

OPERATION WOUNDED WARRIORS





From Front Lines

Kentucky Airman directs Pakistan flood relief



Green Report

UK football coach, players visit 149th MEB at WHFRTC



Into The Blue

CRG first Guard unit to participate in national exercise

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- **19** 301st named top in National Guard



Wounded Warriors spend a week in the Alaskan wilderness to rest, relax and heal. Read more on page 13.





The Bluegrass Guard

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Please report any corrections to: The Bluegrass Guard 100 Minuteman Parkway Frankfort, KY 40601 or: gina.vaile@us.army.mil

Reaching new heights Photo by Spc. Michelle Waters, 133rd MPAD

Campers attending the 2010 Youth Development Week at Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center scale the Guard Rock Wall during an exercise June 24. The camp is held each summer for children and Family members of Kentucky Guard personnel.



Online Comments

Taken from Facebook and our Blog



Congratulations to all the Kentucky National Guard recruiters. You definitely have something to be proud of. Go Guard!!





Thanks for all the hard work you do to protect us!

— **Jerome Thompson** Facebook fan of Kentucky National Guard

Kentucky wins national contest





RESILIENCE





VOTE FOR KENTUCKY IN THE NATIONAL GUARD RESILIENCY VIDEO CONTEST

Congratulations to Ana Maldonado Coomer, the Kentucky National Guard Visual Information Department and Public Affairs Office for creating, marketing and winning the National Guard Bureau Resiliency Video Contest. To see the winning video, visit the Kentucky National Guard YouTube Channel.

Letters to the Editor Policy

The Bluegrass Guard values opinions

To comment, keep remarks under 150 words, include your name, rank and address and send them to: The Bluegrass Guard KG-133 MPAD 100 Minuteman Parkway Frankfort, KY 40601 or: kypao@ky.ngb.army.mil We reserve the right to edit letters for tone, length, clarity and factual accuracy.

Change of Address

Don't miss an issue

All change of address requests should be made by the unit clerk using RCAS for all current Army or Air National Guardsmen. The Bluegrass Guard is mailed out via alert roster addresses at the unit level.

Army Retiree address changes should be made through Staff Sgt. Debbie Devine at the Kentucky National Guard Personnel Services Branch. She can be reached at 502-607-1497 or deborah.devine@ ky.ngb.army.mil.

Air Retirees should request changes through retired Chief Master Sgt. James Turpin at jturpin@fewpb.net.







Wounded Warriors, a national treasure

By David W. Altom

Deputy Public Affairs Officer, david.altom@us.army.mil



It was during a drive through Alaska's Kenai Peninsula that Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Reed said something that impacted me profoundly. We were escorting six Kentucky Guard Wounded Warriors (whose story you can read in this very issue) and taking in some of the most magnificent landscapes I'd ever seen. I was talking about how great it was to hang out with the troops.

And that's when Reed said that they were "national treasures."

For some reason what he said – or maybe it was the way he said it, slow, deliberate and with typical NCO conviction – caught me off guard. I considered his words for a moment and said, "That's true. National treasures. I never thought of them like that before."

Reed smiled and I got the funny feeling that the answer had been in front of me all along.

Since my early childhood I'd held Veterans in high regard, my admiration becoming part of my DNA. Their example, both in deed and in word, ultimately led me to join the service and becoming a token member of their brotherhood. They've been my heroes, my mentors, my colleagues and I'm honored to say, my friends.

We are now approaching the ten year mark since 9/11. Our nation has changed dramatically since then, in some good ways and some not so good, perhaps. Change happens, but

one thing remains constant: the dedication and resolve of those who serve in uniform and put their lives on the line for those of us who cannot or will not do the same.

For so few to stand up and endure so much on the behalf of so many, that to me was a humbling thought as I sat in that van on that memorable day. How ironic that Reed used those words while we were in the heart of the United States' last great frontier, a national treasure of towering mountains, fantastic wildlife, endless forests and, as we say here in Kentucky, a true pioneering spirit among its people.

I encourage everyone reading this to take heart in that ideal. You may already. I've no doubt that many of you are way ahead of me on this. But for those of you who aren't, or perhaps just need a gentle reminder, think on this: we need to treasure our wounded Veterans and keep in mind what they have endured on our behalf. That doesn't mean pity them, nor does it mean treat them as if they're broken. They may be injured, they may need healing, but there is strength and wisdom in each and every one that I've met, enough to make me question my own potential.

Funny thing. Most of the Wounded Warriors I know don't consider themselves "heroes" in the traditional sense. They were just "lucky enough to survive." But they've got experience and insight that most of us overlook in our daily lives. Make them part of your life, whether it's part of your Family day, your unit's change of command or holiday celebration or just stopping by and saying "hey." You can learn a lot from these guys.

They are, after all, our national treasures.



Photos by Master Sgt. Phil Speck/ KyAN



Kentucky Airman instrumental in Pakistan flood relief efforts

By Tech Sgt. John Orrell National Guard Bureau Public Affairs



Col. Greg Nelson

CHAKLALA AIR BASE, Pakistan - After torrential rains fell over Pakistan in July, Air National Guard air crews provided relief supplies to areas affected by the flooding.

Kentucky National Guard Col. Greg Nelson, deputy director of mobility forces for humanitarian assistance Air Force Central Command, was instrumental in the relief efforts.

"We are working in concert with the Pakistani air force and the government of Pakistan to bring air relief in

here and then dispatch it throughout the nation where it is needed," Nelson said.

Working in a 10,000 square-foot warehouse, Nelson said supplies would fill it in one day, depending on how many aircraft arrived from supporting countries.

"In other words, this is a large airfield (in Islamabad) so larger aircraft can come in and bring shipments of medications or supplies," he said. "We will break it down into smaller loads on tactical airlift aircraft like the C-130 to go into the flood affected areas."

Capt. Robert Dodson, a C-130 Hercules pilot deployed from the Illinois Air National Guard's 182nd Airlift Wing in Peoria, Ill., was aircraft commander on the first mission into Pakistan.

"We had a quick response from the time we were notified to the time the pallets were on the airplane," he said. "The whole reason we are here is to help others when we can and the whole crew is happy to do it."

On Jul. 31, Dodson's crew delivered nearly 8,000 Halal meals to Pakistan. The meals are similar to the U.S. military's packaged ready-to-eat meals, and are prepared according to Islamic tradition.

Nelson said the U.S. and Pakistan air forces, along with several governmental and non-governmental agencies worked well together to provide the necessary relief to the devastated areas.



Photo by Lt. Col. Patrick Ryder/U.S. Air Force

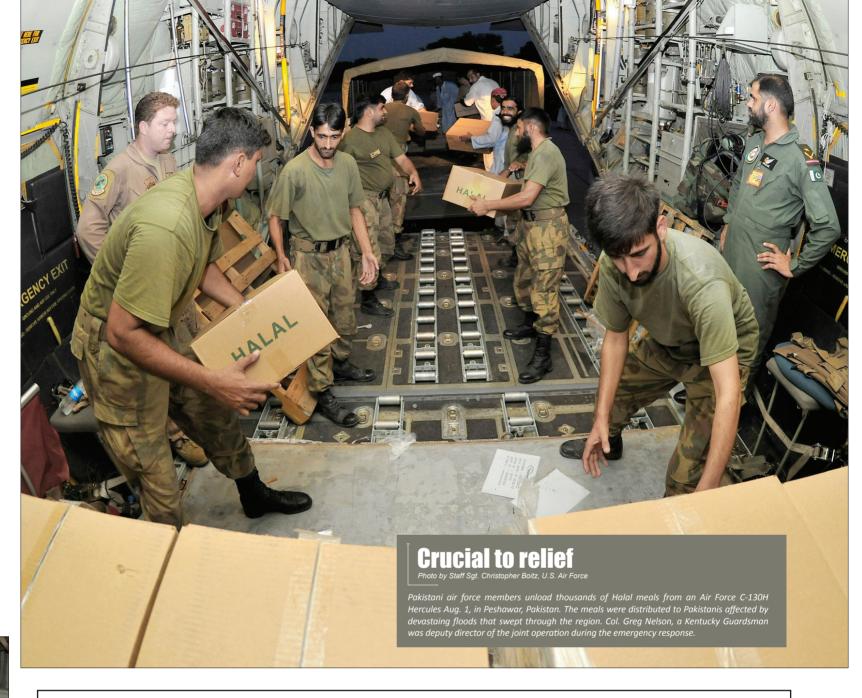
Airmen from the 621st Contingency Response Wing place equipment and prepare to establish operations with the Pakistan air force's central flood relief cell in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, Aug. 29.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Christopher Boitz/ U.S. Air Force

Sr. Airman Jose Cornejo unloads Halal meals Aug. 1, in Peshawar, Pakistan. Halal meals are similar to the U.S. military's packaged ready-to-eat meals, and are prepared according to Islamic traditions. Cornejo is a load master assigned to the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing at Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan.

5 http://www.kentuckyguard.com



Kelton awarded Medal for Valor

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Air



Kentucky Air Guard Master Sgt. Charlie Kelton, Kentucky State Police sergeant, was awarded the Governor's Medal of Valor May 5, in Louisville. The award is the highest honor awarded to officers in the line of duty for acts of heroism. Kelton received the honor for his actions in responding to a shooting incident in June 2008.

Photo Submitted



WHFRTC bleeds blue as UK coaches visit 149th MEB AT

Story and photos by Spc. Scott Raper 133rd MPAD, kypao@ng.army.mil

niversity of Kentucky Head Football Coach Joker Phillips and his staff paid a visit to Kentucky National Guardsmen at Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky., as part of UK's Operation Win campaign.

The coaches arrived at WHFRTC via Kentucky Guard Blackhawks and spent the day observing and participating in training lanes with Soldiers assigned to the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade Combat Team.

"It's very important for us to be here and show our appreciation to the troops for what they do," Phillips said.

The coach and his staff experienced first-hand a typical Annual Training Day for the 149th troops.

Accompanied by Brig. Gen. Joseph M. and Col. Scott Campbell, 149th commander, the coaches participated in a Virtual Convoy Operation Training simulation, observed Humvee Egress Assistant Training and walked through the Individual Maneuver Tactics course side-by-side with the training Soldiers, many in full battle-rattle.

"Its humbling to get out here and see how well coached they are, and they are indeed well coached in the basic fundamentals of protecting our country," he said.

The coaches signed autographs, posed for photos and talked with the 149th troops.

The training was pre-mobilization training for the brigade, which is set to deploy in 2011.



University of Kentucky Head Football Coach Joker Phillips gives a thumbs up as he prepares for take off in a Kentucky National Guard Blackhawk Aug. 3. Phillips and his staff visited the 149th Maneuver and Enhancement Brigade during annual training.



Staff Sgt. Matthew Meyer, 438th Military Police Company, throws a grenade during a demonstration for University of Kentucky Head Football Coach Joker Phillips and his staff Aug.3, at WHFRTC.

Strength in numbers



For the seventh consecutive year, the Kentucky National Guard's 2-75th Recruiting and Retention Battalion has achieved recruiting goals and kept the Kentucky Army National Guard at 100 percent strength. (photo by Staff Sgt. Aaron Hiler/KYARNG)

Busy summer as 149th prepares for MOB



Pvt. 1st Class Justin Waters, 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, secures the rear of a squad moving through a room clearing exercise Aug. 4.

Story and photos by Spc. Scott Raper 133rd MPAD, kypao@ng.army.mil

Kentucky National Guard Soldiers of the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade began the long road to possible deployment when the first of three scheduled Annual Training rotations kicked off in early August at Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky.

The rotations were designed to qualify Soldiers and reach the necessary required strength for possible mobilization.

"We are focused on getting the Soldier as an individual ready to deploy," said Col. Scott Campbell, MEB commander.

Soldiers battled excessive heat conditions during training, but were reminded of how appropriate it is in a real-world understanding of their possible deployment.

"Morale has been excellent," said Capt. Janee Wilson, Alpha Company commander, 149th BSB.

The 149th could also be in the process of making history for the Kentucky National Guard, as the possible deployment of nearly 1400 Citizen-Soldiers could be the largest deployment since World War II.



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Soldiers of the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade conduct a vehicle search during Entry Control Point training Aug. 2.



CRG first Guard unit invited to AD exercise

By Capt. Andi Hahn

149th MEB Public Affairs Officer, andrea.hahn@us.army.mil

MCGUIRE AIR FORCE BASE, N.J. -- The Kentucky Air National Guard's Contingency Response Group mobilized to McGuire Air Force Base July 26 to participate in joint exercise Eagle Flag.

The exercise simulated a deployment in support of humanitarian relief efforts with a mission of quickly opening a port opening for the movement of relief and supplies.

Joint Task Force-Port Opening consisted of Active Army, Air Force and Guard units. More than 140 people participated in the exercise, including 82 Kentucky Guardsmen from the 123rd Contingency Response Group.

It was the second joint exercise of Eagle Flag and the first in which National Guard troops were asked to participate.

The Kentucky Airmen were able to utilize experiences learned during Operation Unified Response, the Haitian earthquake relief mission, during the exercise.

"This provides a good challenge for us working with the Army," said Air Force Maj. Kevin Thornberry, JTF-PO logistical officer in charge.

"We are getting more and more engaged with the Army with these kinds of joint activities and helps us understand their capabilities and they understand ours."

Army Capt. Matt Zayd, operations officer in charge said that everybody had to realize on both sides, both Army and Air, active and reserve components, that there were challenges to overcome initially, but then established a good flow of operations.

"Once you overcome the difference in lingo and terminology, the basics are the same," Zayd said.

"Understanding each other and working together continually allows for the mission to be successful," he said.





Photo by Capt. Andi Hahn/KYARNG

Staff Sgt. Brian Leach, 123rd Contingency Response Group, waits alongside his forklift for an Air Force aircraft to land at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehust, N.J., during exercise Eagle Flag July 27. After offloading the aircraft, Leach moved the pallets to transportation provided by the Army.





Photo by Master Sgt. Phil Speck/KyANG

Soldiers and Airmen move relief supplies during exercise Eagle Flag July 27, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.

Tech Sgt. Phillip Seif, 123rd CRG, assembles a communications antenna during exercise Eagle Flag at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J, July 27.



Community Support

Soldiers provide security, festival-goers give thanks

Photos and story by Sgt. Mark Owen

UPAHR, 438th Military Police Company, kypao@ng.army.mil

s alarm clocks screamed inside more than a dozen rooms at The Comfort Inn in Erlanger, Ky., Kentucky National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 438th Military Police filled the hallways with gear in hand and a mission of support on their minds.

"We have to step up," said Pvt. Casey Heald, 1st platoon. "Any challenge you face, keep a calm head and just really go about it objectively," he said.

"Don't forget why you're there. Our role is to support the local law enforcement."

The Murray, Ky.-based Guardsmen joined city, county and state police to oversee safety and security while the last summer celebration commenced Sept. 5.

Since 1977, Newport, Ky., has hosted Riverfest over Labor Day weekend. Although brimming with local bands and other entertainment, the highlight is the spectacular fireworks display at closing. An average of 500,000 people attend, with 2,500 boats filling the Ohio River.

Donna Schneider came from Lexington, Ky., to be a part of the festivities with her friend Beth.

"I like to watch the people, being down by the river, seeing the boats and just coming back home," she said.

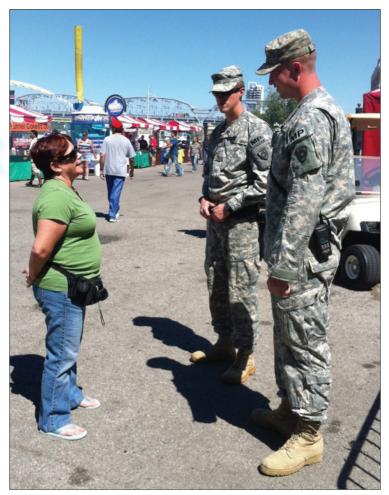
"The food and bands are good. It's just enjoyable."

Schneider said she also knows the importance of security and is proud to see the presence of the Kentucky National Guard for extra strength.

"It makes it a little better," she said. "The local guys, they do the best they can. The Guard has always been out here, and it is always nice to see them."

Schneider said she makes it a point to thank Soldiers, and at Riverfest, Pvt. Heald is one of those Soldiers she thanked for his service.

"It's uplifting to get that even after a hard day," he said. "Someone comes up, pats your back, shakes your hand and expresses their gratitude for you being there and just serving your country. It is really uplifting."



Lexington resident Donna Schneider thanks Pvt. Casey Herald and Pvt. 1st Class Colton Duncan for their service at the Newport Riverfest Sept. 5. Herald and Duncan, Soldiers assigned to the 438th Military Police Company, provided security for the event.



Spc. Junior Stark directs a festival goer to parking at the Newport Riverfest Sept. 5.

Chaplain: PREP for home readiness

By Staff. Sgt. Jason Ketterer

Visual Information Department, jason.a.ketterer@us.army.mil

hether it's your first deployment or your fifth, Kentucky Guard Families can all agree that sending off a loved one is difficult. But so are the numerous schools and training seminars our Soldiers

and Airmen are contractually committed to. Even monthly drill weekends can sometimes throw a wrench in plans with Family and friends.

Wouldn't it be nice to spend a quality weekend with your spouse away from the house and the kids? The Kentucky National Guard realizes that and even wants to pay for it.

"The training we provide is designed to help reduce stressors within relationships and to foster resiliency among our servicemembers. It's a positive Commanders program to help relationships at all levels and in all areas. This is training we're doing specifically for the Family," said Maj. Bill Draper, Kentucky National Guard chaplain.

The Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program (PREP) retreats for married couples offers Kentucky Guard husbands and wives the opportunity to build upon their relationship and create a stronger marriage while enjoying a free mini-vacation.

Master Sgt. Chris Tellis, 123rd Contingency Response Group, said it is good for a Soldier or Airmen to think his (or her) marriage is strong enough and that attending a Marriage Enrichment Conference Weekend isn't necessary.

"But don't pass up on the opportunity to have a mini-vacation and spend quality time with your wife," he said.

The weekends are open to all Kentucky Guard Soldiers and Airmen and their spouses, with time focused on positive communication skills to strengthen the marital bond, giving couples the tools and information they need for better communication and relationship building.

Col.Charlie Jones, Personnel Services Branch director, said the last enrichment weekend he attended was very beneficial.

"It was great to be with a mix of Guardsmen of different rank and age. Whether you've been married for 34 years or two, everyone has similar problems. I'd recommend it for any couple, regardless of how long they've been married," he said.

The Marriage Enrichment retreats are part of the larger Army Strong Bonds Program, which provides Soldiers and Airmen with tools to strengthen relationships. The conferences are lead by Kentucky Guard chaplains who have had extensive training



in marriage enrichment, and have been a staple of the Kentucky Guard Family Programs since 2005.

"The optempo of our current operations is taxing on our Families, especially the young servicemembers," said Draper.

"These retreats show our Soldiers and Airmen that we appreciate the job they did, and that we will not forget the sacrifices they made during deployments. It also shows their spouses that we do care about them, and the Family."

Draper said the curriculum is information-based, not therapy and non-invasive. Couples should expect a safe and non-threatening environment designed to help them strengthen their relationship with one another.

Lorie Tellis, wife of Chris, said the retreat weekend was a relaxing environment and that it showed her commitment as a Guard spouse is appreciated by the leadership.

"It was great to have time to do things like date night and to have down time to be able to enjoy with your spouse. It was well worth every bit of our time," she said.

"I wish we could go again."

The PREP is not just for married couples. Single Soldiers are also encouraged to attend to learn how to have positive, active relationships, and for Premarital Interpersonal Choices and Knowledge (PICK) advice.

For more information about PREP, or to register for upcoming weekends, contact Chaplain Bill Draper at 502-607-1729 or bill.draper@us.army.mil.



OPERATION WOUNDED WARRIO

Story and photos by David W.Altom Deputy State Public Affairs Officer, david.altom@us.army.mil

he scenario is familiar.

Getting up at oh-dark early, the gathering together of Soldiers and gear on a quiet airfield. The smell of aviation fuel and the call of "load up, gentlemen."

The hurry up and wait. The long flight. And finally, in country.

Six Kentucky Citizen-Soldiers, all Wounded Warriors, offload their gear from their ride, an Air National Guard C-17. They smile and laugh. They have plenty of reason to be happy. This time their destination is not the streets of Baghdad or some lonely outpost in Afghanistan.

This time it's the wilderness of Alaska. Their assignment: a few days of adventure, fun, and most importantly, comradeship.



Spc. Henry James gets a world class view of Alaskan glaciers thanks to the Kenai Peninsula Experimental Aircraft Association.

By the numbers

4,073

miles from Frankfort to Kenai, Alaska

7

days relaxation for six Wounded Warriors

500

approximate pounds of fish brought back

34

number of Kentucky Wounded Warriors since Sept. 11



Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Reed and Alaskan Park Ranger Johnny Evans discuss their favorite subject: Alaska. "I just want the guys to experience Alaska because they have given so much," Reed said.

A joint effort between the Kentucky National Guard and dozens of generous individuals, Operation Wounded Warrior Alaska has a single focus – take a small group of battered war Veterans who put their lives on the line for their fellow Soldiers and their nation, remove them from their daily grind and give them a chance to rejuvenate, recreate and reconnect.

And what better backdrop than the last great American frontier?

Kentucky Army National Guard Sgt. First Class Chuck Reed came up with the idea for the trip. A retired Kentucky State Trooper and a member of the Guard for 37 years, Reed is a frequent visitor to the 49th state and a part-time employee at the Salmon Catcher Lodge where the troops will stay during their visit.

"I thought, what a great way, if we could work out a trip for some of our Wounded Warriors," Reed says.

"I talked with Terry Johnson, the owner of the lodge, and he was extremely supportive. It took a little while but we worked things out."

Reed's expectations are simple. "I just want the guys to experience Alaska because they have paid so much and given so much. It is just one way to help reinvigorate their fighting spirit and to possibly pay back a little."

The Wounded Warriors include Master Sgt. Brett Hightower, Staff Sgt. Ricky Brooks, Staff Sgt. Ken Wininger, Sgt. Casey Cooper, Spc. Henry James and Spc. Jaremy Austin. Staff Sgt. Bart Greenwood, an Iraqi War Veteran, serves as their escort and support staff.

They are all met by Reed upon their arrival at Elmendorf Air Force Base, just outside the city of Anchorage, following a chain of flights courtesy of a Kentucky National Guard C-23 Sherpa and a Mississippi Air National Guard C-17.

The schedule begins with a visit to the city of Anchorage, then a leisurely drive to the Kenai Peninsula for several days of fishing and taking in the Alaskan countryside.

Alaskan hospitality is evident everywhere the warriors travel. Seventy-four year old Ron Fike welcomes the Kentuckians to his home, an aircraft hangar adjacent to a lonely gravel airstrip. Fike, the archetype Alaskan, smiles modestly as he shows off his experimental plane and workshop. The troops are fascinated as he tells of chasing a bear off his property just a few davs before.

"I'm a disabled Veteran, too, from Korea, so I can identify with them," says Fike. "I'm glad to see men like that come and visit."

Airplanes in Alaska are like pickup trucks in Kentucky. It seems that just about everybody has one. Johnny Evans, an Alaskan state park ranger and friend of Reed, flies as part of his ranger duties. Unlike Fike, who lives in an apartment in his hangar, Evans built a hangar on the front of his house. The Kentuckians feel privileged when they are told they have full run of the house during a dinner held in their honor.

"Alaskans love the Veterans," Evans says. "When I told evervone the Wounded Warriors were coming to visit, there was an outpouring of food and money to help them out on this trip. People appreciate what these guys have done for our country. I am honored. I respect these guys and love'm. I'd do this all the time if I could."

Despite being told "take it easy and have fun, guys," the troops pitch in wherever the need comes up. During the cookout at Evans' home Brooks and Wininger take over grilling duties, freeing the host to entertain his guests. When Evans jumps in his airplane - in t-shirt and flip-flops, no less - and takes off to run an errand, he showers gravel into his newly constructed hangar. Hightower, ever the NCO, puts down his Alaskan beer, picks up a broom and starts sweeping. A few minutes later and the hangar looks brand new and ready for inspection.

> "Now that's a Soldier," someone says. Everyone smiles and nods. Old habits die hard.

> As anyone who has "been there, done that" can attest, humor is a great stress reliever as well as part of the teambuilding process. Friendly jibes are passed between the warriors and the resulting comebacks invariably trigger a back blast of laughter among the team. On the water Hightower gets the reputation of having the worst luck catching fish until the very last minute. That is when he pulls in one of the largest

> catches of the day. "Way to go, master sergeant!" someone hollers. Hightower's grin reveals an impish pleasure. Eyes alight, he takes the kidding, refines it and tosses it back, igniting a secondary burst of laughter. He's just glad to be with the troops and they're glad he's with them.

"For me this trip meant the opportunity to spend time with Kentucky

Kentucky's Wounded Warriors display the rewards of a hard day's work at the Salmon Catcher Lodge in Kenai, Alaska, Aug. 23. Terry Johnson, owner of Salmon Catcher Lodge, donated accomodations for the Operation Wounded Warrior Alaska mission.





Spc. Jaremy Austin, Sgt. Casey Cooper and Staff Sgt. Ricky Brooks band together to bring in an Alaskan halibut during a fishing trip Aug. 28. "The best thing about this trip has been the camaraderie with the guys," Austin said. "I think it's because I'm with the Kentucky guys."

National Guard Soldiers," says Hightower. "It's the first time since my injury that I've been with a group of Guard guys who have been deployed, who have a whole lot in common, who have been injured. These are guys who have served our state and our nation honorably."

His smile is emphasized by a dimple on his cheek, a subtle reminder of his 2008 encounter with a grenade and small arms fire.

"The fellowship, the kinship, you kind of miss that," he says.

Austin's humor pushes the envelope, but the team understands. He lost an eye when a car bomb exploded on him in Iraq. He now has a Chevrolet insignia printed on the side of his glass replacement and he isn't shy about showing it to the guides or anyone else who is standing within range. A moment of disbelief is followed by guffaws and laughter, and an instant bond is formed.

"I'm here, but I ain't all there," Austin says with a boyish smile that belies his injuries.

Getting in and out of the boats is not easy for the 28 year old war Veteran, but he carries on like he still wears the uniform. Not once during the expedition does he complain. Like the others, he feels like he's won the lottery.

"This is way beyond what I expected," he says. "I love the

outdoors. I like fishing back home, but this is Alaska."

Chatter between catches gets the troops talking about their experiences. Austin talks about his year in Walter Reed. The others let him go on, and then someone gets a bite and the rhythm changes completely.

Austin smiles in the ensuing chaos. "I love this. The best thing about this has been the camaraderie with the guys. I think it's more because I'm with Kentucky guys."

The concept of comradeship may seem cliché in today's media saturated society, but here on the Kenai Peninsula it defines this team. At one point Austin fights to bring in a halibut, his injured arm giving out after an epic fight. Brooks and Cooper pitch in and all three have hands on the rod as the fish is drug into the net. Beaming with pride, they pose with their trophy, Austin giving the "W" sign – "Wounded Warrior."

The warriors' stories are like their injuries, similar, but different. Hit by a VBIED (vehicle born improvised explosive device) in 2005, Brooks found his wounds compounded by the death of his brother-in-law, Eric Lee Toth, who was killed in the blast. Out of the Guard now, Brooks currently serves as a Kentucky State Trooper. He looks at the trip as a way to reconnect with his military past and share his experiences with new friends.

"When I got the call to go to Alaska it caught me completely

off guard," he says. "This is a trip I always wanted to do. It's a dream come true. I've got a new network of friends, some good times and stories I'll tell when I get back home."

He pauses for a moment. "I'll never forget being wounded. And I'll never forget Alaska. This is something I'll remember the rest of my life."

Brooks' energy contrasts with that of Cooper, who was injured during the March 20, 2005 firefight at Salman Pak, Iraq. Cooper does not talk much about the war, focusing more on his family and friends and duties as a full-time Guardsman. Looking younger than his battlefield experience – he is "carded" at least once in a restaurant – his quiet reserve is



Master Sgt. Brett Hightower holds a minature version of the Alaskan moose stalking him and Staff Sgt. Bart Greenwood. Hightower's stuffed moose was a gift from his children that has accompanied him during deployments.



Korean War Veteran Ron Fike shows off his hangar and aircraft to the Kentucky Wounded Warriors.



Staff Sgt. Ken Wininger and Spc. Henry James fish the waters of the Kenai Peninsula Aug. 23.

broken during moments like the fight to bring in the halibut.

"I felt obviously honored and privileged," the military police NCO says of his invitation to go on the trip. "I felt a sense of 'why me'? Some of these guys continue to fight their battles on a daily basis. These are the ones who really deserve this."

Cooper served a second tour of duty in Iraq since his injuries and continues to help train Soldiers. He is also married to a Guard member, Staff Sgt. Emily Cooper. His professional and private lives intertwined, he is thoughtful about what trips like this mean to his fellow troops.

"Any kind of show of faith from the military and private sponsors, these things are a great morale boost for these guys. This shows that the support we get from the Kentucky National Guard is more than lip service. They really provide the kind of support these guys need."

Gratitude is the other defining characteristic of the warriors. The most commonly heard phrase – "I think I won the lottery!" – is repeated over and over again when the Kentuckians are invited to fly over some local glaciers. Members of the Kenai Peninsula Chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association break out a variety of bush planes, float planes and other small aircraft to take them on the tour of a lifetime. The Veterans fly for nearly two hours, winding between mountain tops and through glacial valleys unlike anything they have seen back home. Beaming faces and excited talk are plentiful as they egress from their rides.

During quiet moments waiting for aircraft, or around the campfire, stories are told and notes are compared. Anger and frustration with the system are met with compassion and brotherly support. James, who was in the gunner position when an IED hit his hummer in 2005, talks of the difficulties he has gone through following major surgeries on his face and spine.

Wininger can identify with his brother Soldier: a double stacked anti-tank landmine crushed his foot during his tour in Afghanistan. He listens, silent at first, then responds.

"You better stop now, brother. I'm about ready to go back and kick some ass."

Such support prevails throughout the

mission. There are no posers here, no pretenders, no whiners. Everyone has the proverbial "t-shirt" and mutual respect is the name of the game. Commiseration evolves into problem solving and long-term planning. The fishing trip turns into a series of mini-summits on the plight of Kentucky's Wounded Warriors.

"At home I'm not able to do a whole lot," says James. "This has been great to get outdoors to see the moose and nature, seeing the countryside. This has been great for me, really wonderful for me. I miss the guys, above the fishing. I miss the troops, the people I was with. I miss talking to them, how they're doing, how their families are doing. When you're hurt you turn to each other."

Hightower sees a lot of value in the discussion and wants to keep up the momentum for the wounded troops.

"We believe as a group we have good ideas that can help other wounded Soldiers and future wounded Soldiers," he says. "Every individual Soldier is different in their experience. Collectively there is a lot of information, a lot of pointers that we can provide to assist others in their process."

The trip is not without its challenges, but determination and teamwork can move mountains apparently. In addition to the Kentucky Army and Air National Guard staffers working out the trip details, the Mississippi Air Guard provides space on a C-17 transport to the 49th state and the Nebraska Air Guard gives up some seats on a KC-135 tanker for the return leg. Private donations come in from sources as diverse as members of Governor Beshear's office staff, the Kentucky State Police Professional Association, along with dozens of friends, family and members of the Kentucky Guard who are touched by the Soldiers' stories.

One of the biggest contributors is Terry Johnson, owner of the Salmon Catcher Lodge where the troops stay for most of their Alaskan visit. Johnson turned the entire lodge over to the team for an entire week. A retired pilot for UPS and former Louisville resident, he has a habit of contributing to worthy causes. He has given up rooms at his lodge for several charitable causes, the IPA Children's Hospital and the Dream Foundation to name a couple. Stricken by kidney disease himself, he identifies with the troops and their individual struggles with their health.

"I was touched by the sense of duty our troops showed following 911," Johnson says. "About eighty percent of the pilots I work with are in the military, so I have great respect for what they do. I told my family that if I wasn't a pilot I'd be a Soldier or a cop or a fireman."

Johnson says he would like to host more trips for Kentucky's Wounded Warriors and has invited them to come back next year.

"I came to realize that life isn't about what's in it for me. Giving something like this away is a little thing compared to what these guys have gone through. I'm in the fortunate position where I can do this for others. If I could I'd do it for every Soldier in the darned Army."

Reed echoes the desire for a repeat mission.

"We have about 34 Wounded Warriors in the Kentucky Guard," he says. "I'd like to get every one of those guys involved and get them up here. "I consider anybody who's been to Iraq or Afghanistan, who's been wounded or hurt, they're national treasures, because they know what it means, they know what dedication is, they know what service is.

"We need to listen to these guys, get their input on a lot of things we do in the Kentucky National Guard and the Department of Defense as a whole. They know what they're talking about when it comes to their situation. They love their country. They stepped up to the plate and it cost them."

The return flight on the refueling tanker is quiet and uneventful. The troops mentally prepare to see their families and reminisce about their adventure.

Wininger talks about the special joy he found in traveling with his team. "You could do all this by yourself, but it wouldn't be as much fun. We only met each other a few days ago, but we are probably one of the tightest crews you'll ever meet. In just a week we've become really close."

Austin, the trip's practical joker and commentator, is especially poignant about leaving his team mates.

"I'm having a hard time thinking about going back home," he says. "I'm starting to think I'm gonna get back in this again, and I'm gonna miss it even more.



Far from the realities of war and reminders of their injuries, six Kentucky Wounded Warriors were treated to a week of rest and relaxation in Kenai, Alaska. Proud of their service, the Warriors displayed their Veteran status with hats, sweatshirts and t-shirts.





301st Chemical Co. named Guard's best

By Capt. Richard T. Huber

301st Chemical Company Commander, kypao@ng.army.mil

The Kentucky National Guard's 301st Chemical Company was awarded the Maj. Gen. William L. Sibert Award, the highest distinction for chemical units in the U.S. Army, June 23, at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

The unit received a streamer and bronze plaque from Brig. Gen. Leslie C. Smith and Command Sgt. Maj.Ted Lopez during the Chemical Corps Regimental Review and Change of Command Ceremony.

"The 301st is a dedicated unit," said Lt. Col. Jeffrey Stevens, commander of the 103rd Chemical Battalion. "The Soldiers assigned to this company have proven here on the home front, and while mobilized in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, that they are professional and among the top in our career field.

"I am proud and honored to have the 301st under my command," he said, "and even more proud of this exceptional accomplishment.

The Maj. Gen. William L. Sibert Award is designed to recognize excellence within the U.S. Army Chemical Corps. It instills pride and reinforces the essential elements of mission



Photo submitted

Company commanders, including Kentucky National Guard Capt. Richard Huber (far right) accept the Maj. Gen. William L. Sibert Award June 23, at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

readiness, leadership, discipline and organizational excellence.

Nominated units are evaluated on four areas of readiness including individual Army Physical Fitness and Weapons Qualification scores; Collective Training Tasks completed against the unit's mission; maintenance and safety records and organizational administrative readiness over a period of 12 months.

16 graduate OCS program

Story and photos by Spc. Scott Raper 133rd MPAD, kypao@ng.army.mil

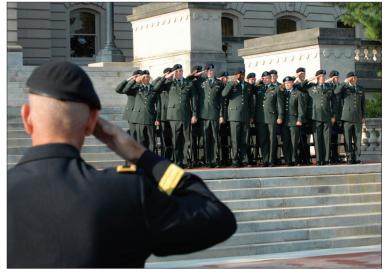
FRANKFORT, Ky. - The Kentucky National Guard commissioned 16 new lieutenants during a ceremony at the Capitol Aug. 28. Kentucky's Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini presided over the event.

The graduation was the culmination of a long and demanding journey that makes up Officer Candidate School. Some candidates began the process more than a year ago through the traditional program, while a couple took the accelerated route several weeks ago.

The day was rich in time-honored traditions – with candidates swearing in early at the gravesite of Kentucky's "first Guardsman," Daniel Boone, in Frankfort Cemetery. At the Capitol they received awards and commissioning certificates prior to taking the Oath of Office. Awards were presented to individuals who excelled in physical fitness, academics and leadership.

Each candidate received their new gold bar insignias from various Family members during the pinning ceremony. Tradition continued as the newly commissioned officers rendered their first salutes to an enlisted servicemember of their choice. Brothers, uncles, friends and recruiters were chosen to complete the pose and receive a silver dollar from the saluting officer as the tradition states.

Newly commissioned 2nd Lt. Andre Geertsema saw the day of celebration as preparation for his future.



Brig. Gen. Lonnie Culver and the 2010 OCS graduates salute during the National Anthem Aug. 28, at the steps of the State Capitol. Sixteen lieutenants and their Families celebrated the graduation weekend with numerous traditions.

"It gets you in the right frame of mind because it confirms the responsibility of the job," he said.

The day was just as important to Family members, according to Elizabeth Donato, wife of 2nd Lt. Louis Donato.

"My kids have been looking forward to this for a while now," she said. "They got all caught up in the OCS thing too.

"They got to pin him today and run around with the berets on. It has a community feel to it, the whole family feels like we have become part of the military. And that's really important," she said. $\sim\sim$



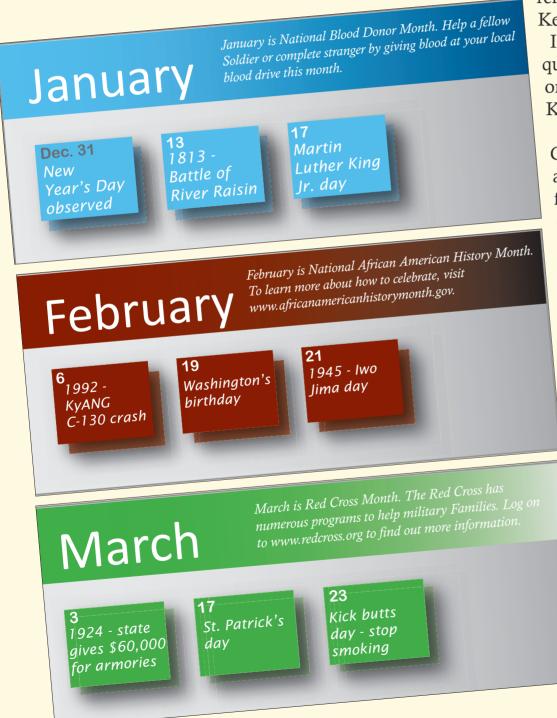
Sixteen Kentucky Guardsmen graduated from the state OCS program Aug. 28 on the steps of the Kentucky State Capitol.



Kentucky history, to dos for 2nd quarter

Staff Report

f you're looking for something to do with your Family during second quarter, check put these snapshots of upcoming events. Celebrate upcoming monthly observances, or



reflect on dates in Kentucky Guard history. If you're looking for a quick weekend getaway on a tank of gas, try a Kentucky State Park.

All Active, Reservists, Guardsmen, Retirees and Veterans are eligible for discounted rates on lodging with the Kentucky State Park USA Military Pass program from Nov. 1, 2010 to March 31, 2011.

> Proof of military service is required upon check-in.

"We appreciate the men and women who serve or who have served in uniform ad want to let them know how appreciative we are," said Gov. Steve Beshear. "Our state parks offer great fun for families looking for a break and outdoor adventure."~~

Ethiopians visit Air Base

By Spc. Michelle Waters 133rd MPAD, michelle.waters@us.army.mil

Three Ethiopian air force colonels, sponsored by the United States African Command, visited the Kentucky Air National Guard Base Sept. 23, to exchange ideas and gain more knowledge.

"We are here to observe the U.S. Air Force flight operations," said Col. Tiqneh Hableqiorqis Teklemariam, a C-130 instructor pilot.

AFRICOM, a command station responsible for maintaining U.S. military operations within Africa, was developed to assist in building military cooperation between the U.S. and African nations.

The three officers visited the Kentucky Air Guard Base to observe the training and maintenance procedures of the 123rd Maintenance Squadron.

The Ethiopian Air Force has two C-130's and two O-100 aircrafts that they use to support peacekeeping operations in Africa.

"By supporting them in these endeavors, it helps take the optempo off the U.S. Air Force assets because of their internal capability to do it," said Lt. Col. Christopher Fournio, AFRI-COM security officer.



Photo by Spc. Michell Waters/KYARNG

Tech sergeants Greg Norberg and Michael Embry explain the removal, installation and repair practices of a C-130 fuel system to members of the Ethiopian air forcce.

The goal is for the Ethiopians to take the observations and practices to Ethiopia and maintain their own aircraft.

"It's great to have them here. We can really learn a lot from each other, said Maj. James Bishop, 123rd Maintenance Squadron commander.

"We are all one Family with a common goal."

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Thumbs up Photo by Staff Sgt. Jason Ketterer, KyANG PAO

WARNING-DO NOT &

Ecuadorian search and rescue diver Ronald Pluas gives a thumbs up to Master Sgt. Mario Romero of the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron during a State Partnership Exercise at Dale Hallow Lake, Ky., Sept. 17.

State Partnership dives deep

STS hosts underwater search and rescue training for Ecuadorians

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Jason Ketterer

Visual Information Department, jason.a.ketterer@us.army.mil

Kentucky Air National Guardsmen hosted an underwater search and rescue exchange with Ecuadorian military members and National Police at Dale Hollow Lake Sept. 17.

The event was part of the State Partnership Program – a cooperative that allows Bluegrass Guardsmen to interface and learn from their Ecuadorian counterparts.

"The State Partnership Program is widespread across the Guard because of the continuity and longevity of relationships our Guardsmen can provide," said Air Force Maj. Matt Groves, Kentucky's SPP director.

"Kentucky formed our partnership with Ecuador in 1998. We were one of the first states to go in the [United States Southern Command area of operations] and we have had a mutually beneficial relationship with Ecuador for over a decade," Groves said.

Representing the Commonwealth in the exchange and hosting of the event were pararescuemen from Kentucky's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron. They operated alongside and exchanged information with narcotics police, port inspectors and marines from Ecuador.

Together, they dove at the lake, practiced with underwater radios and discussed techniques for performing search sweeps while submerged using a search grid.

"I believe this is going to make a tremendous difference for me when I return," said an Ecuadorian narcotics police officer, who will use the training for duties that require him to do counter drug inspections on the hulls of naval vessels and search and rescue missions.

"There is a great benefit for me to learn how [Kentucky Airmen] operate. Truly, this is a tremendous opportunity for all of us to grow and share."

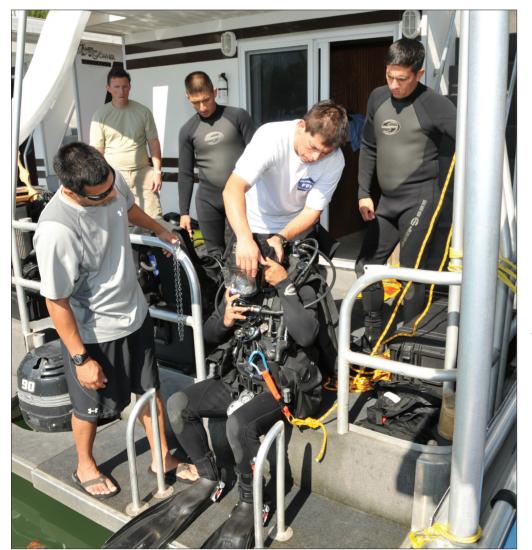
While the latest installment of the program focused on search and rescue, the Commonwealth and Ecuadorians have worked together on other exchanges such as aircraft maintenance, officer training, counter drug programs and munitions disposal, storage and transportation.

Even though the dive subject matter expert exchange was led by the 123rd STS, officials said the Airmen benefit extensively from the exchange of ideas and the opportunity to travel south and learn from the Ecuadorians.

"Ecuador is very geographically diverse," said Groves. "Their country has 20,000-foot mountains, the Amazon jungle, the Galapagos Islands and the Coastal Range. It offers a lot of benefit to our personnel to be able to go down there and operate in those diverse regions.

"Search and rescue will definitely be a continuing theme in our partnership with Ecuador and it's an area where we can develop a great relationship."

Members of the Ecuadorian military and pararescuemen from the 123rd STS prepare to conduct a dive while tethered to a rope at Dale Hallow Lake, Albany, Ky., Sept. 17.



The Bluegrass Guard \cdot 1st Quarter FY11 24

Firefighting 101

Kentucky Guard instrumental in stopping spread of fire at Fort Knox

By Capt. Stephen Martin

Around Kentu

Public Affairs Officer, stephen.d.martin1@us.army.mil



Kentucky Army National Guard aviators and equipment assisted Fort Knox officials Oct. 22-24 with fighting the spread of fires at the training areas on post.

Tracer rounds likely sparked the fires sometime on Oct. 19, burning more than 10,000 acres.

Two Kentucky Army National Guard UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters and crews from the Frankfort-based Army Aviation Support Facility assisted with more than 200 water drops on the affected areas to contain the fires that threatened to spread. Ryan Brus, Fort Knox

spokesperson said the Kentucky National Guard's assistance was instrumental in putting out the fires.

"I witnessed first-hand how effective the pilots and crew chiefs were with their accurate bucket drops," he said.

"You could tell these crews were experienced, time after time dropping the buckets on the firelines," he said. "It was a very effective method to contain the fires and knock out the smoldering brush."

Some of the Kentucky air crews recently returned from a year-long deployment to Kosovo where the aviators supported NATO's mission to build peace and stability in the area.

The unit conducted troop transport, slingloads and waterbucket operations during the deployment.

Staff Sgt. Matt Singer, Bravo Co. 2nd Battalion 147th Aviation, said the Bravo company crews worked well with Fort Knox firefighters on the ground, making the bucket drops easier.

"They directed us to where we needed to go in order to keep the fire contained," he said. "It's challenging to use the waterbuckets and worthwhile to help protect the environment."

"I love the firefighting mission," he said.



Unbridled protection at international event *Fires Brigade Soldiers volunteer in high numbers to support WEG*

Story and photos by Spc. Scott Raper 133rd MPAD, kypao@ng.army.mil

ore than 80 Kentucky National Guard Soldiers assisted with the security at the World Equestrian Games held at the Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, Sept. 27 through Oct. 11.

Their mission: ensure each day of the 16-day event was safe and enjoyable for the visitors and competitors in attendance. Approximately 500,000 guests visited the horse park throughout the WEG, many were international guests.

"It is a once in a lifetime event," said Staff Sgt. Joseph Young of the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery Brigade.

"This was a great opportunity for the Guard to interact with people from other countries and learn a little about other cultures," he said.

According to Lt. Col. Tim Fanter, 2/138th administration officer, more than 300 Guardsmen volunteered for duty during the Games. Fanter said the number of volunteers reflects



Staff Sgt. Joseph Young, 138th Field Artillery Brigade, mans a checkpoint during the WEG in Lexington, Ky., Oct. 6.

greatly upon the Soldiers of the 2/138th and the Kentucky National Guard, once again proving that Kentucky Guardsmen are always ready and always there for the people of the Commonwealth.

"Soldiers understood their job. It was made painfully clear that they were not only representing the brigade, the Kentucky National Guard and their state, but they are representing the nation," he said.

The Soldiers attended training prior to the opening day. Each Soldier qualified with a 9 mm pistol, the standard sidearm of security personnel. They received instruction on their roles as security personnel, media training and cultural awareness training.

"The preparation took six to eight months of planning and the result was a seamless operation with minimal impact to both the visitors and competitors," Fanter said.

In addition to the 2/138th Soldiers, the Kentucky National Guard Joint Incident Site Communications Capability provided communications support between all participating agencies.





Feelin' the burn

By Sgt. Paul Evans

103rd BSB UPAHR, kypao@ng.army.mil

Soldiers from the 103rd Brigade Support Battalion prepared themselves for a real tear jerker in the early morning July 21, at the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center.

Soldiers prepared their uniforms and donned their Army issued gas masks, then entered the gas chamber for a required chemical environment training event in which each Guardsman was exposed to CS gas.

Prior to entering, the Soldiers were instructed on how to remove and reseal



their masks in a chemical environment. Those who failed got burned—literally.

The exercise was part of the required Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills training during Headquarters Company, Alpha and Bravo Companies annual training.

- Spc. Andrew Matlock, HHC 103rd BSB, drips with water following a round in the gas chamber during a chemical training exercise July 21. Matlock rinsed his eyes and pores after being exposed to CS gas.
- Sgt. Timothy Collins, HHC 103rd BSB, dons his mask before entering the gas chamber.

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Public Affairs Office kypao@ng.army.mil

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Aviation fights fires at Knox