan – The weather's still nice here – relatively cool in the evenings and bearably warm in the afternoons – but the Airmen know that's going to change soon.

Located on a nearly grassless plain near the towering Kyrgyz mountain range, the weather in this central Asian country has achieved almost legendary status among the Americans who have served here through stories that have been passed down between the rotations of Airmen deploying to this critically important base.

Sudden snow storms. Shrill, biting winds. Bone-numbing temperatures.

True or not, for the Nebraska Air Guard security forces personnel currently involved in a six-month mission here, the coming winter – while a passing thought – isn't really all that much of a concern. Heck, many say, it doesn't sound all that different than a typical Nebraska winter.

"Most people back home ask you what the weather is like," said Staff Sgt. Joshua Robertson, Omaha, who normally works full-time as a security specialist at the National Guard Air Base in Lincoln but now is serving in a similar role at Manas Air Base during his six-month deployment to Kyrgyzstan. "It's comparable to being in Nebraska without the mountains."

The fact that winter is still weeks or even months away is just as well for the 28 members of the Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Security Forces Squadron who have deployed here with Guardsmen from across the United States to form a unique All-Guard security forces squadron – a first-ever at a deployed location. Even though most have been working at the base for nearly two months, they're still adapting to the change of cultures, working conditions, environment and schedules.

"Ever see the movie 'Ground Hog Day?'" asked Master Sgt. Craig Shrimpton, a Nebraska Air Guardsman from Plattsmouth who is now working in the base anti-terrorism office. "It's kind of like that here."

"The days are beginning to melt from one into another. Same thing, different day," he added.

For the Nebraska Air Guardsmen, a typical day means spending a shift conducting patrols around base, guarding aircraft on the flightline or providing security at the main gate where local Kyrgyz workers – pronounced ker-Gee – who provide many different services on the base, wait to be processed through the security checkpoints.

When the Airmen are off-duty, many participate in the intramural sporting



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Getting Ready For Work: Master Sgt. Daniel Emken straps on his gear while standing in front of his locker at Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan. Emken is one of 28 Nebraska Air Guard Security Forces personnel currently guarding the important Central Asian air base as part of Operation Enduring Freedom.

leagues that have sprung up on base or work out in the massive gym that's been built in a tent on the base. Others pass the time e-mailing or calling friends and family back home, watching movies, playing cards, taking college classes via the Internet or jogging on the base trails that – while not very long – can still provide a decent workout.

All in all, say the Airmen, the deployment hasn't been too bad.

"It's better than I thought it was going to be," said Senior Airman Anthony Ray, Omaha. "Living conditions are great here. You can't complain about them. The food's great...and I'm here with guys from Lincoln, so you get to see guys you know."

Staff Sgt. Ryan Blodgett, Lincoln, agreed.

"It was kind of funny because it was three o'clock in the morning when we



Office Call: (From left) Master Sgt. James Boeselager, Senior Airman Brian Baack, Master Sgt. Daniel Emken and Tech. Sgt. David Nelson of the Nebraska Air National Guard, stand in front of the Manas Air Base Security Forces headquarters on Sept. 18.

got in," he said. "We sat on the plane for about an hour then we got on a bus...you really couldn't see anything. My first impression was that this (base) was just going to be a bunch of tents."

"It's actually really nice," he added. "From what I hear, compared to other peoples' deployments, (this base's facilities) are newer and the amenities are a little bit better. Personally, for a first deployment, this is a good way to start off."

Yet, even though the base has more amenities and the local threat level is somewhat less than those encountered at similar bases in nearby Afghanistan, make no mistake about it, the mission the Air Guardsmen are performing in Kyrgyzstan is important.

"Small base, very big mission," said Master Sgt. James Boeselager, a 155th Security Forces Squadron mid-shift supervisor in Lincoln who now is serving as flight chief, area supervisor on the flightline and quick reaction force supervisor at Manas.

"Our basic mission for the Security Forces is to protect the personnel and the property that we have here," he said. "The basic mission for the air base here is for crew movement, passenger movement, air refueling support for air-



Enjoying A Day Off: (From left) Staff Sgt. Ryan Blodgett, Senior Airman Dustin Johnson and Senior Airman Andrew O'Grady pause for a photograph while standing in front of the Peter J. Ganci Jr. Memorial at Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan. Ganci was a New York City fire chief who was killed during the terrorist attacks on 9/11. Manas Air Base serves as the primary logistical base for all personnel, supplies and equipment heading into Afghanistan.

craft over Afghanistan."

Opened in November 2001, the Manas Air Base served as a major staging base for the initial operations in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. Today it continues to be extremely important as it serves as the "premiere" logistical hub for personnel and supplies moving into and out of Afghanistan as well as a base for American and Coalition air refueling aircraft providing support to aircraft flying over Afghanistan.

And protecting all those assets are members of eight Air National Guard Security Forces Squadrons that have come together from Alaska, Vermont,

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On Duty: Tech. Sgt. David Nelson pauses near a Hum-Vee during a break at Manas Air Base, Sept. 18. According to Master Sgt. James Boeselager, the small base in northern Kyrgyzstan has a huge mission serving as the primary logistical hub for all personnel, equipment and supplies heading into and out of Afghanistan.

Deployment to Kyrgyzstan offers many benefits for Airmen

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

MANAS AIR BASE, Kyrgyzstan – For the nearly 30 members of a Lincoln-based Nebraska Air National Guard Security Forces Squadron who have deployed nearly half-way around the globe to provide security protection at a key base in Central Asia, the six-month mission has been anything but routine.

Providing security at the base flightline, conducting patrols and manning the security posts at the base's front gates have not only given the Air Guardsmen a chance to do their part for the continuing Global War on Terror, it's also given them a chance to learn more about themselves, their military occupations and the world in general.

In short, say the Nebraskans, the deployment to Kyrgyzstan has offered the Guardsmen the opportunity to become both better leaders and people.

"It's definitely a learning experience," said Staff Sgt. Ryan Blodgett, a Lincoln native who is experiencing his first deployment to a foreign country. "From a personal level, being away from family for six months is definitely going to build some character and personal strength and resolve."

Blodgett said that one of the first lessons he learned upon arriving at Manas was that he definitely wasn't in Nebraska anymore.

"Instead of being in your own home state where English is the primary language, we're actually the outsiders here," he said. "It's just a totally different mindset that you have to get around. You have to deal with their rules instead of them learning to deal with your rules."

Ditto, says Senior Airman Dustin Johnson from Bloomfield, Neb. Johnson, who works full-time in security forces at the National Guard air base in Lincoln, said deploying half-way around the world to help protect a critical air base is an experience he won't soon forget.

"There's so much that we're getting out of this," said Johnson.

"We're all in the same position here. We all signed up for this or got chosen to come over here and serve. So, for the next six-plus months, it could be a



Start Of A New Day: (From left) Staff Sgt. Chris Jobman and Staff Sgt. Ryan Blodgett prepare to start their shift at Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan, on Sept. 18.

Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

life-changing experience for some and it could be just another day for others," he said.

For example, Johnson said, in the few short weeks he's been stationed at Manas he's already experienced things he never imagined.

"You're dealing with host nationals...you're dealing with people from all over the world," he said. "We've all got different backgrounds and experiences."

"It's something no one can ever take away from you as far as what you've done for your country, what you've done for your state," he added. "You're representing the Air Force."

Johnson said he's also learned a little bit about a part of the world few back home even know exists. "A lot of people don't even know where Kyrgyzstan is or anything about the country," said Johnson. "We're in support of the war in Afghanistan. What we're doing is protecting this installation and its resources."

According to many of the Nebraskans, working in Kyrgyzstan as part of a multi-state security forces squadron has served as a



Heading Out To The Flightline: Master Sgt. James Boeselager and another Air National Guard Security Forces specialist prepare to move out to the Manas Air Base flightline, Sept. 18.

leadership laboratory of sorts. Here, they say, they're learning how to refine working habits and develop better leadership skills.

"You can take all that back – what worked over here, what didn't. Many situations are obviously different... (but) I think we can take a lot back to the base (in Nebraska)," Johnson said.

For Senior Airman Andrew O'Grady, an Omaha native who took a break from studying Criminal Justice and Marketing at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, the deployment to Kyrgyzstan is providing him

with an opportunity to learn more about real-world law enforcement and military security operations than what he'd studied in college.

"The reason I enlisted was that I wanted to get the police experience," he said. "This deployment has shown me how military law enforcement works. It's something we read about at times. Now I get to apply a lot of the stuff I've studied and gotten to see how it actually works in the real world."

"In that respect, it's been really interesting," O'Grady added. "I'll be able to take that away to my classes back at home."

Master Sgt. Daniel Emken is another case in point. A native of Lincoln who works as a police officer in Beatrice, this is Emken's first deployment after being promoted to the rank of master sergeant. He said the experiences he's gaining as a leader in Kyrgyzstan are invaluable, both militarily and for his civilian career back home.

"I'm gaining leadership experience on how to handle different situations with different personnel," he said. "It's not just Ne-

braska personnel either...it's Oregon, Alaska, Vermont...all those other states that are here."

Because of this, Emken said he's learning a variety of new real-world skills that leaders need to be successful. "If you can adapt to any situation here, it's going to be easier to adapt to normal situations back home where we can speak (to people) in English versus here where we have that language barrier," he said. "If (a person) can handle it here, I'm pretty sure they can handle it back home."

The education isn't just confined to within Manas' walls, either. Because of its location and the nature of the local environment, groups of Airmen are allowed to occasionally travel to nearby Bishkek or other communities. Often these trips revolve around community partnership efforts at local schools or orphanages, cultural awareness visits to local Kyrgyz sites or even morale, welfare and recreational outings up into the mountains.

Regardless of the type of trip, the Airmen say they always learn something during the daylight excursions.

O'Grady recently participated in a hiking trip to a waterfall in the mountains. He said he learned much about the local people during the trip.

"You really get to see what a different country looks like," he said. "It's totally different than what you're used to seeing at home, especially going into these small villages."

After completing the hike to the waterfall, O'Grady said his group came upon a small family that was grilling their meal of chicken and bread on rocks.

"They called us up to their spot and gave us some chicken and bread," said O'Grady. "All we had was some chocolate and stuff from the BX, so we gave them a bunch of candy."

O'Grady said he's also recently volunteered to serve as a focus group leader for a local cancer center, which he added, will give him an even greater opportunity to meet with local Kyrgyz people.

"I know that there's a lot that I'll take home from this," he said. "A lot of people I've talked to have done that. Some of the memories they've gotten from that are unbelievable."

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Oregon, New York, Indiana, Connecticut and Nebraska who have come together to form the 376th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron, which, according to the Guardsmen, is the first time a Air Guard-only security forces squadron has operated in the Central Command theater of operations.

According to Boeselager, even though the Airmen come from so many different states, they've quickly learned to work closely together. "I really haven't seen any difference between one state and another," he said. "We're all intermixed and we all work together."

Robertson said that even though the Air Guard units, by their very nature, have some built-in, good-natured competitiveness, for the most part the Airmen have set aside their natural rivalries and blended into one cohesive unit. He attributed part of that to the fact that the Guardsmen spent several weeks in Texas training together and getting to know each other several weeks prior to the start of the deployment.

"Everyone really has meshed well together," he said. "I think some of that

has to do to with our training together. It really has helped us (come together) here as well."

"Even though we're not using the exact training for this exact mission, the fact that all the faces are now familiar... it helps," said Robertson. "A lot of your job from a security standpoint is working with the person you're sitting next to. A lot of times there's hesitancy because you don't know anything about that other person. (The training gave us) something... some kind of grounds to start your conversation while we're getting to know each other."

"We're getting along pretty well," added Master Sgt. Daniel Emken, Lincoln, who works as a police officer in Beatrice, Neb. "Especially coming from different states, different backgrounds, we're getting along fairly well... I think the Guard brings a lot of maturity and a lot of experience to the table that other people might not be able to bring."

Working with Guardsmen from other states has also had an effect on Nebraska's newer Guardsmen as well.

"You get a lot of knowledge from a lot of different backgrounds on how they do

(security)," said Senior Airman Brian Baack, a nuclear security officer from Auburn, Neb. "I try to soak up as much as I can from whoever I work with."

The Guardsmen say they have also quickly realized that even though the days can often be long and busy or long and mundane, they have an important job to do for the people who are relying daily on their support.

"The only thing that really sticks out for me (is) you see your deployment here and you're trying to work through your six-month tour and then you see the guys transiting through," said Blodgett. "You know that you're stopping here, but they're going to a place that's far worse... a more dangerous place to put themselves deeper into harm's way. They're likely to be in a place where they don't have a really nice gym to work out in. They're going to be eating MREs (meals, ready to eat) far more frequently than they'll get to eat in a dining facility... that kind of brings what you're doing home."

"It makes you appreciate them more for what they're going to be going into." Shrimpton agreed, adding that he

definitely felt like he and the other Guardsmen were helping make a difference during the recent Sept. 11 memorial ceremony held at the base.

"It's been an experience," he said. "We had the 911 ceremony here a few days ago. It really sent the message home to myself that we are at the location where Operation Enduring Freedom started."

"It was a pretty good feeling to be standing there at the ceremony," he said.

Shrimpton added that like any deployment, the Guardsmen from Nebraska have to deal with a variety of issues and situations, not the least of which is being separated from friends and family for nearly a half year. Still, he's proud of how the Guardsmen have stood up to the challenge.

"Everyone who is here volunteered to be here," he said. "Everyone stepped up to the plate and said, 'Yes, I want to go.' To me, that makes a difference in a deployment."

"People have the attitude of, 'Hey, let's get in here and do the mission.' It makes it a lot easier."



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Interrogation: Sgt. Steve Brewer, Nebraska Army National Guard, listens as a member of the Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Team interviews him about evidence the team found during a simulated drug raid on a safe house, Sept. 14. Among the things the American team attempted to teach the new MOBITS was how to use investigative techniques to build a case against drug smugglers.



Drug Bust: Members of the Mobile Interdiction Team look for evidence in a car they discovered “smuggling” drugs, Sept. 13.



On The Look Out: A member of the Mobile Interdiction Team prepares to scan a mountain range for people who might accidentally wander onto the Kyrgyz shooting range, Sept. 15, during the Top Gun competition for the soon-to-graduate MOBITS.

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training in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, Aug. 22 – Sept. 17, the graduation of the first class of Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Teams is a huge milestone in the global War on Drugs.

“It’s a huge accomplishment,” said Brewer, adding that the new MOBITS are designed to interdict drugs and money moving through Kyrgyzstan between Afghanistan and Russia and the rest of Europe.

“Once the MOBITS become established in their operational zones, I think the amount of arrests and drug interdictions is going to skyrocket.”

So, how did this happen? How did eight Nebraska Army National Guardsmen find themselves nearly halfway around the globe working with an elite DEA team and US Customs and Border Patrol to train Kyrgyz law enforcement officers to crack the pipeline of drugs flowing through Kyrgyzstan?

The Kyrgyz project was actually an offshoot of an international agreement initiated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and by the U.S. Embassy in Kyrgyzstan and approved through a Kyrgyz government order signed by the prime minister calling for the creation of “mobile groups” to combat the illegal circulation of narcotics.

According to Brewer, who recently completed a year-long fellowship at the DEA headquarters in Washington, D.C., the concept of training an elite drug interdiction team made up of officers from multiple Kyrgyz law enforcement offices began approximately a year ago as officials looked for ways to stem the increasing amount of drugs flowing out of Afghanistan through southern Kyrgyzstan.

“What Kyrgyzstan has become is the center of the pipeline for drugs coming out of the northern part of Afghanistan

and in through Russia and Eastern Europe. (The Kyrgyz government) is concerned with the trafficking of drugs,” Brewer added.

“It’s destabilizing the country because a lot of the profits are going to the very folks that we’re trying to prevent from getting a foothold in these Central Asian countries.”

According to the U.S. State Department, opium has been a significant cash crop for many Afghans for several decades, growing significantly after the breakdown in central authority following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989. Drugs continued to constitute a major source of income for the two main factions during the Afghan civil war in the 1990s.

Opium poppy production has skyrocketed in recent years to the point that in 2006 Afghanistan produced an estimated 91 percent of the world’s opium supply, much of which is refined into heroin and consumed by a growing regional addict population or exported primarily to Western Europe.

This makes Kyrgyzstan strategically important.

“The idea is, if we can not only seize the money that is coming out of Central Europe, Eastern Europe and Russia but also seize the drugs coming out of Afghanistan, you get the double win,” Brewer said.

“A lot of times in Afghanistan we’re able to destroy the poppy fields or the laboratories or seize the drugs while their trafficking, but you don’t get to interdict the money that’s coming in.”

In order to accomplish this, the Kyrgyz government recently created the Drug Control Agency, an independent law enforcement office that reports directly to the president of Kyrgyzstan. The new MOBITS, said Brewer – of which six are planned – work directly for the



Keep Low, Go Fast: An assault team prepares to enter a suspected drug safe house during a field training exercise for members of the newly created Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Team.

DCA.

“It’s designed that way so that it prevents corruption or control from a higher headquarters on what types of missions they do or who they arrest or do not arrest,” said Brewer.

Developing the training

In order to assist the DEA in training the new team, Brewer said, U.S. Central Command determined that the National Guard was best equipped to help.

“Montana is the state partner with Kyrgyzstan, so they actually had the first opportunity to accept the mission,” said Brewer. “Their Counter Drug program does not have special operations personnel assigned to it, so they opted not to do the mission and allowed Nebraska to fall in on it.”

Beginning last year, Brewer and several Nebraska Counter Drug Special Operations Detachment sergeants and DEA agents took the first of multiple trips to Kyrgyzstan where they met with national drug enforcement officials and U.S. State Department staff members to learn more about the training and equipment needs.

The team then returned back to Nebraska and began preparing training plans, writing

standard operating procedures and developing a list of equipment that the Kyrgyz would need to operate effectively in the mountains that dominate the southern regions of the country.

“The guidance we received from U.S. Central Command was that they wanted (the MOBITS) to be the finest equipped police in Central Asia,” said Brewer. He said U.S. CENTCOM pledged approximately \$500,000 to fund the equipment while the U.S. State Department’s International Law Enforcement Division pledged an additional \$500,000 to fund the American training team’s pay and allowances.

“We moved forward with the belief that we were going to do that,” Brewer said. “We gave them the best body armor, the best helmets, uniforms, duty belts, night vision, cameras, binoculars... every piece of equipment we gave them was top of the line.”

Along with researching and purchasing the equipment, returning multiple times to Bishkek to validate the training and then translating much



Busted: Sgt. 1st Class Hubbard Duranski leans his head against a wall while being guarded by a member of the Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Team after Duranski was “arrested” during a raid on a suspected drug safe house, Sept. 14.

of the plans into Russian, several Nebraska Guardsmen also traveled to Quantico, Va., to meet with the DEA FAST members they would be working with to develop the training plan’s goals and procedures.

All in all, said Brewer, the entire process took nearly a year to complete.

Training the MOBITS

The actual training kicked off on Aug. 22 when the team of eight Nebraskans, one U.S. Customs and Border Patrol agent, and six DEA FAST members were introduced to the 30 Kyrgyz law enforcement officers who made up the first MOBITS class. According to Brewer, the MOBIT members were selected from various Kyrgyz organizations including the Customs, Border Police, Drug Control Agency and other police agencies through a com-

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Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Sight Adjustments: Sgt. 1st Class Hub Duranski helps a member of the Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Team aim her AK-74 rifle during the Top Gun competition, Sept. 15.



Tower Duty: Members of the Nebraska Army National Guard and their interpreter are silhouetted against the mountain sky as a member of the Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Team takes aim with his AK-74 rifle during the Top Gun competition, Sept. 15.



Colors: The flags of the United Nations, Kyrgyzstan and the United States stand together during the graduation ceremony for the new Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Teams.



Congratulations: Lt. Col. Tom Brewer, Nebraska Army National Guard, shakes the hand of a newly graduated member of the Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Teams, Sept. 17.

Guard trainers learn much during Krygyz mission

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

BISHKEK, Krygyzstan — Along with helping train members of a foreign police force to interdict illegal drugs and money, members of the Nebraska National Guard Counter Drug Task Force's Special Operations Detachment also learned much during their mission to Krygyzstan.

According to Lt. Col. Tom Brewer, who served as commander of the U.S. Central Command Counter Narcotics Task Force, the Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen who participated in the mission brought home many important new skills from Central Asia that will undoubtedly help make them better instructors and better Soldiers and Airmen in the future.

"Most (of the Nebraska Guard instructors) have trained Iraqis, so they had worked with interpreters before. That part wasn't new to them," said Brewer.

"But as time went on, we realized that our ability to train the Kyrgyz directly correlated to the number of interpreters we had and the number of drivers we had because we spent so much time shuttling to different places."

"I think what it has forced them to do is think about the training they're doing and all of the pieces of the puzzle that have to come together in order to be successful," added Brewer.

Others echoed those thoughts, saying that training foreign officers in a deployed location provided an eye-opening experience for the Nebraskans involved.

"I think what we gained from it was just getting the exposure to how a foreign country works and relates with other law enforcement agencies and how they think as far as the big War on Drugs and the big picture is concerned," said 2nd Lt. Jeff Frazey, who

served as executive officer during the mission.

"I think we opened their minds up to the broader picture of how drugs influence the whole world... how the drugs coming into (this) country can influence the United States."

Sgt. 1st Class Kelley Cramer agreed, saying the mission was an extremely fulfilling experience.

"Personally (I gained) the personal gratification that hopefully (the Kyrgyz) can stop the drugs there before they can go somewhere else and do harm," Cramer said.

"It's kind of a personal gratification to see that we did something that in the long run helps everyone."

The mission also gave the Nebraska National Guard something beyond experience and gratification.

Along with helping improve the state Counter Drug Task Force's ability to better train and better work with local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, Nebraska also gained something more concrete from the mission.

"Our program benefited to the tune of about \$50-100,000 through the equipment that's in our program that we didn't have before," said Brewer.

That, combined with the opportunity to work with experts in the field of counter narcotics, will undoubtedly pay dividends for years into the future, according to Brewer.

"We had the opportunity to work with the most elite counter narcotics soldiers in the world... the DEA FAST teams," Brewer said. "And our guys learned a tremendous amount from them."

"I think (the Guardsmen) grew in maturity and understanding of the big picture about how drugs are being trafficked and about labs and how the labs work," he added. "These are things that will benefit them back here also."

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petitive process that included interviews, a polygraph test and other vetting techniques.

"The idea behind the mobile interdiction teams is that they would be (made up) of personnel from different law enforcement agencies within the Kyrgyz government," said Brewer.

"We received some from Customs, Border, Ministry of Interior, DCA and even the Ministry of Defense."

Brewer said because much was expected of this new team, much was expected of the training.

"What we needed to do first off was assess their level of training to know where to begin and that was a little difficult in the beginning," he said. "We finally got the pulse of where they were with their abilities and then we built our training around that."

"We knew that their job was to be these elite police that would go into the remote regions of the southern mountainous region in the Fergana Valley to stop the transport of drugs... to assist in the stopping of all trafficking out of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan," Brewer said. "And they had to have the ability to do a lot of stuff that was non-standard, off-the-road, rural area types of missions."

"So we equipped them to do these types of missions. We trained them (to be able to) go into regions — say the mountains — and stop the trafficking there by setting up positions where they could observe using the binoculars, laser range finders from long distance away and at night."

According to 2nd Lt. Jeff Frazey, officer-in-charge of the Nebraska Guard Special Operations Detachment who served as the training team's executive officer, because the MOBITs candidates arrived with a variety of experience levels it took time to build a sense of trust between the instructors and some of the older, higher ranking Krygyz candi-

dates.

"There were some that were very experienced that did seem a little bit resistant to some of the things we wanted to teach them at first... it took a little while to build that rapport to open their minds a little bit."

"But with the younger members of the MOBITs, they seemed motivated right from the get go," added Frazey.

During the month-long course, the MOBITs candidates were taught a variety of skills from the DEA and Guard instructors including drug identification and evidence processing, case development, combat and tactical shooting.

They also learned defensive tactics, communication, document analysis, vehicle take-down procedures, search techniques, operational planning, surveillance in a variety of different environments including rural, urban and night settings, and small unit tactics and battle drills.

"We knew that we needed to get them to a level so that they could do the collecting of data needed to prosecute the (smugglers) they can find and arrest," said Brewer.

"We had to struggle through some of the stuff, like Kyrgyz law, which we didn't understand," he added. "So we relied upon them to provide Kyrgyz attorneys to explain how they did things, which we found shocking, compared to our rules...but, you're in their country and you need to make sure that you follow their laws."

Frazey said the trainers also focused intently on helping the Kyrgyz improve their pistol and rifle marksmanship skills.

"Prior to this, they would get usually six rounds to qualify every year," said Frazey. "And they shot about 3,000 rounds per person over the month that we were over there."

Overall, Frazey said, the Kyrgyz seemed to adapt to the training well.

"They thought it was all applicable to what they would be doing," he said. "Most of the

training, they'd never seen before."

Working as a team

The creation of new Kyrgyz mobile interdiction teams wasn't the only thing that made this particular mission unique, said Brewer. It also marked the first time that the United States had ever put together an interagency joint military team to train a different country's police force to combat the drug trade.

"The DEA international training team has gone over and trained different law enforcement groups, but we've never come together with both the military, U.S. DEA and Customs to do training like this. To do that in a partnership with the U.S. State Department and the (United Nations Office on Drug Control) was another twist that was different."

Despite the fact that many members of the team had never worked together before, Brewer said the Guard, DEA and Custom agents merged almost seamlessly to put on the course.

"I think (the DEA and Custom agents) were pretty open-minded," Brewer said. "These guys are the Delta operators for DEA... they're their tier one elite police. For them to come in there and be married up with some Guardsmen, I think they were a little shocked at first."

"As soon as we hit the ground in Kyrgyzstan, I had some communications and medical and ammunition and weapons specialists and they all kind of went to do their own thing (while the DEA, Customs and Border agents focused) on case development, interrogation, surveillance... so we each had our own unique skill set," he said. "The nice thing about it was we all learned from each other."

The other Guardsmen agreed.

"(We developed) a great relationship with the DEA," said Sgt. 1st Class Kelley Cramer, a Nebraska National Guard team leader with the Special Operations Detachment who, prior to

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going to work for the Guard's Counter Drug Special Operations Detachment worked as the Nebraska National Guard liaison to the DEA. "The working relationship went just flawless... we really got along well with them."

Frazey echoed that sentiment.

"We meshed together and made one team right from the get-go," he said. "That's what makes the Nebraska Counter Drug program so unique...we work with law enforcement agents from the federal level all the way down to the local and county level every day. So, it's easy for us to combine with law enforcement agencies and make one team."

"We had all the skills sets covered from medical to communications," Frazey added, "to shooting, to drug interdiction work to investigative work."

The teamwork was further influenced by the fact that from the start of the course, one Guardsman and one FAST member were assigned to each new MOBIT to serve as mentors.

"Every day at the end of the day they talked about the training, questions, issues, problems... they were the coaches," said Brewer. "And that brought the DEA and Guard guys closer together because they were working as the two main mentors. It also brought the team members closer together as well. Now it's not a group of 30, it's a group of six or seven that are working with two (mentors,) so they can get that much more personal."

"Of course we made it competitive between teams to see who was the best team... that helped build esprit-de-corps as well," added Brewer. "We tried to stress everything we could to see them come together as soon as possible and then nurtured that competition. And in so doing, it brought our teams closer together, too."

That feeling seemed to be shared by the DEA agents as well.

"I was very apprehensive about working with the Guard before I got over here," said DEA FAST team chief, who, because of the nature of his work, requested to remain anonymous, during a post-graduation dinner with other members of the training team. "But you guys were just absolute pros. We will definitely work with you anytime, anyplace."

Brewer said the month-long mission definitely opened up doors for future joint work between the Guard and DEA.

"When we left there, I think we all had a healthy respect for each other," he said. "As a matter of fact, the DEA has asked me to have some of my guys go to Quantico to teach at the DEA Academy where they train up their FAST team members."

Foreign climate

That doesn't mean that working in a foreign climate thousands of miles away from the comforts of home classrooms was easy though. Far from it, in fact.

For example, said Frazey, conducting a class through a translator often makes it difficult to accent critical parts of the training for members of the

class.

"Definitely one of the biggest challenges was giving classes through the translators," he said. "You lose a lot of your personality when giving classes through an interpreter."

Still, some things are universal.

"The biggest thing that you can translate to the students is, that it's all about their lives," Cramer said. "If they don't train hard and do the right things, they could be killed doing their jobs."

Another issue was simply getting all of the equipment needed to conduct classes.

Brewer said the team focused primarily on developing lesson plans and equipment lists that would be issued to the Kyrgyz teams.

What they didn't realize was that they also needed to account for everyday items such as power cords, highlighters, water and MREs.

"You really have to think of everything...scotch tape, markers, whatever it is you need you've got to bring with you or have some way of getting it," Brewer said.

Frazey agreed.

"It was an everyday thing. We were constantly chasing things down and making sure that they were there on time," he said.

Brewer said the team dealt with this by buying some items off the local economy. They were also "blessed" that members of the Nebraska Air Guard's 155th Security Forces Squadron had recently arrived at nearby Manas Air Base for a six-month deployment.

"They were able to provide us with cleaning kits, (Meals, Ready to Eat,) water and things like that," said Brewer. "Had they not done that, the mission would've been a lot more challenging because we would've had to eat more food off the economy (or) used filters to filter water."

"We were blessed in that we had other Nebraskans over there to help us," Brewer added.

Final training

The training culminated on Sept. 13-14 with a field training exercise during which the new MOBITs were challenged with investigating a potential drug ring through evidence and interviews conducted following a traffic stop and several raids on suspected safe houses. At that point many of the trainers switched roles from mentors to actors.

"The goal," said Brewer during the exercise, "is for the MOBITs to uncover the drug ring and build a case to uncover the ringleaders."

"The entire exercise is designed to help them put together all these skills we've taught them over the past weeks and tie it all together in a real world situation," he said. "They're working real hard to build their case."

Finally, the MOBITs uncovered enough information to discover a fictitious safehouse – actually a Kyrgyz military training building – which the teams then raided in the early morning hours of Sept. 14.

Within moment after entering the building, the team exited with two alleged smugglers – in this case Sgt. Steve Brewer

Under the Microscope

■ Nebraska Guardsmen knew pressure was on to conduct successful mission

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan — As members of the Nebraska National Guard Counter Drug Task Force Special Operations Detachment prepared to travel to a foreign country to form part of a revolutionary new team to train the first set of Mobile Interdiction Teams in Kyrgyzstan, they knew that they and their work would be under the microscope.

They were right.

According to Lt. Col. Tom Brewer, commander of the first-ever joint multi-agency U.S. Central Command Counter Narcotics Task Force, the team of Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen and their partners from the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Customs and Borders Agency was watched closely by senior officials within the National Guard Bureau, DEA, U.S. Central Command and U.S. State Department from the start.

Brewer said that even though the mission was being watched, he worked hard to keep his team of instructors from dwelling upon the fact that much depended on this first effort to train the MOBITs to interdict the drug smuggling pipeline in Kyrgyzstan.

"I tried not to get them to think how many people were watching them because I didn't want them to change any of their routines or the classes they taught," said



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Comrades: Lt. Col. Tom Brewer, Nebraska National Guard, and Col. Timur Isakov, commander of the Kyrgyz Mobile Interdiction Team, spend a few moments talking together following the graduation ceremony for the new MOBITs, Sept. 18.

Brewer. "I guess I kept more of an eye on that because I knew that people all the way to the prime minister within the Kyrgyz government were watching. And on the U.S. side, there were some very high officials within the State Department, U.S. Central Command and National Guard Bureau who were watching as well."

Even though the spotlight was on the team, that doesn't mean the Nebraskans were worried, though. They said the fact that they knew they had an important mission to do was all they needed to keep focused on the tasks at hand.

"Oh definitely (we knew people were watching), but the thing about that was we weren't worried about everybody looking at us," said Sgt. 1st Class Kelley Cramer, one of the Ne-

braska National Guard trainers. "We had a mission to do."

"We could feel the pressure that it needed to go well," said 2nd Lt. Jeff Frazey, executive officer during the mission. "And I think it did. I think everybody from the top on down was pretty satisfied with the outcome."

According to Brewer, the pressure was lessened by the fact that he knew the Nebraska Guardsmen and other trainers were equal to the challenge.

"I knew we had good people and they would do good work," he said. "If we could just avoid any accidents and do the things that we had put on the schedule, it would be successful."

"Fortunately, it all worked out and we were."

and Sgt. 1st Class Hubbard Duranski of the Nebraska Guard Special Operations Detachment – in custody.

The exercise was a success.

A day later, the same MOBITs descended upon a military shooting range located on a hillside on the outskirts of Bishkek to put their individual shooting skills to the test in a "Top Gun" shooting competition.

Shooting a Russian Makarov pistol and short-barreled AK-74 rifle, the Kyrgyz officers spent the day competing to disassemble and assemble their weapons the quickest and to shoot their weapons with the most accuracy.

Among those watching the newly trained officers compete was British Air Vice-Marshal Mike Heath, special advisor to the commander of U.S. CENTCOM in the areas of Counter Narcotics and Information Operations. Heath said he was extremely pleased by the transformation the MOBITs had undergone during their month-long training.

"I've been very impressed with what I've seen here this afternoon as I've been watching your training all the way through your program," said Heath to the gathered MOBITs following the Top Gun competition.

"There's no doubt in my mind that you have a lot to be proud of. And much more important,

your country has a lot to be proud of in you."

"You will make an enormous difference not just for your country, but the international community in this region," Heath told the MOBITs moments later. "All I would ask you to do is go forward, be very proud of what you've achieved here, be very strong and don't lose sight of the fact that this is a battle we have to win."

The next morning the MOBITs team members – now uniformed in their new tiger-striped uniforms and black helmets – marched into the compound at the DCA headquarters in Bishkek for their graduation ceremony.

Among those in attendance were U.S. Ambassador Marie L. Yovanovitch, DCA director Maj. Gen. Alimbay Sultanov, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime Project Coordinator, Kyrgyzstan Sub-office Ugo Enea, and a wide array of officials from the government of Kyrgyzstan, U.S. Central Command, National Guard Bureau, the Nebraska National Guard and other U.S. officials representing Homeland Security, Customs and others.

According to Sultanov, the graduation was an example of true international teamwork.

"Today's ceremony is the result of the very hard work of these people to help destroy the evil of drugs for the benefit of future generations," said Sultanov, referring to the team

that had trained the MOBITs.

"I would like to express to them my sincere and heartfelt gratitude. These people are our friends and partners."

'On the right track'

Later, following the graduation and banquet ceremonies, Brewer and the other Guardsmen involved said they felt good at what they'd been able to accomplish.

"It was a great mission," said Brewer.

"We were able to give them practical, real world experience in law enforcement," he said. "The other part is, we had the opportunity to work with the most elite counter narcotics personnel in the world, the DEA FAST team. And our guys learned a tremendous amount from them."

Cramer agreed, saying living and working in Kyrgyzstan gave him a greater appreciation of the Central Asian culture, the friendliness of the local people and the MOBITs interest in learning how to be an effective law enforcement force.

"It was a different experience," he said. "I learned a lot from them and hopefully they learned a lot from us."

"Hopefully this isn't the last time we go over there to conduct this training," he added. "They're on the right track. Now we've just got to keep it up and they'll be successful in whatever they try to do."

The Pearl Guy

■ Retired Montana Guardsman, wife helping change lives for Kyrgyz special needs children

By Capt. Kevin Hynes
Editor

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan – Among the local Americans living and working in this tiny Central Asian country, he's known simply as the "Pearl Man."

But to the special kids he's committed his life to serving, retired Master Sgt. James L. Carney is much, much more. To them, he's the American who, with his Ukrainian wife Nadya Semenenko, has helped build a "garden" for them to learn, play and become a contributing part of their society.

According to Carney, a native of tiny Dutton, Mont. (population 500), who served in the Montana Army National Guard until retiring from the military two years ago, it's hard to believe he's living and working in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, to develop a one-of-a-kind school for special needs children.

"This is as far away from Montana as you can get," said Carney, laughing one afternoon as he stood in the courtyard of the Uventus Center on the outskirts of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan as several young students played tag around his sports utility vehicle.

"It's 12-hours distant...and a world away," he said, suddenly serious.

Carney's journey to his present-day job as a jack-of-all-trades fundraiser for the school – which he believes is the only one of its kind in all of Central Asia – actually began in 1997 when the Montana National Guard sent him to Kyrgyzstan on a fact-finding mission as part of the State Partnership Program.

"Two years later our State Partnership Program wasn't functioning as well as we'd hoped, so I was one of a two man team, the other being Chief Warrant Officer Ric Bridwell, that was sent over to look at the program and to find out what it would take to make it better," he said.

"A part of this was to find some civilian projects for us to become involved in here in Kyrgyzstan along with the military to military contacts," said Carney, who was the first sergeant of the Montana Army Guard's State Medical Section and a financial officer in civilian life.

"While we were here, the U.S. Embassy arranged for us to visit a number of places including a school that Nadya had set up for special needs children in the basement of a large, high-rise apartment building. It was leaky and dismal, but you could tell that they were trying to do good work there," Carney said.

Since there were no schools for special needs children in Kyrgyzstan, Carney said, Semenenko and several other parents of mentally challenged children had recently decided to start one themselves.

During his visit, Carney said, he noticed a young boy afflicted with cerebral palsy named Dima who had just enrolled at the school.

"At the time of our visit, he couldn't dress himself, take care

of himself and he couldn't walk," said Carney. "He had to be carried everywhere."

Approximately a year later, Carney again was sent to Kyrgyzstan and once again he visited the Semenenko's school. He said he was shocked at the transformation he saw.

"That same boy was there, but now he was walking with crutches and could actually walk for a short distance without them" said Carney. "It was still hard for him to move, but he was moving nonetheless."

"That's when I knew that this was a good school," he added.

According to Carney, mentally and physically handicapped children face extremely difficult odds in Kyrgyzstan and the other countries that make up Central Asia. "It's considered an embarrassment to the family," said Carney. "They're shunned by the rest of society."

For some, that means a life spent indoors, shuttered away from others behind closed doors. And they're the lucky ones.

"There's an orphanage in (a nearby town) that's plumb-full of handicapped kids...there must be 250 kids up there that their parents just dumped or left in a hospital," he said. "There's also a nearby baby hospital that's filled with babies that are handicapped. Their parents leave them in the hospital and sneak out in the middle of the night because they don't want them."

Upon returning to Montana, an introduction was made between Nadya and the Farm In The Dell Foundation, a Montana agency that works with handicapped children. After going to Montana and meeting with the representatives from the Farm In The Dell, they agreed to raise enough money to construct the new school.

Within a few years enough money had been pledged through the "Farm in the Dell" foundation to begin construction on the new center.

The plan called for a 5,500-square-foot school to be built on two acres of land for a total cost of approximately \$50,000.

Carney returned to Kyrgyzstan on Jan. 1, 2001, planning to stay approximately seven to eight months, long enough to build the school, before returning home. He never left.

"I came over here to build a school and then (Central Command) found out I was here and they needed someone to organize a work shop on emergency response."

After that project was completed, Carney again was tasked by U.S. Central Command to remodel the Marble Village school. Other projects soon followed. All-in-all Carney said he was on orders from U.S. Central Command for approximately the last four years he was in the military.

At the same time, work continued on the Uventus school. Carney said building the center was an eye-opening experience. For example, the project coordinator who had bid to do the project for \$50,000 severely underbid the actual costs of the project. By the time the school

was built, the cost was closer to \$155,000, Carney said. An electrician who wired the school actually used stereo wire instead of standard wire, costing \$13,000 to replace once it was discovered.

Carney said he's earned some hard-learned lesson along the way.

"My experience in Montana really didn't do me any good over here," he said. "You know, I learned the hard way."

For example, he said, there are simply some things that an American cannot do.

"It has to be a local who know the ins and outs...the people to call when problems start," he said. "Here it's who you know...it's all driven by who you know."

Still, by 2005 the Uventus Center was built and open for business.

Carney, too, had changed. While working to build the school, Carney and Semenenko started dating and then fell in love.

They married soon after.

Today, the school is surrounded by a tall, brick fence and several new buildings including a nearly-finished greenhouse, storage buildings, a new garden and shelter, made from metal wall lockers that the American base at nearby Manas Airport was planning to throw out.

But the real work goes on within the walls of the school where the 41 students currently enrolled at the school are taught by the center's 23 teachers full-time teachers, each of whom focuses on a separate skill including writing, reading, sewing, woodworking, computers and other life skills designed to prepare the students for the rest of their lives.

"Nadya and the teachers work very hard with the students to give them the skills they need to be successful on the outside," said Carney. "And once Nadya feels that they're ready, she goes out and finds them jobs."

Take Dima, for example. According to Carney, as Dima continued to attend the school, the instructors learned that he had a passion for computers. Today he works as a local business in Bishkek doing computer data entry for the company.

"He still lives at home with his family, but now he brings home a salary that is helping his family out," said Carney. "He's now a contributing part of the family."

And Dimas' is not the only example of a family that has benefitted from the work being done at the school, said Carney.

"It costs the families about 400 Som a month (about \$10) to send a student here, which doesn't even cover the costs of the gas of picking the students up by the bus," said Carney. "But you have to charge something, otherwise it has no value



Say Cheese: Three young Kyrgyz students mug for the camera while standing outside of the Uventus Center near Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on Sept. 17.



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Mountain of Success: Retired Master Sgt. James L. Carney describes how teachers at the Uventus Center use a mountain chart to plot each student's success during the year. According to Carney, students meet with their teachers each week to see if they have achieved enough to move up the mountain.

to the people here."

"A lot of the kids make more than that a month here, because whatever they make that Nadya sells, they get half of the money and the school gets the other half."

Another requirement for attendance, said Carney, is the fact that the families must stay involved with their student.

"This is not an orphanage. They can't just bring a child here, dump them off and expect a day care center," he said.

"If the family doesn't stay involved, Nadya won't take the child," Carney added. "The family is the most important part... it's keeping together families."

Still, like any major project, there are often many unforeseen costs. At Uventus, those expenses typically run approximately \$2,000 per month.

And to pay for those expenses... well, that's how Carney earned the moniker "the Pearl Guy." It's a name that has its origins back when Carney first visited Kyrgyzstan in 1997.

According to Carney, upon arriving in Kyrgyzstan in 1997, the American Embassy's defense attache's wife told him that while in Kyrgyzstan he had to buy pearls for each one of the females in his family because the cost was so reasonable.

"So I bought 30 sets because there are 30 women in my family, ranging from sisters, sisters-in-law, nieces and grand nieces," he said. "(When I got back to Montana) I took them to a friend of mine in the jewelry business and he said they needed to be restrung."

The only catch was, said Carney, the jeweler friend wanted \$50 for each set he restrung. When Carney refused, the friend told him to come back later.

"His father taught me that weekend and I've been doing it

ever since," he said.

Today, he said, he buys the pearls from a dealer in China, restrings them and then sells them to local Americans serving in Kyrgyzstan or to friends back in Montana.

"The thing that I've always tried to do is sell them at a price an enlisted person could afford," said Carney.

Carney said that every single dollar he's earned for pearls goes into paying the center's monthly expenses. "All the pearl money I've ever gotten has gone for humanitarian aid," he said.

One of those who purchased Carney's pearls is Maj. Brenda Fujan, state partnership coordinator for Nebraska.

"I first met Jim in October 2006 when a team from the Nebraska National Guard traveled to Kyrgyzstan to start work on the current Mobile Interdiction Team mission," said Fujan.

Fujan said she met Carney while sitting at the restaurant one morning.

"With Jim having being a Guardsman from Montana, the Nebraska team had an immediate connection to him," she said. "After visiting with Jim for a short time and asking him what he is doing in Kyrgyzstan, you hear his story about the school, his wife, his daughter and eventually the pearls that he sells to finance the school."

"With the small amount of time I have spent with Jim, he is the type of man who is honest and doing good work with special need children in a country that can use his assistance," Fujan added.

"How can you place a value on that?"

Looking back at all the center's accomplished, Carney said he feels a sense of satisfaction.

"We've come a long ways...but we've still got a long ways to go."

Nebraska Airmen's impact felt across Manas Air Base

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

MANAS AIR BASE, Kyrgyzstan – When it comes to having an impact on a mission or a base filled with American military personnel, don't look too closely at the fact that Capt. Matthew Clough and Master Sgt. Craig Shrimpton are the only two people assigned to their office.

That's because the work these two Nebraska Air Guardsmen do has a daily impact on this important base in northern Kyrgyzstan and affects each member of the base assigned there.

As the base anti-terrorist office staff, Clough and Shrimpton are responsible for ensuring that force protection measures are kept up to date at the base, which in turn keeps the personnel and resources there safe.

They're also responsible for processing all requests by American service members to go off base into the local community, which

can also have an impact on the unit and more importantly, the morale of the people serving there.

Pretty impressive for what is the smallest anti-terrorist office staff in the entire Afghanistan theater of operations.

According to Clough, commander of the 155th Security Forces Squadron back in Lincoln, Neb., and a contingency planner for the Defense Contracts Management Agency in civilian life, his office's mission is an important cog in the overall base effort.

"There's a lot of growth and development going on and with that comes new buildings and the potential impact of something to happen," he said. "So we are very involved in that process as far as buildings, codes and specs, and where (buildings) are located in regards to the (nearby) road."

"We're constantly looking at every aspect of the growth process here, which is continual," he said. "There is a huge force protection mission."

Along with that, Shrimpton – who normally works full-time as the non-commissioned officer of installation

security back at the National Guard air base in Lincoln – spends the bulk of his day processing a wide variety of off-base requests. This includes everything from making sure that the Americans aren't going to off-limits establishments or gathering in a large group in any one location.

Shrimpton said that requests are first submitted to unit first sergeants and commanders, who then forward them to him.

Shrimpton then makes his recommendation to the vice wing commander as to whether those requests should be granted.

"He's the ultimate decision-maker," said Shrimpton. "Past experience says that if we non-concur, he doesn't second guess us."

"So that part of the mission impacts everyone on this base," he added. "We can either be everybody's friend or everybody's enemy... that's what it comes down to."

Because of that responsibility, Shrimpton said he constantly works with requesting units to help them find ways to get their requests

granted.

"We're trying to ride both sides of the fence and do what we can for the people," he said. "If I see something a little strange, I'll call them and help them find ways to fix their requests."

Along with working as a two-person office, both Clough and Shrimpton said that serving in Kyrgyzstan has been an eye-opening experience. "I think the thing that really surprised me was the size of this base," Clough said. "It's a lot smaller than I thought. There's a fishbowl affect that you have here... you hear the term 'Groundhog Day' a lot here."

Shrimpton agreed, saying that despite the base's small size, it has an important role to play, serving as the primary transportation hub for all personnel, equipment and supplies heading into and out of Afghanistan.

"We had the 911 remembrance ceremony here a few days ago... it really sent the message home to myself that we are at the location where Operation Enduring Freedom started. This is where everything started," he said.

"It was a pretty good feeling to be standing at that ceremony."



Photo by Capt. Kevin Hynes

On Freedom's Frontier: (From left) Master Sgt. Craig Shrimpton and Capt. Matthew Clough, Nebraska Air National Guard, pose with their Nebraska flag at Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan, where the two Air Guardsmen are serving.

Enlisted leaders meet with top Kyrgyz military officers to discuss future of NCO Corps

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

BISHKEK, Kyrgyzstan – Years from now when the Kyrgyz Republic's Army sports a proud, functioning noncommissioned officer corps, a couple of National Guard sergeant majors will be able to look at the accomplishment with a small measure of pride.

That's because they helped the Kyrgyz Army take a measurable step towards the creation of its own NCO Corps.

On Sept. 17 Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Burch, Nebraska Army National Guard command sergeant major, and Command Sgt. Maj. David Ray Hudson, National Guard Bureau senior enlisted advisor, met with the deputy director of the Kyrgyz Ministry of Defense and his staff to talk about what it takes to develop an effective noncommissioned corps similar to the one found in the United States.

According to Burch, the meeting was scheduled to last approximately 30-45 minutes. It actually lasted two-and-a-half hours.

That, said Burch, told him how seriously the Kyrgyz military leadership is looking to find ways to develop sergeants who have the capability and the authority to make decisions.

"I think they realize that a solid NCO Corps will be an asset to them... an additional weapon in their arsenal for success."

"They're starving for information on how to make it work... what the intricacies are between the officer and NCO relationship," he said.

Burch said the Kyrgyz military is facing a situation shared by nearly every former Soviet and Warsaw Pact country.

In the old Soviet system, sergeants were essentially senior privates who had slightly more authority than the lower enlisted force, much of whom had been drafted into the military. Even today, much of the work that is being done by staff sergeants and sergeants first class in the U.S. military is being accomplished by lieutenants and captains there.

Hudson said that the meeting with the Kyrgyz military leadership centered primarily around questions the Kyrgyz had about what NCOs do in the American system, how they are developed, how they related to the Officer Corps, and what legal authorities an NCO has. "They recognize that when they deal

with the NCO Corps of the United States military that they're missing out," said Hudson. "(They see) a structured enlisted force that has the capability to work independently from the Officer Corps and they generally like that and want that to happen."

"Of course the problem is the United States military has evolved since Von Stuebben and 1636 and those early times before the Revolution... those things didn't happen overnight," he said. "So often foreign militaries see our Non-commissioned Officer Corps and would like to have one similar. However, you have to make sure they understand that it's an evolving process that requires education of not only the enlisted force, but also of the officer force. And that's what we talked about."

Burch said members of the Kyrgyz MOD staff were particularly concerned about the legal authority an NCO has to make decisions. Burch said that trying to talk about how the NCO's authority is ultimately based upon an officer's authority, was probably the most difficult thing for them understand.

"What we tried to impress upon them that the key thing is the NCO can make your job easier and you can still maintain ownership of whatever the task is at hand. We impressed on them that you can delegate the authority to the NCOs, but you cannot delegate the responsibility or the task," said Burch. "So ultimately the officer is still responsible."

"We tried to impress on them that the NCO can make decisions based upon the officer's guidance on the task," he said. "And that's the big thing that the U.S. Army has to offer with an NCO Corps... an NCO Corps that can make decision in the absence of orders and the leadership that trusts and empowers the NCO Corps to do just that."

Burch and Hudson said they both left the meeting feeling confident that the Kyrgyz military honestly desires to develop a stronger NCO Corps. The key, they added, is simply taking the time to not only do it right, but to also make their NCO Corps fit their own unique needs and situation.

"They're really reaching for the foundation... the legal foundation... the regulatory foundation that they need to institute an NCO Corps," Burch said. "I think it's a matter of them experiencing – and I told them this – it's a matter of experiencing the benefits of having an NCO Corps."

Deployed Nebraska Guardsmen cheer on Big Red in losing effort

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

MANAS AIR BASE, Kyrgyzstan – Back before the Iron Wall crumbled and Russia and its surrounding satellite republics were known as the Soviet Union, the USSR was often referred to as "Red."

All that changed in the early 1990s when the Warsaw Pact fell apart and many of the republics that made up the USSR broke off to form their own separate countries.

Kyrgyzstan was no exception.

Declaring its independence from the Soviet Union on Aug. 31, 1991, the Kyrgyz Republic and other neighboring countries decided to break out on their own and make their way through the world as independent nations.

Recently, Kyrgyzstan was

revisited by a little "Big Red Fever" when Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen gathered around television sets at Manas Air Base and in downtown Bishkek to watch as the University of Nebraska Huskers took on the top-ranked Trojans of the University of Southern California.

While watching a game may not seem like much of an event to most college football fans, consider the fact that the Guardsmen were watching the game live even though they were nearly half-way around the globe from Lincoln, Neb., and that they were watching the game in the former Soviet Union just as the sun was rising on a beautiful late Summer Sunday morning and the uniqueness becomes pretty darn clear.

"It was actually kind of impressive seeing it live in the setting we were in," said Tech.

Sgt. David Nelson, a Lincoln, Neb., police officer who is currently deployed to Manas Air Base where he is providing security for the base. He was one of several dozen Nebraska Air and Army Guardsmen who were deployed to Kyrgyzstan who rose at 5:30 a.m. local time on Sept. 16 to catch the game live on TV.

"I never really dreamed about watching Nebraska in Central Asia," said Senior Airman Dustin Johnson from Bloomfield, Neb., who confessed that he brought along a copy of the "Tunnel Walk" music to listen to in his room. "When you're watching ESPN or FOX Sports and they keep pulling up all the guys in Afghanistan and Iraq... I kind of thought that was us for a while."

According to members of the 155th Security Forces Squadron currently deployed to Manas, the group woke up early

and traveled to the base morale, welfare and recreation tent – better known as "Pete's Place" – to watch the game. Others also attended.

"It was actually kind of interesting because you meet people that congregate in the same area rooting for Nebraska... people you've never met before from different places all over the United State who somehow have a common bond of Nebraska Football," he said.

"People who are transient and just passing through who didn't think they'd get to see a Nebraska game... all of sudden they sit down by you and introduce themselves and you find out that they could've been your next door neighbor."

Unfortunately for the Nebraska enthusiasts, the game didn't turn out as hoped. After hanging close through the first and second quarters, USC blew open the doors in the third, scor-

ing 35 unanswered points late. Nebraska went on to put up a few points in the fourth quarter to keep the score respectable, before losing 49-31.

According to the Nebraskans, the few USC fans watching the game at the base, while quiet at first, soon became pretty loud. Still, they added, it was all in fun.

"Unfortunately, it didn't go our way," said Johnson. "I took a lot of grief for that. But it was own little 'Sea of Red' over here and we had it rocking."

"It was good."

Others agreed, saying even though the Huskers lost the game, it was still a fantastic opportunity to bring a little Nebraska spirit to Kyrgyzstan.

"I never would've thought that I would've had that opportunity," Nelson said. "I'd rather be home watching it, but I'll still watch wherever I can... it's Husker Football."

Soldiers' Voices

Nebraska Soldiers voice thoughts about serving in today's National Guard

Recently the Neconducted a computer-based Soldier Survey to solicit a frank view of the current state of the Nebraska National Guard.

As part of the survey, the Soldiers were asked the following items in this order: Do you have the necessary information you need to encourage someone to join the Nebraska National Guard? Do you have all of the information that you need to encourage a current Guardsman to re-enlist in the Nebraska National Guard? What are the top reasons that people enlist in the Nebraska National Guard? What are the top reasons that people leave the Nebraska Army National Guard? What one thing could be done to better recruit new Guardsmen? What one thing could be done to encourage current Guardsmen to re-enlist?

What is the best reason to give a family about why a spouse or son/daughter should enlist? What is the best reason to give a spouse or family member for why a Guardsman should re-enlist? What is the best reason to give an employer as to why they should initially hire a Guardsman? What is the best reason to give an employer as to why one of their employees should re-enlist?

List one specific incentive that someone enlisting in your unit would receive. List one specific incentive that someone re-enlisting in your unit would receive. Do you know what Military Occupational Specialty vacancies currently exist in your unit? Do you know the names of the soldiers who are going to end time in service (ETS) in your unit next month? Do you use the Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (GRAP)? Who is your Unit Career Counselor?

In your opinion, has the quality of the noncommissioned leadership in your unit increased or decreased in the last two years? In your opinion, has the quality of the officer leadership in your unit increased or decreased in the last two years? Do you read The Prairie Soldier? Do you read your unit's Newsletter? Do you use/check your Army E-Mail account? Do you use/check a civilian E-Mail account? Comments?

The following are a sampling of just some of the hundreds of responses received. The names have been removed, leaving only the rank of the individual who responded to the survey and their responses in the order that they were received. No changes other than minor spelling changes have been made to the responses, however, comments have been limited to areas of focus that the leadership of the Nebraska National Guard can actually make an impact on.

To participate in the survey, log on to www.neguard.com/survey.

Look for additional results from the Family Member Survey in future editions of the *Prairie Soldier*.

Sergeant:

Yes; Yes; Patriotic; some for a bonus (although I personally never got a bonus in 19 years!); discouraged; fed up!; treat them better when they come in; don't abandon them give them a mission so they feel like they're accomplishing something; serving a purpose;

"If we're going to continue our American way of life, we need soldiers"; maybe this is why I'm divorced!; need to explain to the family the mission so they feel like they're accomplishing something; serving a purpose; doing something important; being in the guard demonstrates a commitment; doing work for their country; bonus \$\$; Camaraderie with unit;

No; No; Yes; Yes; Increased; more experienced; Better Commander; leader oriented; delegates; Yes; Yes; No; Yes; 19 "MOS: 92L; 1 more year then retiring; former USAR E7, came back as an E5; nobody can find the paperwork to prove he was an E7 for pay/retirement; nobody is interested in helping him find it; Army needs to do a better job of taking care of troops"

Sergeant:

Yes; Yes; College Tuition; Possible Deployment; Guard for a Day Program; give possible recruits the ability to have a hands-on experience; let them see what we do;

Implement Bonus \$\$ better; encouragement; tuition assistance; family support; Promote the opportunities to develop as a leader; to grow as a person (these are opportunities that civilians never get); serve their country; Enlist-

ment Bonus \$\$; Pride that family members have in their guardsman who is serving the country;

Experiences as a leader; ability to implement tasks & follow orders; understand chain-of-command demonstrates to the employer their sense of loyalty (to their country - demonstrated by desire to re-enlist); employer should value the character of loyalty; Bonus \$\$; Friends; loyalty; enjoy the people in this unit; sense of duty and will like being here;

Yes - posted for entire unit to see on duty board; Yes; I'm the Career Counselor; "Signed up, but don't use personally"; "I'm the career counselor; I volunteered for the position; I went through the training course and was very excited, but my 1SG said we weren't doing any of those things, we just wanted to check the box that someone had been trained";

Decreased because we have new NCOs; we're rebuilding; Decreased because we have new officers; we're rebuilding; yes; Yes; Yes; 8 m-day; MOS: 68W; UNIT: 313th; Nursing student in Omaha; ETS: Aug 2008; plans to do a direct commission in medical field.

Lieutenant Colonel:

Yes; Yes; "College benefits, service, responsibility"; "Deployment tempo, spouse dissatisfaction, job conflict"; Involve M-Day soldiers more in the process (GRAP); Identify early the ETS and be more pro-active in courting them to stay; Service above self; Benefits to family (TRICare);

"Training that the soldier has that



Photo Illustration by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Connected: To participate in the Soldiers Survey, log on to www.neguard.com/survey

the military gave them (leadership, skills, etc...); "Service to the community, state, and nation"; Being part of a professional organization that cares about you;

Appreciation for your service in mentoring that they would not receive in the civilian world; NO; No; Yes; No idea; Increased with the experience from deployments; Increased.

Most of the deadwood got smoked on the deployments; Yes; Yes; Yes; Yes; 24; This is an awesome survey; We need to hire them on full time to keep this going.

Private First Class:

Yes; Yes; Pride in themselves; College \$\$; put in their time; ready to get out; "RSP is good; visit RSP & drill before enlisting; Go for a day, not many people understand what we do; they should try for a day; Soldiers for a Weekend program";

"if they enjoy it, they should re-enlist"; keeps you out of trouble; get through college; financial \$\$; "if they enjoy it, they should RE-enlist"; soldiers are respectful; they have military bearing & are professional; not slackers; no idea; police benefits (192nd Law & Order); there's some sort of age waiver for joining a civilian police force if you're young (17-24) and in the Army too; Extra Training;

no idea; don't have any; "yes, I try"; no idea; increased; training is more exciting; increased; better organization of training every once in a while; Yes; Yes; "no, I only use AKO"; "My dad's an E7, that's why I signed up; I'll probably re-enlist when the time comes; I'm not worried about a deployment (if I go, I go; if I die, I die); there's a lot of pride in wearing the uniform and working with good professional people!"

Private First Class

Yes; No; College \$\$; Enlistment \$\$; No idea - only been in for 1 year; "young people have no work ethic; they're lazy; I'm trying to recruit my cousins, but they're not interested in work";

Re-Enlistment Bonus; Benefits for college; training can count as college credit; Veteran preference points for employment; Rank; promotions; veteran benefits; monthly pay; disciplined; on time; punctual; not lazy; military continues to encourage discipline; values structure; No idea - only been in for 1 year; No idea - only been in for 1 year; no;

I think I know one because they talk about getting out (our UA); No; I don't have any names to enter; No idea; No idea - only been in for 1 year;

No idea - only been in for 1 year; No; don't receive; Yes; Yes; Yes; 1; enlistment bonus was the key to getting in; training for civilian work in law enforcement; not worried about deployments;

I don't know how the student loan repayment program works; I'm not sure who to ask

Major:

Yes; Yes; "school money, service to U.S., friends or family involvement with

service"; mediocrity in promotion and retention;

"Keep pushing Guard activities in the communities, especially in larger communities that do not have armories in them."; Enforce standards by empowering first line leaders in an effort to improve the NEARNG from the ground up; Belief in the Army mission and history. The Army is a diverse enough organization that people can find a home;

"Obviously XXX is a key part of your family, he or she is also a valuable part of the NEARNG. We would like XXX to continue with the NEARNG"; The employee has a baseline of skills that got him into the military and through basic and (AIT);

"The military has worked on developing the person in a field of expertise, leadership, and personal skills, any of which you can leverage to help your organization";

Enlistment bonus based on MOS; "\$15,000"; I know some of the MOS vacancies; Yes; I am enrolled in ESAR but have not recruited anyone in that program;

"I believe we have dead weight, but it has not changed significantly in the last two years"; Some parts of it; Yes; Yes; Not very often; 16.

Staff Sergeant:

Yes; Yes; I am a Recruiter so I know first hand that it is mainly for the Tuition assistance;

"Employment conflicts and lack of good training, i.e. doing PMCS at drill month after month when the vehicles have never even moved"; "I think that if the Guard/Reserves could offer a better health plan that was even close to that of an AD soldier that would help a lot. Although it is offered through the GRAP program, soldiers have to pay either \$2,000 or \$6,000 for it";

"Offer a change in MOS if it for with the needs of the Guard; The current reenlistment incentives are excellent, the best they have ever been. I still see soldiers turn it down because they don't want to get deployed again";

"Joining the National Guard isn't always about College tuition, or bonuses, or even serving ones country. It is about personal transformation, the building of character and the establishment of a real set of values in a persons life";

"Because the Guard is family, we take care of our own"; They know what discipline and dedication to duty means. As a soldier progresses in their military career they gain additional leadership experience that they can in turn offer to their employers; Tuition assistance; Usually a bonus. If not then at least an ACU backpack; yes; yes;

"No but I have soldiers that "work" for me that do; Myself; Increased; Increased; Yes; Yes; Yes; Yes; 11; "I feel pretty strongly about the health care issue. Although Guardsmen and women do not put in as much time as an AD soldier does, I feel that they are entitled to better health care even though the program has come a long way";

"I don't feel that guard members

See SURVEY RESULTS on 18.

SURVEY RESULTS continued from page 17.

should have to pay taxes (at least state taxes, to include property tax) Other states offer Guard members reduced property tax bills, I think that Nebraska should follow suit. It is the right thing to do for the soldiers"; yes; yes;

"Opportunity to serve our country and still hold a civilian life; College; Mobilization overseas; Higher bonus; "Sense of service, sense of belonging to a proud group, sense of pride"; Responsibility of a citizen/soldier; None;

"Currently mobilized, there are several going to ETS upon our return home"; No; Increased; Increased; yes; yes; yes; yes.

Command Sergeant Major:

YES; YES; Patriotism & College Financial Aid (includes enlistment bonuses); "Deployments, time away from family & friends";

"Give them an opportunity to talk with their peers who are in the Guard, and accompany them at a weekend drill"; Provide Career Development and Career Path options....communicate what needs done to get to a position of higher responsibility and rank; "Opportunities to learn a specialty.

Opportunities to develop as a leader. Opportunities to provide a supplemental income to full time job. Many benefits for the member and his/her spouse and children. Retirement plans (TSP, SBP, Pension);

"Continue benefits. Retirement, SBP, TSP. Civilian organizations are quickly learning the value of military service to their organizational goals"; "Leadership training/experience. Maturity, responsibility, initiative and many other admirable traits are developed during military service";

Look at me. You can expect more results that will benefit the company. GI Bill (TDA Units don't get bonuses anymore); Continuation of GI Bill (TDA Units don't get bonuses anymore.); Somewhat. I'd have to call up the list to be sure;

Yes. I will be talking with them; No....ESAR; Increased; Warfighting experience and younger blood is helping bring in fresh ideas and TTPs; Increased. But I still feel there are some Officers that are not contributing to their fullest potential; Yes; Yes; Yes; Yes; 31.

Private First Class:

Yes; No; "College \$, family in the military, better their lives"; do it for the college and then leave; Bonus is great More active stuff (training) not classes; College benefits;

"Higher rank, \$, bonus, help defend our country"; Skills Good worker; Locked into MOS; Different MOS; yes; no; yes; no; Increased; Increased; no; yes; yes - CAC problems; no; 2.5 "42A, Community College, Criminal Justice"

Specialist:

Yes; yes; "Get away from home, travel, active, challenge"; "Bad commo, NCO's and enlisted, job conflict"; Everything is being done; Hard worker; Hard worker; Hard worker; "Great bunch, teamwork" why move?; yes; no; yes; yes; Increased; Increased; yes; yes; yes - CAC problem; yes; 1.5 ADSW in Scottsbluff.

Staff Sergeant:

Yes; yes; School money; deployments; we need more that transportation in the Kearney area and to the west of here; better incentives such as health care better bonus money;

More foreseeing of deployments; depends on their age. A young person it is for real world experience. A person that has some life experience it is for patriotism and bettering themselves; keep the team they already deployed with together.

Close knit relationships make for more efficient teams; "experience, motivation, determination, hard work, commitment";

the military is a great foundation to build a community on; if their business is part of a community they need to

support our soldiers in their decisions to re-enlist; bonus money; bonus money; yes; yes; no; ESAR; decreased; decreased; sometimes; yes; every day; no; 8.

Chief Warrant Officer Two:

Yes; Yes; "Serve Nebraska and our country, help pay for college, the challenges"; "

Deployments too long/often, lack of upward mobility (promotions), time away from work/family"; More visibility around the state - especially for activities concerning high school age students and their parents; Make certain they are doing the MOS he/she has been trained to do - not just grunt work; "A prospective soldier can serve our state and our nation while serving his or her self (i.e. pay for college, learn a trade/skill, etc.); Retirement and other military benefits;

"Soldiers, for the most part, are dedicated, responsible, and reliable individuals who want to do their best"; same as above; "Pay, and the opportunity to make music. Due to our unit make-up, we are not eligible for bonuses at this time";

"Pay, and the opportunity to make music. Due to our unit make-up, we are not eligible for bonuses at this time"; There are no MOS vacancies in our unit; Yes; Yes; Increased; Decreased;

We have a brand new Commander having lost a Commander of 26 years experience; Yes; Yes; Yes; Yes; 19; yes; yes; college benefits; "deployments, will leave if unit is re-stationed"; more available slots "bonus for all m-day, tech, AGR; less deployments, no re-stationing"; college benefits; benefits; work ethics; community pride; tuition; tuition; yes; yes; no; increased; decreased; no; yes; yes; yes.

Sergeant:

Yes; yes; "Service to country, college fund, better life style"; Not satisfied with what they experienced in the Army National Guards; I think that we do a real good job of recruiting;

"Show them some of the benefits that are available that they have not taken advantage of and are really easy to take advantage of like Space A flights, going to the base and shopping. Take them on a little trip to experience these benefits";

This all depends on the enlistees desires of why they are enlisting; Bonus and benefits; They quality of the employee that they will be working with; The dedication the employee has given to the company and his country; The experience of driving different types of vehicles;

Be able to be a transportation specialist when they get a civilian job; yes; "I know some of them, but not all"; "I recommend it to all soldiers, but I can not, because I work ADSW with Recruiting and Retention as the Hispanic Liaison";

My unit is overseas so I can not really respond to this question honestly; Same as above; Sometimes; Yes; everyday; No; 11.

Specialist:

Yes; Yes; College Money; "No reenlistment bonuses, no opportunities for advancement"; More live recruiting at public events;

Reenlistment benefits/bonuses; It opens up more opportunities than any other job out there; That is situational; "As soldiers in the United States Army, we hold to a higher standard, and conduct ourselves accordingly"; That is situational; I don't know; I don't know; 42A; NO; Yes; I don't know; Decreased; Decreased; Yes; Yes; Yes; No; 1.

Lieutenant Colonel:

Yes; Yes; "Assistance for college expenses, pride in country/family tradition, extra money/bonus's, training opportunities that relate to civilian jobs"; "deployment conflicts with family and work, finished with college and do not need benefits, do not see ability to reach

20 years for retirement, not challenged enough in current position, lack of promotion possibilities";

Tough one. I think we are throwing enough \$\$\$ at them; I would say more contact with the parents and ensure they are well informed; Stress the leadership skills they will continue to develop if they stay in the Guard and work through the OES/NCOES and leadership positions; Direct relation with the civilian work place;

"Freedom isn't free! It is kind of cliché, but it is a fact"; Potential benefits for soldier & family both short & long term; "99% sure they are getting someone that is responsible, accountable, and trustworthy with a strong work ethic as well";

"Builds a more confident, experienced employee capable of taking on numerous tasks and responsibilities"; Training in the aviation sector that directly relates to the civilian world; Great chance for upward mobility in all Companies; "25U, 15P, 92G, 25B, 92F..."; Yes. I review the report at every monthly drill and submit it to Troop Command in our monthly AAR; Eligible soldiers within my Bn. are using it;

Were previously sharing Kearney's Career Counselor. It is essential that the 1-134th Avn Bn have a designated full-time Career Counselor to ensure success";

New Bn. established in OCT 05; I would say that our NCO leadership has increased as they have become adjusted to the new unit and MTOE; Extreme lack of Bn. staff limits my ability to respond to this question.

Our young officers have stepped up and done a good job in their Company Command positions. I would say Officer leadership has increased as well; "Yes, every month"; Yes; Yes; Yes; 20; Good survey. I will stress the importance for all soldiers to have access to form during our AUG drill periods.

Specialist:

No; No; The top reasons that people enlist in the Nebraska National Guard is to serve their country and receive money to go to school; I think a good way to recruit people is to have a soldier that they know talk to them about their experiences in the National Guard;

The Nebraska Army National Guard is full of opportunity and it will change your life; Army Values; They would get the privilege of being a member of a unit that is comprised of outstanding soldiers;

They will still have the privilege of being a member of a unit that is comprised of outstanding soldiers and may receive a bonus; Yes; Increased; Increased; Yes; Yes; Yes; Yes; 2.

First Lieutenant:

Yes; Yes; Ultimately they want to serve their country but the more immediate reasons are tuition assistance and training; "They have met their service obligation - not everybody signs up intending to spend 20 years in the military. They may be burned out after mobilizations. Why don't we say "good job serving your country for 6 years, you are welcome back any time";

"Have more Combat Arms units and more opportunities for "hooah" schools and training opportunities"; "Provide quality, meaningful training on drill weekends. Make them feel like the time they spend is important. CDR's need to make their units into a world-class organization focused on supporting the GWOT then the soldiers will stay";

That they are doing something important to the country and the benefits they get are something earned in return;

"It is the best decision for the long term, even though it requires more time away from them now."

We have had experiences and additional skills that most people do not have. Our continued training will make us better employees and will give back to the company. They already get many

incentives after enlisting;

"An additional school, and one entire drill off after re-enlisting. This is an excused "leave" after 6 years, then one every 3"; No; No; "I signed up, but have not recruited anyone"; I don't know; I have only been in my unit 1 year; Yes; Yes; Yes; No; 13;

I like West Virginia's example of providing 100% tuition up to and including the PhD level. Getting soldiers the NCOES they need in a timely manner would help retention also. We need to promote OCS more and maybe the OCS enlistment option. This is a huge opportunity for leadership training for the right person that few people know about.

Private First Class:

Yes; yes; money; not enough money; more money; money; college and honor to your country; money and retirement; proven reliable; show of dedication; "rank, respect and good friends"; money; no; yes; yes; increased a lot; increased; no; yes; yes; yes; 2.

Specialist:

Yes; Yes; "School, Discipline, References and control in health"; "Move to different state, friction in family life, age or health reasons.";

Explanation on exact duties that would be asked of enlistee. Show them how easy it really is; let them know they have already started to put your time in. fallow threw with it and retire with some more money in your pocket;

The time we are at drill we can still spend time with one another; Same as the answer as before keep doing your time and retire;

"Discipline, and trust"; Build a stronger bond with your fellow employees can bring the same discipline from drill into the workplace; Large chunk of money and College money so you can excel in your current job or get a better job with a greater starting wage; respect from peers; no not at the moment; New to the unit;

No not at this time; new to the unit; n/a; Haven't asked yet; "haven't experienced their leadership skills yet; Same as previous question; no; no; when I was active duty; Yes; 3.5.

Sergeant:

Yes; Yes; "Education benefits, pay"; "Lack of good leadership, Mobilizations that exceed one year, no consistent training"; Family Health Care benefits for guard members; Bonuses; "At this point, Education benefits"; Bonuses Good work ethic instilled in soldiers; ???;

They would get a skill that can be used in the military as well as civilian life; Do we still get re enlistment bonuses?; Nope; Yes; I was when I was CONUS; Don't know; Increased; Increased; Yes; Yes; Yes; Yes; 4;

I am certainly biased in my opinion of the Guard. When I enlisted, I did so due to my love for my country and my willingness to participate in the war against terror.

I am currently deployed, 13 months into our mobilization...At the end of this mobilization, I have realized that the Army/Guard is not what I had hoped it would be, and at this point, can't wait to ETS."

Sergeant First Class:

No; No; Tuition assistance and extra income; Dissatisfied with leadership. I think we're doing pretty well; I think exposing high schoolers to as much as possible;

Better equipment and facilities; Pride in serving country; Extra income; Tuition assistance. Established friendships and serving your country and state; It shows their commitment to support the American soldier and military. What better way for a company to show their patriotism;

See above; Maybe an occasional flight on a helicopter; I don't know; Some what; No; No; I don't know; Increased; Increased; Yes; Yes; Yes; Yes; 18.



Guard Family NEWS

You Can Use

New pilot program to provide emotional, psychological, mental services to military servicemembers, families.

By Maj. Drey Ihm

State Family Program director

Everyone wants to bring happiness and meaning to their lives.

What better way to do this than to take advantage of the free programs that our office provides.

We have marriage enrichment programs, youth and camp programs, liaison services to the VA, Veterans County Service Office and Tricare and all its programs just to name a few.

We just started a new pilot program called the "Joint Family Support Assistance Program (JFSAP)" and have hired two counselors and a Military One Source representative to work as a team to provide the emotional, psychological and mental service and support military service members and their families may need.

This team can make itself available to you right at your home or at the local armory.

There are only 15 states with this pilot program and Nebraska is one of them. It will work very closely with our chaplains and other Family Program staff to offer you a more comprehensive support system that is highly mobile. We are still in processing these new personnel, but they will be up and ready to provide support within the next 30 days. The Family Office is excited for this new program and we hope you will be too. You may contact Barb Shupe who is one of the counselors at (402) 309-7343.

We have much to offer in the next few months, so please keep an eye out on the following dates:

- Nov. 2-4: PREP will be in Lincoln



Photo courtesy of Maj. Drey Ihm
Here To Help: Members of the State Family Program Office staff pose for a photo during meetings at South Sioux City, Neb.

at the Marriot Cornhusker Hotel. This is a wonderful event for married couples.

•Check with your local Family Assistance Centers for Fall activities and events within your local region or visit www.neguard.com and click on family assistance to see what activities are out there across the state.

•March 7-9: PREP seminar - location to be determined.

•March 28-30: State Family Conference: Marina Inn South Sioux City.

This is a great opportunity to learn about all the new and interesting things that we have available to you and the units to assist with Family Readiness. Some topics that will be covered are Community Readiness & Disaster Planning, Peer-to-Peer, Your Financial Future, Discover your Military and Dependent Benefits and much more.

All you need to do is register with the Family Program Office at (402) 309-

7331/2/3. Your Soldier can attend in lieu of drill with commander's approval or the unit may submit a 350-11 request to put your Soldier in an additional duty status. We hope to see you there.

•July 11-13: 7 Habits of Highly Effective Army National Guard Families. We can register 20 families for this event. Location to be determined. First come, first serve event

The chain of command from the Nebraska National Guard will support any Soldier wishing to attend this seminar with their spouse. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Maj. Drey Ihm at (402) 309-7331/7333.

Leave with a whole new appreciation for who you are and whom you love. The State Family Program staff is here to assist you. Get to know us before you need us.

Education Notebook

■GMAT/GRE general reimbursements for eligible military members discussed

By Chief Warrant Officer Robyn Huskey
 State Education Officer

DANTE reimburses the GMAT or GRE General fee for eligible military personnel only.

To be eligible for reimbursement of the GMAT or GRE General testing fee, the military examinee must, at the time of testing, possess a current "Armed Forces of the United States" identification card and meet the following requirements:

- Have never taken a DANTE funded GMAT paper-based or GMAT CAT or GRE General Examination;
- Is applying to or enrolled in a graduate school requiring the GMAT or GRE General;
- Is fulfilling a legitimate Service requirement;
- Agrees to apply for reimbursement within 90 days of the scheduled test date.

The examinee is responsible for scheduling the GMAT or GRE General, paying all fees associated with registration, and if eligible, completing the reimbursement form and applying for reimbursement not later than 90 days after the scheduled test date.

Reimbursement forms are available through the Education Office located at 1234 Military Road in Lincoln, Neb.

For more information about this program or any other education program offered for military members or their families, please contact Chief Warrant Officer Robyn Huskey at 402-309-7313 or robyn.huskey@us.army.mil.

Understanding regulations can head off many travel voucher errors

For many Soldiers, Airmen and civilians, settling their TDY travel claim is the most laborious and stressful part of the TDY process.

Constant rule changes, the advent of the Defense Travel System (DTS) and the geographic centralization of the clerks who approve/disapprove TDY claims have, in many cases, made the settlement process unduly challenging.

The financial management inspectors of the Department of the Army Inspector General routinely deal with these issues during the conduct of their compliance based inspections.

By far the most common error seen in the TDY settlement process has been improper individuals approving the settlement voucher.

Supervisors should always be the responsible officials who sign/approve an employee's travel voucher. Occasionally this is not possible due to geography or mission requirements, and in these cases designated surrogates may sign/approve.

Failure to use the Army Lodging Success Program (LSP) is another common problem.

Soldiers and civilians alike are required to call the LSP 1-800 number (see www.armymwr.com/portal/travel/lodging/lsp.asp for more information) when going TDY to certain cities in order to receive reduced lodging costs.

Unjustified use of mid and full-size rental vehicles is yet another common

abuse. Those who have already converted to DTS are required to use a compact car unless the number of passengers or the mission requires a larger vehicle.

Those who have not converted must select the lowest cost service provider.

Perhaps the most abused entitlement seen the past fiscal year is the actual expense allowance (AEA), the provision that allows for higher per diem rates (up to 150 percent and 300 percent) for extremely high cost areas.

Many first-line supervisors have generously but erroneously granted their travelers this allowance, completely neglecting the Joint Federal Travel Regulation (JFTR)/Joint Travel Regulation (JTR) rules governing approval authorities.

Overuse of "variations authorized" on the travel order is also very common. This allows travelers to add/change locations to their itinerary or stay longer on TDY than originally anticipated.

The JFTR/JTR state that this authority should only be granted when absolutely necessary, especially since an approving official can now sign block 21 of the travel voucher and approve almost all things after the fact.

Failure to use the DoD travel card and split disbursement are still moderate problems among the population we inspect. Both are mandatory for civil-

IG Voice

By Lt. Col. Owen McCauley
 State Inspector General

ians and military.

Exceptions may be granted for individuals who travel infrequently or are otherwise unable to qualify for the travel card.

Failure to obtain certification of non-availability for government quarters when residing TDY on a military installation is a problem we still see, although less frequently.

Soldiers are required to use available government quarters when staying on post; it is optional, however, for civilians.

In these cases Soldiers are only reimbursed for what it would have cost to stay in the government quarters.

Unauthorized use of premium class travel (first or business class) is a violation we see occasionally. The rules regarding who can approve premium class travel were clarified in March 2004 in a memo by the Undersecretary of Defense.

This is a high-visibility area and one should be very careful about understanding the rules prior to using premium class travel service.

Neglecting to use a commercial travel office (CTO) when one is available is a serious issue we are dealing with presently.

ment gets back a small percentage of the money spent on official travel when we use the CTO.

Finally, observations from our local financial technicians point out nine mistakes that are common in the Nebraska National Guard.

These mistakes are: original signature of traveler omitted, reviewer signature omitted, travel voucher submitted with no travel entitlement, travel voucher submitted when the Soldier's entitlement has already been paid (i.e. mileage), not utilizing the DD Form 1351-2 dated July 2004 or August 2006, voucher dates do not agree with order dates, required receipts are not attached to the travel voucher, Block 16 of the travel voucher is not completed (POC travel - own/operate or passenger) and not having approval on orders for items that are being claimed.

So, what is the lesson here? The lesson is to know what you are doing before erroneously spending government funds and having the DAIG inspector tell you to reimburse Uncle Sam.

Most local finance offices no longer process travel settlements so you probably won't find help there.

My advice: get to know the JFTR/JTR. Most TDY travel answers can be found there and once you figure out how the books are organized, it's not that hard to find what you are looking for. (From an article written by Maj. Simon Seelig, SAIG-IO)

'Culture' hard to define, yet powerful binding force

The original topic for my 30th and last "Lempke on Leadership" article was overcome by the recent events within the University of Nebraska Athletic Department which beg for comment.

Steve Pederson became Athletic Director in December 2002, two years after my appointment as Adjutant General. I met him early on and was very impressed. His vision, confidence and determination to take Nebraska athletics to a new level exuded excitement.

He eagerly took on tough issues and make difficult decisions.

More personally, he was (and is to this day) supportive of the military and took every opportunity to honor our troops. That early energy never ebbed—he was just as enthusiastic about Nebraska athletics when I last talked with him a month ago as five years ago.

So what caused such a dramatic downfall?

This question will be studied for years from every angle. I have no more insight than what has been reported by the media, other than knowing

Steve Pederson to be a talented and dedicated

leader. But one common theme emerging from employees and fans is a perceived disruption to the culture of our beloved athletic institution.

Culture—everyone wearing red wants to return to the roots that produced a football program second to none.

Culture is an elusive force that binds a collection of individuals to a set of ideals and attitudes that in some undefined manner drives them toward a common goal. It is usually hard, if not impossible, to adequately define and articulate. Ask ten people and you'll get ten varying answers.

An organization's culture is like a large swarm of bees. It produces sweet honey good if used in moderation, but also kills with a thousand tiny stings when stirred.

This amorphous binding force doesn't prevent change, but certainly influences how an organization responds to it.

Leaders today are caught between demands to make vis-

LEMPKE ON LEADERSHIP

An organization's culture is like a large swarm of bees. It produces sweet honey good if used in moderation, but also kills with a thousand tiny stings when stirred.

This amorphous binding force doesn't prevent change, but certainly influences how an organization responds to it.

ible, rapid changes for quick results and an organization's readiness to accept change. Management's focus is often the near term bottom line at the expense of attempting to understand the long term impact on the organization. Phrases like "get rid of the dead wood" and "this thing is broken" al-

ways scare me because they promote ignoring cultural underpin-

nings.

Some managers even attain notoriety by being change agents (a common modus operandi is to force changes rapidly and then move on to new assignments leaving the next managers to deal with cultural impacts).

Is it possible to make needed changes in a timely manner without ruining a respectable culture?

I think so, provided leaders attempt to understand organizational culture and assess changes against it as best they can. It will never be a perfect science, culture is too hard to completely define and grasp, but I believe trying is key—people appreciate leaders that respect their culture. A leader need not shy away from change, but must be sensitive to impacts on the organizational culture.

Culture and change need not be antithetical. Consider Nebraska's football program a generation ago.

During the 1980's Nebraska's run based defense, which featured a five-man defensive line, was having trouble stopping good quality spread offenses.

The "business school" solution was to quickly drop the run-oriented defense for something more glitzy with different coaches while forcing players into roles they were not prepared for.

What Coach Tom Osborne did instead was to gradually adapt the four-man front defensive scheme. As his coaches learned how use, it future players were recruited that fit this style of defense.

All this was done without disrupting the hard-nosed "Blackshirts" culture and victory expectations—Nebraska hallmarks.

In 1994 the defense that helped Nebraska defeat the University of Miami for the national championship was not the same kind of defense that lost the championship to Miami in 1982. The defense, and results, had changed, but not the culture of the storied Nebraska program.

FBI says identity theft now nation's fastest growing crime

Identity theft is a national problem and current statistics indicate identity theft is dramatically increasing.

The FBI calls identity theft the fastest growing crime in the United States and statistics back that claim up. According to a recent Harris report, the incidence of victimization increased 11-20 percent from 2001-02 and 80 percent between 2002-03.

Additionally, a recent study showed that the 2006 victim population was at 15 million.

This means every minute about 28-and-a-half people become new victims of this crime, which equates to a victim approximately every two seconds.

"Identity thieves" obtain information by various methods which include:

- Stealing mail or rummaging through rubbish (dumpster diving);
- Stealing payment or identification cards or the information on them (pick pocketing, "drive-by" scanning of cards/tags);
- Eavesdropping on public transactions to obtain personal data (shoulder surfing);
- Stealing personal information in computer databases (Trojan horses, hacking);
- Infiltration of organizations that store large amounts of personal information;
- Impersonating a trusted organization in an electronic communication (phishing);
- Obtaining castings of fingers for falsifying fingerprint identification;
- Browsing websites for personal details that have been posted by users;
- Simply researching about the victim in government registers and on the Internet.

So, how can someone protect themselves? Here are a few easy steps to protect your "identity":

- Install a firewall on your home computer to protect your information;
- Install reputable anti-spam and anti-virus software;
- Keep your anti-virus, firewall and operating systems updated;
- Beware of hidden file extensions;
- Turn off your computer when not in use;
- Ensure any passwords can not be easily compromised;
- Do not respond to emails from compa-

Protecting Yourself

By Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder
Air Guard Anti-Terrorism/Force
Protection Office

nies asking for your personal information unless you are sure the email is from a legitimate source;

- Look for a "padlock" or "shield" symbol on the bottom of any webpage in which you are entering personal information;
- Safeguard credit and debit card pin numbers. Make sure someone can not see the code you are entering into a number pad;
- Shred information such as credit card statements, no longer used ATM/Debit cards/Credit Cards, bank statements, applications, checks, bills;
- Shred any information which contains privacy act information (Social Security number, address, date of birth, driver's license and financial information.)

Members of the military are not immune to this problem. The amount of documentation containing privacy act information is overwhelming.

However, military personnel using privacy act information take many steps to ensure this information is not available to potential identity thieves. These steps include the encryption of e-mails, elaborate firewalls; as well ensuring proper controls are placed on the dissemination and disposal of your personal information.

This does alleviate the responsibility each of us has to protect our identities.

Military members and their families need to take the time to protect identity information by securing documents that contain privacy act information or shredding the documents when they are no longer needed. Do not just open the garbage can lid and toss in information that can be used by an identity thief. You wouldn't hand your wallet to a stranger would you?

For more information go to <http://www.idtheftcenter.org> or contact one of the following:

Maj. Guy Moon, Nebraska Army National Guard Antiterrorism Officer, 402-309-7406 or Master Sgt. Jason Schroeder, Nebraska Air National Guard Antiterrorism Officer, 402-309-1565.

Nebraska bucks national trend in warrant officer recruiting

Recently Chief Warrant Thomas Dahlgren, Chief Warrant Officer David Meyers and I attended a Warrant Officer Senior Leadership Seminar at the Army National Guard Readiness Center where we received briefings from the Chief of National Guard Bureau, the Army Guard Director and the NGB staff.

The Director of the Army Guard spoke specifically about the national shortage of Army Guard warrant officers. Nationally, warrant officer strength is at 68 percent and the director asked all command chiefs to get involved and to fix the problem.

NGB is targeting warrant officers strength with additional resources in the form of recruiting manpower, additional dollars and policy changes. Policy changes include reducing time in grade requirements to four years for CW2 to CW3 for warrant officers assigned in a higher graded position. Soldiers holding the rank of sergeant first class (SFC E-7s) can be promoted to CW2 upon completion of Warrant Officer Basic Course. These are just two of several policy options being considered.

So how are we doing in warrant officer strength in Nebraska? Nebraska is at 93 percent of authorized warrant officer strength and is one of four states above 91 percent.

Chief Warrant Officer John Ayers is certainly the major contributing factor in Nebraska's warrant officer strength success. According to my records Chief Ayers helped Nebraska's warrant officer strength grow by 20 new warrant officers in FY 07. He also met and exceeded mission for many officer strength goals.

Congratulate Chief Ayers for all his hard work and thank him for a job well done.

Another success story that you should be aware of is that about one year ago one of our own Nebraska warrant officers (Chief Warrant Officer Randy Hirsch) formerly a full-time technician in the USPFO DPI section was hired as the National Guard senior advisor to the Signal School at Fort Gordon Georgia. Chief Hirsch is responsible for working all the National Guard issues at the Signal School. Chief Hirsch stepped into a challenging job and he is in the process of re-engineering many aspects of warrant officer training.

Chief's Business

By Chief Warrant Officer Steve Weber
Command Chief Warrant Officer

Chief Hirsch is making an impact for Army Guard warrant officers nationwide. I have been to several national meetings where Chief Hirsch has been there and all of my command chief warrant officer counterparts are singing his praises.

Chief Hirsch is working the issues, solving problems and coordinating with the schoolhouse to make things better for the National Guard. Chief Hirsch is making a difference and he is making Nebraska proud.

Congratulations to Warrant Officer Eric Cole, ordnance ammunition technician. Cole was one of 103 warrant officer candidates that graduated on Aug. 4 from the Reserve Component Warrant Officer Candidate School at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

Graduation activities were held at the Indiana War Memorial in downtown Indianapolis. If military museums are something you enjoy then I recommend you visit the Indiana War Memorial. It was by far the most impressive military museum I've ever seen.

Congratulations to Kelly Olinde Signal Corps information systems technician for graduating from the Warrant Officer Candidate School at Fort Rucker, Ala. Olinde is assigned to the 67th Area Support Group. Congratulations to Warrant Officer Benjamin Weyers, Quartermaster, who joined our Corps after completing Nebraska Officer Candidate School. Weyers will be assigned to the 267th Ordnance Company and works full time at the Central Issue Facility with Chief Warrant Officer Scott McKinney (who was just promoted to the rank of chief warrant officer four today). Congratulations Chief McKinney.

Welcome home to all our warrant officers who have returned home the past couple of months. Thanks for a job well done and thanks for all the sacrifices you and your families endured. All of you have been a part of something bigger than yourselves and you should be proud of your service.

Nebraska still has troops deployed, so keep all Soldiers in your thoughts and prayers.

AWARDS

Army National Guard

Air Medal
Maj. Robert J. Kadavy

Bronze Star

Maj. Robert J. Kadavy

Combat Action Badge

Sgt. William M. McClure
Spc. Justin R. Queen

Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Richard H. Dahlman
Lt. Col. Fred A. Schizas II
Maj. Brennan J. Heelan
Maj. Shelly M. Herrod
Chief Warrant Officer Marty J. French
Chief Warrant Officer William F. Hager
Chief Warrant Officer Fredrick G. Focken
Command Sgt. Maj. Barney J. Solomon
Sgt. 1st Class Walter A. Schueth
Staff Sgt. Timothy J. Andersen

Army Commendation Medal

Lt. Col. Gerald D. Meyer
Chief Warrant Officer Marty J. French
Warrant Officer Justin r. Vonloh
Master Sgt. Bernard F. Pallas
Master Sgt. Chris L. Saltzgaber
Master Sgt. Steven W. Thomlison
Sgt. 1st Class Gerald d. Bouska
Sgt. 1st Class Timothy S. Elder
Sgt. 1st Class Anthony J. Lopez
Sgt. 1st Class Kyle D. Miller
Sgt. 1st Class Kent L. Ropers
Staff Sgt. Christopher S. Deters
Staff Sgt. Christopher H. Kidd
Staff Sgt. Kevin W. Smith
Staff Sgt. Robert Stokes

Army Achievement Medal

Maj. Robert J. Kadavy
1st Lt. Carlos A. Van Nurden
2nd Lt. Bernadette J. Brown-Clerk
Chief Warrant Officer Ronald M. Helton
Warrant Officer Craig W. Niemeyer
Master Sgt. Billy R. Butler
Master Sgt. Kent L. Ropers
Sgt. 1st Class Steven D. Goldapp

Tech. Sgt. Shannon M. Nielsen
Sgt. 1st Class Robert W. Stokes
Sgt. 1st Class Gus R. Swanson
Sgt. 1st Class Jacob J. Widhalm
Staff Sgt. Nevada W. Amack
Staff Sgt. Sylvia R. Bastian
Staff Sgt. Kameron E. Graham
Staff Sgt. Robert M. Hayden
Staff Sgt. Joshua R. Loos
Staff Sgt. Erik J. Singaas
Staff Sgt. Matthew J. Spalding
Staff Sgt. Christopher L. Sterns
Staff Sgt. Nancy L. Wescott
Sgt. Courtney M. Eurek
Sgt. Barbara K. Pope
Sgt. Steven J. Cerny
Sgt. Chad A. Naeve
Sgt. Jessica R. Sefzik
Sgt. Micheal G. Trebelhorn
Spc. Mathew A. Field
Spc. Charles Marshall
Spc. Christopher Miklas
Spc. Nicholas J. Mosel
Spc. James M. Small
Spc. Katherine K. Smith
Pfc. Jeremy M. Cutsor

Nebraska National Guard Legion of Merit

Lt. Col. Fred A. Schizas II
Maj. Russell L. Virus
Master Sgt. Roger A. Groetzinger
Master Sgt. Gary W. Wilhelm
Sgt. 1st Class Jeffrey M. Botsford

Nebraska National Guard Commendation Medal

Sgt. 1st Class Dorrance A. Atherton
Sgt. 1st Class Michael L. Wood

Staff Sgt. John F. Ayers
Staff Sgt. Carrie A. Littlewood
Staff Sgt. Justin R. Portenier
Staff Sgt. Benjamin J. Weyers
Sgt. Michael L. Hytrek
Sgt. Matthew J. Rouse

Nebraska National Guard Individual Achievement Medal

Lt. Col. Dale R. Vrana Jr.
Maj. Jeffrey Kilgore
Master Sgt. Richard d. Cruickshank
Sgt. 1st Class Rene Sole
Staff Sgt. Christopher G. Cox
Staff Sgt. Dennis J. Hartman
Staff Sgt. Carrie A. Littlewood
Staff Sgt. Benjamin J. Weyers
Staff Sgt. Dustin Young
Sgt. Michael L. Hytrek
Sgt. Nicholas A. Province
Spc. Heather R. Davey
Spc. Timothy J. Greiner Jr.
Spc. Nora J. McGowen
Spc. Wesley D. Newton
Spc. April M. See
Pfc. Lauree R. Lenz
Pfc. Gary L. A. Sons
Pvt. Tori A. Almond
Pvt. Jeffery F. Hansen
Pvt. Tamara R. Johnston

Air National Guard Meritorious Service Medal

Lt. Col. Vernon K. Alls
Chief Master Sgt. Victoria K. Cerino

Nebraska National Guard Meritorious Service Medal

Chief Master Sgt. Victoria K. Cerino

PROMOTIONS

Army National Guard

Lieutenant Colonel
Brett W. Andersen

Major

Steven O. Ward

First Lieutenant

Christopher J. Pelchat
Daniel J. Preister

Chief Warrant Officer Four

Marcus A. Groetzinger

Chief Warrant Officer Three

Kelli R. Brewer

Chief Warrant Officer Two

Julianne M. Kenkel
Joshua D. Norris
Stephen M. Sanderson

Warrant Officer One

Lloyd T. Morris III

Master Sergeant

Craig A. Bartels

Staff Sergeant

Tarissa R. Batenhorst

Sergeant

Wesley D. Newton
Heather N. Springer

Specialist

Jacob W. Anderson
Trevor A. Baker
Lance P. Barnes

Michael S. Booksmills
Oscar Garcia
Deryek C. Gerken
Brandon J. Jancik
Ryan M. Lemke
James C. McPherson Jr.
Justin P. Notter
Shaun M. Pekarek
Michael D. Rieke
Dustin J. Riese
Brennan A. Rutt
Darcey D. Slingsby

Private First Class

Brandon T. Austin
Gregory P. Becker
Cory J. Doty
Devin E. Frerichs
Sean C. Hanger
Joshua J. Hatheway
Vic W. Hiatt
Tucker J. Iverson
Adam P. Johnson
Kevin J. Larson
Brandon D. Lee
Teodoro Lopezdunn
Stuart J. Mason
Randy J. Peitzmeier
Christopher J. Smith
Michael R. Stone
John M. Vance
Allen J. Wichman
Ryan R. Wullschlegler

Private Two

Catherine L. Jensen
Travis S. Matzen
Joshua E.C. Sladky

Air National Guard

Captain

Christopher L. Ganshert

First Lieutenant

Justin E. Hyde
James L. Otte
Caleb A. Ramsey

Joseph R. Remmenga

Chief Master Sergeant
Raymond L. Kubert

Master Sergeant

Kevin J. Miller
Clint E. Snider

Technical Sergeant

Gary A. Banner
Robert J. Bogle
Boyd W. Bowder
Brian L. Brunton
Aaron D. Couture
Christian D. Bradley
Stephen J. Dyer
Mandy R. Joens
Joseph P. Woodshank

Staff Sergeant

Corrina J. Bartels
Daniel Cadenbach
Mark C. Cozad
Hoa B. Einspahr
Derek B. Hollrah
Matthew J. Kobza
Robert J. Kozisek
Crystal M. Mossman
Michael T. Roddey
Matthew L.C. Stebbing
Jarod D. Warneke
George F. Werner
Jeremy L. Wiemer

Senior Airman

Gage T. Bowder
Sean F. Jimerson
Joshua B. McDonald
David J. McDowell
Michelle J. Pinkerton
Anthony R. Ray
Meghan M. Schneider
Megan Sears
Dillon J. Woodrum
Mark A.R. Young

RETIREMENTS

Army National Guard

Master Sgt. Daryl M. Klute
Staff Sgt. Rodney J. Niedfeld
Sgt. Tommy L. Troxel

Air National Guard

Chief Master Sgt. Victoria K. Cerino
Senior Master Sgt. Michael C. Johnson
Master Sgt. Ronny G. Ward

Master Sgt. William L. Weber
Tech. Sgt. Brian W. Barnes
Tech. Sgt. Darren L. Mehl

Shorttakes

G-RAP Officer Program

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Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (G-RAP)

Degrees within reach of Air Guard members; helps in military, civilian career

By Chief Master Sgt. Vicky Cerino
Staff Writer

They're among the honored guests during Honors Day every year. You too could be one of those earning a Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) degree.

Maybe you're one or two college classes away from earning the CCAF degree or perhaps you already have a bachelor's or master's degree and might be eligible for the additional degree. Why not check into it?

Many people are. Since 2005 the number of Nebraskans earning their degrees has doubled. Students graduate in April and October and are recognized during Honors Day.

In 2005, 13 earned CCAF degrees, in 2006, 16 earned the degree and in 2007, 31 will receive their degrees. The goal for 2008 is 40, said Senior Master Sgt. Travis Haberman, non-commissioned officer-in-charge of training, 155th Mission Support Flight.

One of the benefits of the degree is an edge in a competitive job market.

"More and more, you have to have at least an associate's degree or even a bachelor's and master's degree to be competitive," said Master Sgt. Rowdy Newburn, noncommissioned officer in charge of base education and unit training manager, 155th Mission Support Flight. "Later, if you want to teach, a degree is a crucial stepping stone. It's a building block to your career progression."

The Air Force conceived the idea of earning credits from technical schools, military professional education, and public colleges and universities.

Multiple degrees from CCAF can be earned. Military members are enrolled in the CCAF program automatically upon completion of technical school, Newburn said.

The reason for the upswing is in-

creased awareness about the program and new tools that have made the system more user-friendly for degree candidates.

Progress towards a degree can be tracked on the Internet. Another feature degree candidates can access are the approved courses they can take at colleges or universities that apply to the degree.

The Air Force portal makes it possible to manage your CCAF account, track progress, order transcripts for members or to send to institutions, and get a copy of the CCAF diploma. Register for this service through the portal by following the Air Force Virtual Education Center link.

Another way to earn credits is through the College Level Examination Program (CLEP). Newburn said he's seen an increase in requests to "CLEP out." Nebraska Army National Guard Chief Warrant Officer 4 Robyn Huskey manages CLEP testing for the unit.

In order to earn a degree, candidates must have earned 64 credit hours: 24 in technical credits, 15 in general education (speech, writing, math, social science and foreign language, arts, etc.), and six in leadership management, usually earned through PME."

Newburn said he and his colleagues, like helping people get their degree and progress in their careers.

"I think it helps make better future leaders."

Newburn said. "I've met a lot of our members whose bosses have the degree. A lot of it comes from supervisors encouraging it — it's part of their responsibility to do everything they can to help their people succeed and this is something that helps people succeed."

If you have questions about the program, contact Newburn at Lyle. Newburn@nelinc.ang.af.mil or (402) 309-1457.

Nebraska National Guard prepares for new adjutant general

By Dave Heineman
Governor of Nebraska

Dear Fellow Nebraskans: After an extensive application and interview process, I recently had the privilege of introducing the head of the Nebraska National Guard to the citizens of our state. Col. Tim Kadavy will succeed Maj. Gen. Roger Lempke as adjutant general of the Nebraska National Guard.

A native Nebraskan, he is currently serving as operations officer for the Army National Guard Directorate, headquartered at the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Va.

Beginning next month, he will lead the more than 4,500 Air and Army Guard personnel making up the Nebraska National Guard. In addition to commanding our state's military forces, he also will work with emergency preparedness and disaster response personnel as director of the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

I selected Colonel Kadavy because of his outstanding leadership abilities and his vast experience with the National Guard organization, both here at home and at the national level. He is respected by his fellow Soldiers and brings a straightforward, common sense approach to his job. In addition to all of these things, I was looking for a leader who had combat zone experience, just as so many of our Guard personnel have been called to do in recent years.

Kadavy began his military career in 1982 when he enlisted in the Nebraska Army National Guard. He became a commissioned officer in the Guard after college, serving with the 1-167th Cavalry. The squadron is the state of Nebraska's largest combat arms group, with several units based in various parts of our state.

During the next 10 years, he held several leadership positions with the cavalry, ranging from a troop commander to managing operations and

personnel for the entire squadron. In 1994, he switched from part-time status to become an active duty guardsman with the 5th Army at Fort Sam Houston, Texas. He spent several years working with both the U.S. Army and National Guard Bureau before returning to Nebraska in 2001 to become commander of the 1-167th Cavalry Squadron, leading its peacekeeping mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Following the mobilization he completed a fellowship at the Army War College, working with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency, before returning to National Guard headquarters. Last April, he deployed to Camp Victory in Iraq to head up a division of reserve Soldiers, returning in the fall.

I know he is excited to be returning home to serve once again with the men and women of the Nebraska National Guard.

General Lempke has been a truly outstanding leader and advocate for Nebraska during his seven years as adjutant general and I know that Colonel Kadavy is committed to continuing to build a network of support service for our servicemen and women and their families that began under General Lempke.

In a time when more than 80 percent of Nebraska Guard personnel have served in combat, it's extremely valuable to have a leader who both understands the pressures of an overseas deployment and has experience dealing with the challenges it presents.

He has said that taking care of Soldiers and their families will be his top priority and I know that his 25 years of experience in state and national military matters will be an asset in helping build on the programs already in place.

I have confidence in his abilities to lead the Guard and I look forward to working with him.

(Editor's Note: the above was taken from Governor Heineman's Oct. 12 weekly address to the state.)

Final column borrows from first to demonstrate all that Guard has done

It seems like only yesterday that I missed my first Commander's Corner deadline.

Now, 36 columns later (by my count) I've missed my last consecutive one. Since the final one is always the most difficult to write I've borrowed from my first Commander's Corner published in February 2001.

"The one constant I am finding – highly motivated people eager to cooperate and serve." I'm embarrassed to take credit for everything you have accomplished over the past seven years. It wasn't a matter of me being the right leader at the right time; I simply became the adjutant general at a time when the most outstanding congregation of military members and state employees in Nebraska history happened to be "on their game."

"The Army Guard's people strength is on the ragged edge—if it declines, we may eventually be forced to give up missions; but with some hard work and improvements we can become a "shining star" among states." Man, did you ever prove me right on this one. Climbing from a low of nearly 3,000 to over 3,600 was an unbelievable feat.

Because of your efforts to recruit and retain we now have a Civil Support Team, a C-CMRF (don't ask), an engineering company, and are receiving a brigade command in the state.

Don't ever forget that you accomplished this during a period in which pundits predicted losses in national strength.

"We are going to work very hard to make the Nebraska National Guard more visible throughout the state. I recently heard Secretary of the Air Force F. Whitten Peters say: 'We have severed our ties with America,' meaning that people are not longer aware of the military's presence in society as was true years ago. Well, in Nebraska I in-

The Adjutant General
Major General

Roger P. Lempke



tend to re-tie the knots—throughout the state. We are going to do more to get "the uniform" in front of people through local speeches, TV spots, radio, community event participation, etc. You can help by suggesting ways to engage your community."

Days are now rare when the National Guard isn't highlighted by the media. You're everywhere. To make the news you have to do something news worthy. That you have done in spades.

"The Air Guard is on the verge of getting some new and exciting missions. A few things must fall in place – stay tuned."

Well, you did and they did. A new associate squadron began operations at Offutt AFB three years and just a few months ago it became a group with two squadrons under it.

"Get on, it is going to be an exciting ride – can I count on you?" The obvious answer to this rhetorical question was a resounding "yes." I couldn't more proud of where you stand today by every measure of success.

Shirlee and I have one final request if you will. We have a lot of personal capital invested in each of you. Your happiness and success are important to us. If you happen to see us around please take the time to walk up and introduce yourself (including first name).

We're pretty good with faces, but not always with names. We're also good and recalling little things about people upon seeing them again. More than likely we will remember some situation or interaction.

You have become and always will be part of our personal family.
Salute.

Prairie Soldier mentor retires, but work she did will remain

One of the many things that military service teaches you is that for every person you meet, there is a time when they will say goodbye and move on.

So it was this month for a valued member of the Prairie Soldier staff who retired after serving more than 30 years in uniform, more than 21 of which as a part of the Nebraska National Guard Public Affairs family.

While I've had many occasions to attend retirement ceremonies for fellow Soldiers and Airmen over the years – including quite a few for friends – the retirement of Chief Master Sgt. Victoria K. Cerino hit me harder than most.

I first met Vicky more than 17 years ago when I traveled to Lincoln after ending my time in the active Army as a military photojournalist. I had already joined the Guard as a member of a unit in Omaha, but I knew that my true interest was to continue serving as a journalist for the Guard while I attended Journalism College at the University of Nebraska.

Even though they didn't have a position for me within the 111th Public Affairs Detachment at that point (that would come about four months later) I couldn't help but be impressed by the work Vicky was doing when I met her during my interview with Lt. Col. Leonard Krenk, the then state public affairs officer.

Back at Fort Rucker, Ala., I'd worked as part of a full-time staff of six journal-

My Turn

Editor, Prairie Soldier

Kevin J. Hynes



ists to put out our weekly post newspaper.

Yet, even though the Prairie Soldier was only a bi-monthly publication, I was extremely impressed by the quality of the newspaper and more importantly the work that she was doing.

That Autumn I started work for the Prairie Soldier as a part-time, traditional Guard writer. I also started what would become a two-year internship under Vicky as I "Guard-Bummed" work whenever it was available. Often this meant traveling to different annual training sites to visit Soldiers and Airmen as they trained in the field.

It also meant spending hours working with Vicky, learning more about the art of being an editor and what it means to put out a newspaper for National Guard Soldiers, Airmen and their families.

Needless to say, I learned volumes during those two years, lessons that I still use today on a daily basis. And the newspaper you see here today still has Chief Cerino's fingerprints all over it.

In saying goodbye to Chief Cerino this month as a fellow Air Guardsman, it was

hard not to feel as though an important chapter in not only her life, but my life as well, was ending. And, while I felt complete happiness for her as she received the customary retirement awards, I could not help but also feel somewhat sad.

My mentor was leaving.

Chief Cerino, thank you so very, very much for all that you did for the Nebraska National Guard, my family and me during the past 17 years. You will definitely be missed.

Recently, I had the opportunity to spend slightly more than a week covering Nebraska Army and Air Guardsmen as they served in Kyrgyzstan. It was, without a doubt, one of the most interesting assignments I have ever had.

Back when I joined the military in 1986, much of the training we received was to help us prepare for a potential conflict with the Soviet Union. Fortunately for the entire world, that conflict never happened.

Yet, as I walked on a military post that had once served as the primary mountain training post for Soviet special forces, I couldn't help wondering, 'How the heck did I get here?' That feeling was reinforced more than once during this trip as I encountered many different aspects of what life must have been like in the former Soviet Union.

I know that others serving in

Kyrgyzstan felt the same way.

That's why it was such an extraordinary experience to see members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard working closely with people who – barely more than a decade ago – were our potential enemies.

Now, however, they were working as friends and comrades to guard a critical base in the Global War on Terror as well as creating a revolutionary approach to combating international drug smuggling.

You know, it's never been hard to be proud to be part of the Nebraska National Guard because of all that the members of this organization are doing to help make our state, nation and world a better place to live in.

I must say, though, that as proud as I was before I traveled to Kyrgyzstan, I'm even more proud today.

Nebraska National Guard men and women don't ask for a lot of notoriety or attention. Instead, their focus always seems to be on not only completing their missions, but more importantly on doing their missions professionally and as well as, if not better than, anyone else.

And that's what I saw in Kyrgyzstan, be it on Manas Air Base or in downtown Bishkek at the Drug Control Agency headquarters: people stepping up to do the best job they can do.

It's often been said, there's no place like Nebraska. I totally agree. But, in my book, there really is nobody else like a Nebraska Army and Air National Guardsman.

Pre-teens dominate Offutt triathlon relay

By Maj. Mark Hopson

170th Group

A team of three military dependants tested their athletic abilities on Sept. 29 at the Offutt Air Force Base Field House.

The three pre-teens took on all ages, entering the Annual Offutt Air Force Base Triathlon as a relay team. Emily Parks, 12, from Bellevue, was the team's swimmer for the 600 yard leg. Hannah Hopson, 12, from Millard, biked the 12-mile course. Finally, Justin Liedke, 9, from Papillion, was the team's four-mile runner.

It was a beautiful day as this youthful team, along with about 30 other participants, proved to themselves and to the rest of Offutt that they had the mettle to race the Offutt Triathlon.

Emily started the relay with a 600-yard swim. She is the daughter of Rob and Michelle Parks. Rob is an active duty Air Force major who works in the 338th Combat Training Squadron at Offutt as an instructor electronic warfare officer on RC-135S aircraft.

Emily is in 7th grade at Lewis and Clark Middle School in Bellevue. She swims competitively for Metro Omaha Swim Team and is one of the best all-around swimmers for her age in the state. She was named the 11 & 12-Year-Old Female Swimmer of the Year by Midwestern Swimming (the Nebraska state swimming governing body) after the 2007 summer season.

At the most recent state swim meet, the Midwestern Swimming Division 1 Championships in July, she was state champion in the 100-meter Butterfly, 200-meter Butterfly, 200-meter Backstroke, and 400-meter Individual Medley.

She placed second in the 800-meter Freestyle, 1,500-meter Freestyle and 100-meter Backstroke, and was runner-up in the 11-12 Girls Overall High Point (one point behind the winner).

Emily's talent and experience shined brightly during the Offutt race. Her time for the 600-yard swim was 7:08, the fastest swim of the day by over one minute. Emily jumped out of the water and tagged Hannah Hopson to begin the 12-mile bike leg with the team in first place. Hannah Hopson is the daughter



Emily Parks



Hannah Hopson



Justin Liedke

of Mark and Tanya Hopson. Mark is a major in the Nebraska Air National Guard and serves as a RC-135 instructor pilot with the 238th Combat Training Squadron at Offutt.

Hannah is in 7th grade at Millard North Middle School in Omaha and swam competitively for Millard Aquatic Club until she was 10 and has run for the Omaha Racers Track Club since she was 8.

She placed second in the 1,500-meter run at the Nebraska Junior Olympic State Track meet as a Bantam (10-and-under) runner, and has been on three second-place state track meet relay teams. She was the top runner on her 10 & Under Cross Country team that was the state and regional champion, and was even on a 2nd place state swimming relay as an 8-year-old.

She has raced in two triathlons as an individual, placing second in both, and is a veteran of the Offutt Triathlon, racing it as a relay with her dad when she was 9-years-old.

Hannah began the three-lap, 12 mile bike leg of the relay with a lead and a full head of steam.

Unfortunately, a wrong turn on the first lap of the course cost her team the

lead and several minutes. But, she finished the bike with two strong laps, finishing the 12-mile course (12-plus miles, for her) in 42:08.

Despite the detour, she kept her team within striking distance of the lead, but still 5-full minutes behind the first place team. As she finished the bike leg and tagged the team's relay anchor to begin the 4-mile run, Hannah was confident her teammate would win. "He's faster than you, dad," she said.

Justin Liedke is the son of Gregg and Laura Liedke. Gregg retired as a meteorologist from Air Force Weather Agency after a 30-year career. Laura is a Nebraska Air National Guard senior master sergeant with the 170th Operational Support Squadron at Offutt.

Justin is in 4th Grade at Rumsey Station Elementary School in Papillion. A member of the Cornhusker Flyers Track Club, Justin is the best 10-and-Under middle-distance runner in the state. He is the state record holder as a Bantam (10-and-under) in the Metric Mile - 1,500 meters - at 4:52.52. He was the state champion in the 10-and-under 800-meter and 1,500-meter runs this past summer, and was also third place at nationals in the 1,500-meter run.

The 4x400 m relay he anchored won state and placed fifth in the nation.

Justin is a three-time national champion and 11-time All American in Track and Field and Cross Country. In all, he has earned 23 state, regional and national titles since he began running at the age of four.

In other words, he is faster than Hannah's dad.

Justin started the run like he was shot out of a cannon and never slowed down. He steadily closed on the lead team during the four-mile out-and-back course and at the two-mile turnaround he was within a one-and-a-half minutes of first place.

He took the lead for good just past the three-mile marker and finished the four-mile course with a time of 24:35.

After the run Justin put it simply: "It was hard, but I just set my pace and stuck with it."

The athletes' combined time of 1:13:51 was good enough for the Offutt Triathlon Relay Team Championship and a \$25 BX Gift Card that went to each member of the winning relay team.

According to Hannah, "The best part of the race was winning the gift card. I am going to buy a Nintendo DS game."



On Guard: Spc. Robert Montag III and Sgt. Jared Riggert of the 1-167th Cavalry stand in front of the gates at Memorial Stadium before the start of the Sept. 1 Nevada game.

Husker football continues to honor Nebraska Guardsmen for efforts

By Capt. Kevin Hynes

Editor

For the second straight year, members of the Nebraska Army and Air National Guard have been working with the University of Nebraska Athletic Department to open each home football game on the right foot.

At each home game, two Nebraska service members are being selected to serve as "Gate Sentinels" and are responsible for opening the gates to the Cornhusker football team as it enters the field during the "Tunnel Walk" festivities.

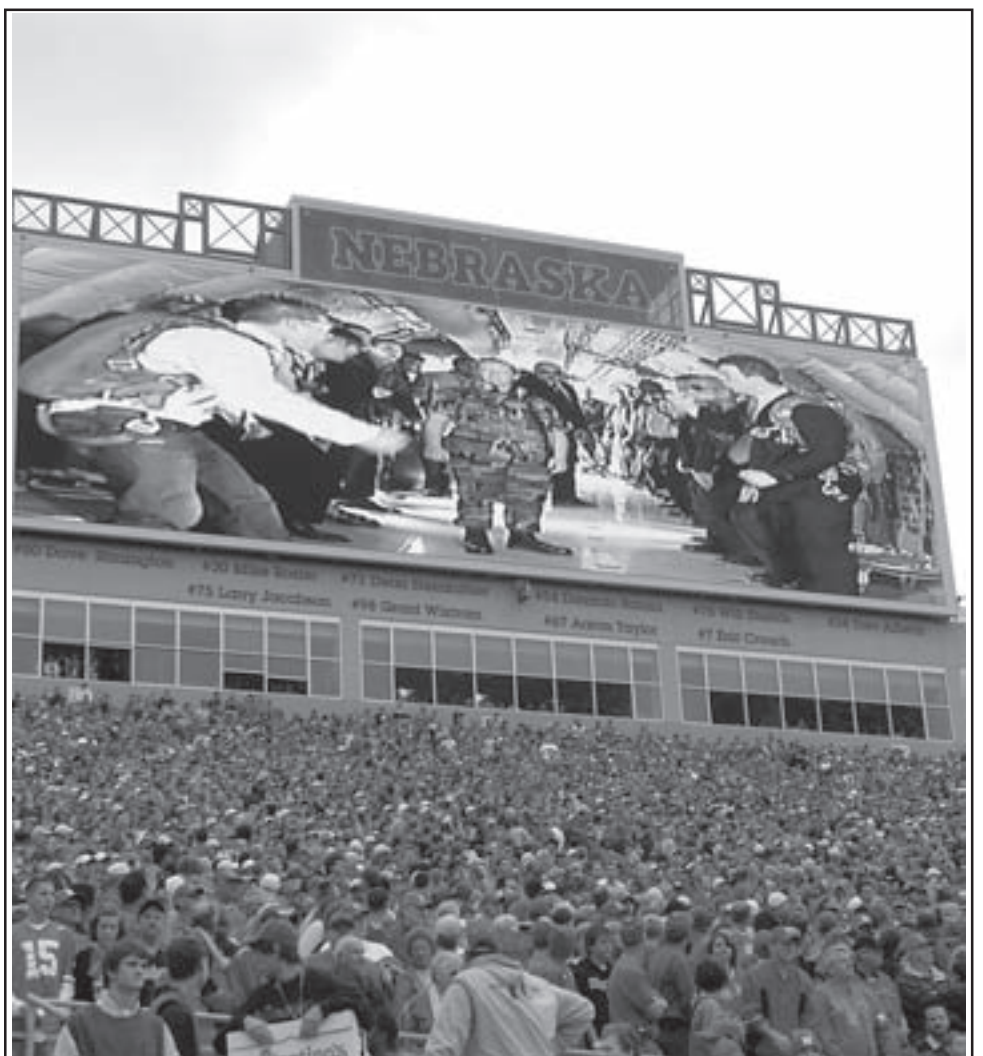
Along with serving as "Gate Sentinels," the first part of this year's Tunnel Walk also had an additional National Guard flair. This past August the staff of the Huskervision video staff and selected Nebraska players traveled to the Nebraska National

Guard air base where they were taped simulating a parachute jump out of a Nebraska Air Guard KC-135R Stratotankers.

Now, parachuting out of a Stratotanker cargo door might seem a little far-fetched, but through the magic of computer animation, the football players seem to jump out of the aircraft and then, parachute down toward a packed Memorial Stadium. The video then showed the players landing on the east side of the stadium, unharnessing their parachutes and then transforming into uniformed football players as they walk through the new Husker red waterfall.

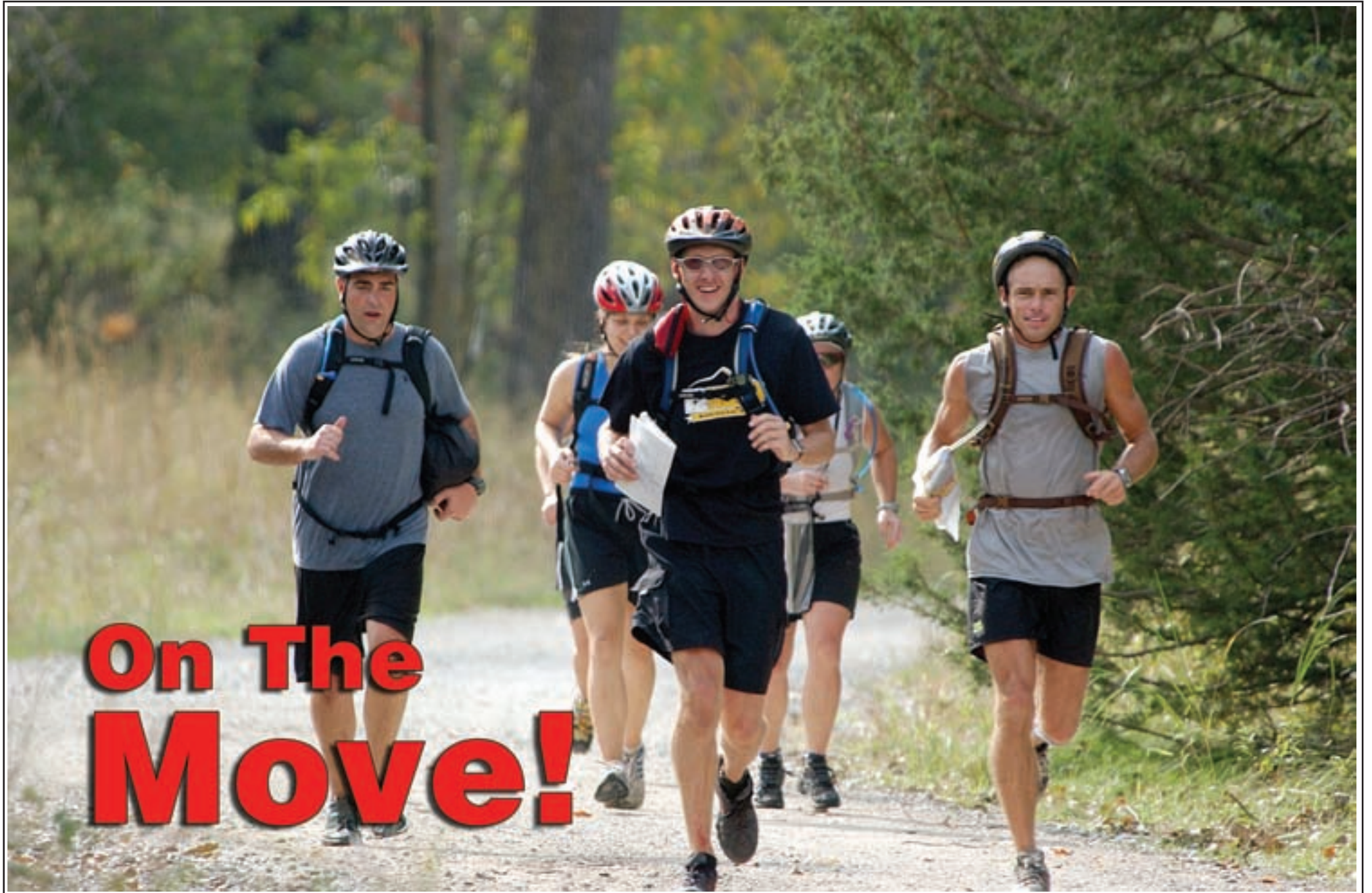
Featured in the video were Senior Master Sgt. Sarah Peterson of the Air Guard's Life Support Section as well as other Life Support, Maintenance and flight crew members.

The video remained part of the Tunnel Walk until the Oct. 20 Texas A&M game.



Photos by Capt. Kevin Hynes

Are You Ready For Some Football? Senior Master Sgt. Sarah Peterson attempts to rev up the Nebraska Football team and fans as part of this year's Tunnel Walk video that played before each home game until Oct. 20.



Photos by 1st Lt. Cole Kilpatrick

To The Boats: Team Nut Brothers (left to right Brian Kerl, Chris Nordin, Chris Graham of Omaha) sprint down a road back towards their canoes after finding all the checkpoints on the east training site at Camp Ashland while Team Adventure-a-holics follows behind in close pursuit.

Athletes take to woods, trails, river to compete in annual Warrior Challenge

By 1st Lt. Cole Kilpatrick
Staff Writer

On a warm sunny morning over 150 extreme sports athletes gathered to pave their way through an intimidating course involving mountain biking, running, kayaking and orienteering navigating trails that would take them through hills, water, trees and rocks.

Attracting more than 50 three-person teams, this year's event definitely lived up to its name as "Warrior Challenge Adventure Race," which was held Oct. 7 at Camp Ashland.

Directed by Jim Craig of the Nebraska Sports Council, the race was designed to determine who was the ultimate warrior.

As usual in adventure racing, teams knew nothing of the route until maps and instructions were distributed at the start of the race.

"Jim Craig, the race director, is a mad man for a course designer," said Sgt. 1st Class Matt Hansen, one of the coordinators of the race. "The long course was supposed to take eight hours, but it took 10 hours for the first and second place team to come in"

Only three Guard teams competed in the event this year and next year race coordinators are hoping to have more Guard teams compete.

"I encourage people to volunteer one year and be a race monitor to see what it is like, and maybe next year get involved," said Hansen. "The land navigation is where a Guard team might have the edge, but a lot of these guys are really

into it and are very competitive. If a Guard member enjoys doing biking, running, working with a team and land navigation, this is the sport they need to get into."

Winning the race with a tie were two of the three Guard teams, Team 209th RTI, and Team Flatwater with a finishing time of 10:16:20. The two teams consisted of Maj. Jeff Kilgore, Capt. Ted Hanger, Sgt. 1st Class Troy Armstrong, retired Staff Sgt. Matt Culver, Mark Heuer and Shawn Hansen.

Armstrong said the two teams finishing first together was planned.

"Part of our strategy was to keep the two teams together and essentially race as one six man team as this can give you various advantages," said Armstrong. "This can also be a challenge in the later stages due to mental and physical fatigue."

The competitors started at Camp Ashland moving down the Platte River valley as far south as the Platte River State Park then continuing their way north to the finish line back at Camp Ashland. The race covered approximately 65 miles after going to all 25 checkpoints. A penalty time was added to any missed checkpoints.

"A lot can go wrong in a race of that length, but I guess we had done enough to get the win," said Armstrong.

The race director was very pleased to be able to hold the event again at Ashland.

"First, the weather held off so it was perfect. Secondly, the



Taking A Toll: Team Van Dorn Mafia takes a break from running to catch their breath after finding a checkpoint. (Left to right Mike Rathe, Drew Ferguson.)

course was awesome. People wanted a tougher race and we gave them one," said Craig.

Craig said he was already working on next year's race and was considering moving it to earlier in the year to avoid some of the heavy Guard training months and other weather issues. Many race officials hope to have more Guard participation in next year's event, in the form of teams or volunteers.

Craig said he hopes to eventually see this race become similar to the Lincoln marathon in size and have it as the championship race in Lincoln. As a race of that magnitude would help draw more out of state teams as well as Guard participation.

"We all feel very blessed to have the God-given abilities to



Through The Meadow And Through The Woods: Team Tortoise and The Hares of Lincoln sprint into an open meadow at Camp Ashland's east training site after dropping off their canoe. (Left to right, Melissa Renn, Mike Renn and Erin Wooley.)



Voyagers: Team 2 Stompers and A New Team Mate begin their second leg on the North Platte River after completing all checkpoints on the east side training site at Camp Ashland. (Left to right Craig Andersen, Katie McEwen, George Russell.)

participate, compete, and contribute," said Armstrong.

"There are a lot of guys who, having served in Iraq and Afghanistan, have sacrificed so

much and their lives are changed forever and this causes you to place a much higher value on what's really important in your life."