

The Bluegrass Guard

Vol. 19, Issue 1 Nov. 2015

Serving the men and women of Kentucky's Army and Air National Guard



A DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

AROUND TH



JFHQ- Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, Kentucky's adjutant general passes the non-commissioned officer's sword to Command Sgt. Maj. David Munden during an assumption of responsibility ceremony in Frankfort, Ky., Aug. 7, 2015.



63rd TAB - Sgt. 1st Class. Paul Brooks, Sgt. Michael Rhynes and Pvt. Tamie Acklin with A. Co., 1204th Aviation Support Battalion, connect a water blivet to a UH-60 Black Hawk during sling load operations for the unit's annual training Aug. 5, 2015.



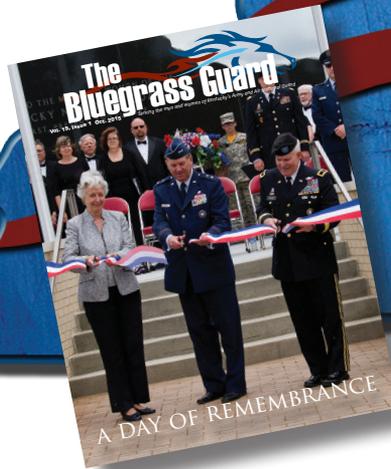
75th TC - Spc. Robert Satterfield with Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry exits a landing zone during an air assault exercise at Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in Butlerville, Ind., July 26, 2015.



138th FiB - A M142 High Mobility Rocket Launcher (HIMARS) from the 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery fires during training at Camp Atterbury, Ind., July 21, 2015. The launch was the first live fire exercise conducted at Camp Atterbury.



238th RTI - In the early morning hours on July 18, 2015, the Warrant Officer Candidates of Class 15-001 were required to complete a 6.2 mile ruck march in less than 106 minutes.



On the Cover:

Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, Brig. Gen. Ber...
Lt. Gov. Crit Luallen officially open the new
Memorial for the public. (U.S. Army National
Scott Raymond)



Year of the Woman Veteran - Kentucky Gov. Steve Beshear has named 2015 the Year of the Woman Veteran in Kentucky. Look for this tag on stories inside this edition that highlight and honor some of our own Kentucky Guard women for their service.

THE GUARD

AND IN OUR PAGES



The Bluegrass Guard

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123rd AW - Master Sgt. Benjamin (right), a combat controller with the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, is awarded the Bronze Star Medal during a ceremony at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., June 6, 2015.



149th MEB - Sgt. 1st Class Jacque Hayes, an instructor from the 198th Military Police Battalion, demonstrates the proper use of oleoresin capsicum spray as part of the law enforcement certification in July.

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Guard members and their Families are encouraged to submit articles meant to inform, educate or entertain Bluegrass Guard readers.

Articles should be submitted in Word format, 10-point arial font and include the writer's name, unit and contact information. Photos should be in .JPEG format with captions submitted via Word document, 10-point Arial font. Send submissions, photos and correspondence to kypao@ng.army.mil.

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Benjamin Adams and Kentucky National Guard photo by Staff Sgt.

IN THIS EDITION...

- 6** Air Wing assets deploy for sixth overseas mission
- 12** Guarding the Derby events
- 14** Biathlon team excels

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Photo by Spc. Jeriel Clark, Kentucky Army National Guard

Staff Sgt. Steve Musgrave helps a truck driver along I-24 in McCracken County. Musgrave is one of the soldiers from the Kentucky National Guard's Co. A, 149th Brigade Support Battalion assisting motorists stranded during Winter Storm Thor.

WINTER STORM RELIEF

Story by Story by David Altom
Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs

In arguably the worst winter since 2009, Kentucky National Guard troops played a crucial role in protecting the health, safety and welfare of their fellow citizens. In the wake of heavy snows that began on March 5, hundreds of accidents and impassable conditions stranded an estimated 600 vehicles along I-24 and I-65 in Central Kentucky. More than 150 Kentucky Guard soldiers were called out over a two day period to support relief efforts, clearing traffic and rendering aid to stranded motorists.

"We were given the mission of getting traffic going," said Sgt. 1st Class Sherman McCoy with the 223rd Military Police Company. "We helped a few motorists who were trying to get off the expressway and got stuck, digging them out and getting them off the road. We also helped numerous tractor trailers that were stuck and we got them on their way."

■ **More** . Read full story at KentuckyGuard.com

FINAL FORMATION

Story and photo by Capt. Gus LaFontaine
63rd Theater Aviation Brigade

The Kentucky Army National Guard hosted the state's first Final Formation Program at the Boone National Guard Center in June. The program is designed to assist out-going Soldiers of the KYARNG as they complete their enlistment or retire.

Col. Michael Abell, personnel director, said the Final Formation Program will help KYARNG Soldiers who are retiring or who have reached their expiration term of service.

"Soldiers who are ETSing don't know for sure what their future is going to be," said Abell. "They know they're coming to the end of one chapter in their life and they don't know what the next chapter will be. Our goal is to put them in that new chapter of their life more informed and to also leave the Guard with a much better feeling about their service."

Representatives from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, the Transition Assistance Program, and personnel services of Joint Force Headquarters were at Boone Center to help Soldiers complete the Final Formation Program. Soldiers completed out-processing tasks and learned about benefits that would expire upon their separation as well as new benefits available to them.

"We want to make sure they're 100 percent squared away

and if they do it, if they go ahead and ETS, it's eyes wide open," said Abell. They know how to get back if they regretted it, and they know what they need from us to go into any other career field."



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
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We reserve the right to edit letters for tone, length, clarity and factual accuracy.

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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.a.devine4.mil@mail.mil
Air Retirees should request changes through retired Chief Master Sgt. James Turpin at jturpin@fewpb.net.

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ETCHED IN STONE



Brig. Gen. Charles Jones traces the etching of his son's name on the Kentucky National Guard Memorial in Frankfort, Ky., May 15, 2015. The monument honors the memory of more than 230 Kentucky Guardsmen who have lost their lives on duty since 1912, including Jones' son, Sgt. 1st Class Charles Jason Jones who died in Iraq in 2006.

Memorial opens at Boone Center

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond
Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs Office

Flags were raised, the ribbon was cut, names were read and the tears fell. Kentucky now has a permanent shrine to fallen Guardsmen.

Lt. Gov. Crit Luallen and Adjutant General Edward W. Tonini joined hundreds of current and former Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen, friends and family members in a dedication ceremony for the Kentucky National Guard Memorial on Memorial Day, May 25 at Boone National Guard Center in Frankfort, Kentucky.

"With a beautiful stone map of Kentucky and that incredible statue of Daniel Boone standing guard ... there's nothing quite like it in our city," said Lt. Gov. Luallen. "I don't think there's anything quite like it anywhere in the state of

Kentucky. It is a fitting tribute to your fallen loved ones, and serve as a reminder to all of us that freedom isn't free."

Nearly 10 years in the making, the memorial honors more than 230 Guardsmen who have given their lives in the line of duty since 1912, in defense of the nation overseas and here at home.

One of those is Lynn Romans' son, Sgt. Darrin Potter who was killed in Iraq in 2003. Romans is happy the memorial is finished and so close to the road for people to see.

"Recognizing everyone on that wall will ensure that they are never forgotten," she said. "This recognizes the real heroes among us and we all should take a moment and relish our freedoms we have because of them."

■ **More**, Read full story and see more photos at KentuckyGuard.com

Air Guard deploys third rotation

Story by Maj. Dale Greer

123 Airlift Wing Public Affairs



Maj. Johnny Cantu, a C-130 pilot in the 123rd Airlift Wing, attends a briefing at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., April 24, 2015, prior to his deployment to an undisclosed air base in the Persian Gulf region.

The third rotation of more than 40 Kentucky Air National Guardsmen departed here today for deployment to an undisclosed

air base in the Persian Gulf, where they will fly airlift missions in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

Freedom's Sentinel is the follow-on mission to Operation Enduring Freedom. It focuses on training, advising and assisting Afghan security forces; and

on counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan.

Kentucky's adjutant general, Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, thanked the deploying Airmen for their continued commitment to military operations all over the world.

"The 123rd Airlift Wing has been engaged in the Global War on Terror from the beginning, and I know you will be a part of this fight until the very end," Tonini told the Airmen in a briefing just

before their departure. "When our nation, our Air Force and our Commonwealth needs the best, they call on you. I have the utmost trust and confidence in your abilities to conduct your mission while overseas, and I thank you for stepping up once again to answer our nation's call."

The director of the state Board of Elections, Matt Selph, also was on hand to wish the Airmen farewell as a representative of Alison Lundergan Grimes, Kentucky's secretary of state.

"As a former Army first sergeant in the reconnaissance field who spent time in Iraq and Afghanistan being transported on C-130s by men and women just like you, I'd like to relay on behalf of Secretary Grimes how thankful we are for the jobs that you do and the sacrifices that your families make," Selph said. "I know I was thankful that men and women like you were able to get me and my troops deployed and redeployed safely."

The Airmen, who departed aboard a Kentucky Air National Guard C-130 Hercules aircraft, will replace earlier rotations of Kentucky Airmen that deployed in February. While overseas, the Airmen are expected to transport troops and cargo supporting

a range of coalition military operations in the United States Central Command Area of Responsibility, which includes Afghanistan, Northern Africa and the Persian Gulf. Deploying Airmen include aircrew members, aircraft maintenance personnel and support staff.

The mission is expected to conclude by early July.

The deployment marks the sixth time in the past 12 years that the Kentucky Air Guard has sent its aircraft, aircrews and maintenance personnel to support U.S. military operations in the U.S. Central Command AOR. The wing deployed aviation assets there in 2003, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2012, operating from multiple undisclosed locations and Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan.

The wing's non-aviation personnel also have been heavily engaged around the world since Sept. 11, 2001, logging thousands of deployments to dozens of overseas locations, including Iraq and Afghanistan. In October, more than 70 of the wing's Airmen deployed to Africa to support Operation United Assistance, the international effort to fight the worst Ebola outbreak in history. 🇺🇸



Photo by Master Sgt. Phil Speck, 123 Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Maj. Jenn Helton, a C-130 navigator in the 123rd Airlift Wing, kisses her husband at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky., April 24, 2015, prior to departing for a deployment to the Persian Gulf.

Fight meets Flight

Nine-year-old Dawson Barr stands on the Kentucky Air National Guard 123rd Airlift Wing's flight line before the annual Thunder Over Louisville Air Show, in Louisville, Ky., April 18, 2015. Dawson, who is fighting an inoperable brain tumor which has left him legally blind in both eyes, was all smiles as he viewed the aircraft.



Photo by 2nd Lt. James Killen, 123rd Airlift Wing

Story by 2nd Lt. James Killen
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Members of the Kentucky Air National Guard welcomed a 9-year-old boy with cancer to the base Saturday as aircraft from around the world prepared to perform in the Thunder Over Louisville air show.

Dawson Barr, accompanied by his sister, mother and father, toured the flight line with Chief Master Sgt. Joe Dawson, superintendent of the 123rd Operations Group here.

"Dawson had an absolute blast!" Chief Dawson said. "We visited every aircraft on the flight line, met and talked with several people along the way, and we also got to watch a C-17 Globemaster taxi out and take off." Dawson toured the Operations Building, ate lunch supplied by the 123rd Security Forces Squadron, and watched several aircraft take off while observing from the 165th Airlift Squadron Heritage Room, which offers one of the best views on base.

Dawson was diagnosed with cancer at just 6 months of age. Doctors were cautious about his life expectancy, primarily because of the number of tumors he has — seven on the brain and three on the spine — and their severity.

He has defied the odds, though, and according to his mother, Aimee Barr, "He's an amazing little kid with a magnetic personality; he's a fighter, too."

Dawson endured five years of chemotherapy, ending his treatments in February 2012. He currently has one inoperable tumor that severely impacts his vision, making him legally blind in both eyes. The chemotherapy and other treatments have left Dawson with a number of challenges, from hormone imbalances to osteoporosis.

Aimee says that doesn't stop him, though.

"He's a normal 9-year-old boy. He wants to play soccer, he wants to be a professional football player, and if that doesn't work, he's going to be a professional baseball player."

Dawson made an impact on several of the people he met at the Kentucky Air Guard, with many noting how positive and upbeat he was, and how he asked so many great questions. "I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and spending time with Dawson, his sister, Lauren, and their parents, Aimee and Shane Barr," Chief Dawson said. "That young man is a fighter in the true sense of the word, with the most positive attitude and the most uplifting spirit that you will ever see in a little boy."

Dawson has a message for those who may be struggling with challenges or illness. In a calm

and steady voice he said, "If you're going through something, just keep going. Eventually something good will happen, and it will be okay."



Photo by Maj. Dale Greer, 123 Airlift Wing

Two F-16 Fighting Falcons from the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds aerial demonstration team perform in the Thunder Over Louisville air show April 18, 2015, in Louisville, Ky.

From private to **Black Knight**

By Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond

Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs Office

A Kentucky Guardsman is taking the next step in his military career to the United States Military Academy. Pvt. Oliver Douthitt, an infantryman with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry accepted an appointment to West Point during a ceremony April 26, at Fort Knox's Brooks Field.

Surrounded by family and fellow infantrymen, Douthitt was presented an official certificate by retired Brig. Gen. Charles B. Skaggs.

"It means a lot to get the opportunity to go to West Point, not a whole lot of people get to do that," said Douthitt. "My unit has been very supportive the whole time and I really appreciate everything they have done so far."

The Paducah, Kentucky native is currently a geology major at the University of Kentucky, but decided to push re-start on his future and attend West Point. Enlisting in the Guard in 2014 for the education benefits, Douthitt gives credit to the Kentucky Guard for helping him lay the groundwork for his future.

"The Guard has given me the opportunity to go to school and get plenty of military training, so I was able to do two things at once to prepare me for what is ahead."

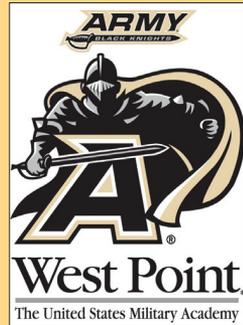


Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond, Kentucky National Guard PAO

"I've only been in 14 months, but I feel like my enlisted service will be very beneficial when I get up there."

Skaggs, a 1975 West Point graduate and Hopkinsville, Kentucky native said the history of the military academy is like the history of our country. He said more than 12,000 prospects apply each year and roughly 1,200 are accepted – a fact he knows Douthitt is proud to be a part of.

"Admission to West Point is equivalent to a college scholarship valued at approximately \$280,000," said Skaggs. "It give me great pleasure to present this appointment to the West Point class of 2019 to Private Douthitt."

Douthitt's parents beamed with excitement and joy for their son. Mother and father both were happy he enlisted in the Guard, which has helped prepare them as well.

"We're proud first that he's a Soldier, then we will be even more proud when he's an officer," said Oliver's father, Jeff Douthitt. "Joining the Guard has made it easy for us to know what to expect with a son in the military."

According to Douthitt's battalion commander, Lt. Col. Joseph Lear, it's been at least seven years since the last Kentucky Guardsman accepted an appointment to West Point. He remembers because it one of his Soldiers then too.

"It's really a testament to the mettle of the Soldier we have in the battalion and the Kentucky Guard attracts," said Lear. "The process shows the fortitude, his drive and his character that he will enhance as he grows as a leader."

Pvt. Oliver Douthitt with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry received an appointment to the United States Military Academy during a ceremony at Fort Knox, Ky., April 26, 2015.

Challenging Kentucky's future officers

Story and Photos by 2nd Lt. Michael Reinersman
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Future Army leaders from across the commonwealth joined forces to conduct a combined field training exercise at Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky., April 16-18, 2015.

Officer candidates from the Kentucky National Guard Officer Candidate School along with cadets from Murray State University and Western Kentucky University's Reserve Officer Training Corps spent three days in the field covering troop leading procedures while conducting platoon and squad level tactics.

This included scenarios such as movement to contact and platoon ambush and raids. The goal of the combined field training exercise is to assess and provide instruction to the officer candidates and ROTC cadets in leadership positions while conducting infantry tasks.

According to Western Kentucky University's Assistant Professor of Military Science, Capt. Lincoln Ward, there are many benefits to training and collaborating with the Kentucky Guard.

"This has been a good partnership," said Ward. "Working with new soldiers from different backgrounds provides a new challenge to the cadets." Adding that, "The Kentucky National Guard provides us with resources that we don't normally have at a ROTC program or the NCO support that can help access land and medics."

This marks the second year that ROTC programs from Western Kentucky and Murray State have participated in the field training exercises with the Kentucky OCS program. To enhance training this year, cadets and candidates used a military grade paintball system, to simulate live fire.

"This enhancement from last year's training will make it more realistic and environmentally friendly by using bio degradable paint balls," said Sgt. 1st Class Anthony Kennedy, operations noncommissioned officer for the 238th Regimental Training Institute. "It is a better alternative than having shell casing all over the training area."

Officer candidate Jennifer Steinmetz also echoed the mutual benefits of the training exercise.

"This would have been a hard training event to conduct since we don't have the numbers," said Steinmetz. "There are eight officer candidates, training with the cadets allowed the officer candidates to participate in full platoon and squad lanes,"

"Now, that we have those spots



Officer Candidate Benjamin Smith from Class 57-15 pulls security during the combined Officer Candidate School, Reserve Officer Training Corps with Western Kentucky University and Murray State University during a field training exercise at Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky., April 17, 2015.

filled, during phase three, it will not be such a shock when we conduct platoon and squad lanes."

Phase three is the last step in the OCS commissioning process. The final phase covers troop leading procedures, infantry squad tactics, and culminates with a field leadership exercise at Fort McClellan, Alabama.

Cadet Kyle Taylor with Western Kentucky University and a member of Kentucky's Bravo Company, 149th Infantry, said training on a college campus is just plain difficult.

"Since we don't have a lot space on campus, it's great to be in a tactical environment and run lanes," he said. "We are able to evaluate each other and work to get better."

According to both Kentucky OCS and ROTC leadership, the Spring FTX was another successful collaboration between two commissioning programs to develop future leaders in the Kentucky Guard, Army Reserve and active duty.



Capt. Colin Bair, Assistant Professor of Military Science at Murray State University conducts an after action review with cadets from Western Kentucky University and Kentucky Guard Officer Candidates during field training exercise at the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky., April 17, 2015.

Lewis named engineer WO of Year

Staff Report

Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs Office

Chief Warrant Officer Jacob Lewis with Kentucky's 149th Vertical Construction Company has been named the Outstanding Engineer Warrant Officer for 2014 for the Army National Guard. Lewis serves as the Construction Engineering Technician for the Cynthiana, Kentucky-based 149th.

"Being named the Outstanding Engineer Warrant Officer of the Year is an honor and words can't explain my feelings right now," said Lewis. "This means to me what I think every engineer regardless of enlisted or officer strive to accomplish at some point in their careers."

Enlisting in 2002 as a combat engineer, Lewis has spent his entire time in uniform in the Kentucky Guard. A decision based upon his family's history of service and a desire to serve.

"I believe it was my path to serve this great nation and to be part a team of individuals that all fight for the same cause. I wanted to be able to look back at my life and say I did what most only dream of in seeing the world and helping out with our freedoms, and I have and will continue to do just that."

It was in 2012 that Lewis decided to make the transition from NCO to warrant officer. With the confidence he had garnered as an enlisted Soldier, Lewis felt his abilities could take him further.

"During my time as an NCO I felt like I could offer so much more and wanted to take my expertise to the next level. I chose to become a technical expert so that I could not only lead Soldiers through diverse situations, but also train them into becoming experts in their fields."

After graduating warrant officer school, Lewis didn't skip a beat, keeping his focus on the mission at hand, his Soldiers and the quality work ethic known from warrant officers. He said

being a warrant officer has been the most rewarding experience of his career.

"I believe that it takes more than just being able to build a structure in order to be recommended for such a prestigious award. It takes time hard work and dedication. We as warrants hold the keys to our success, we have to be the ones that answer the hard questions to our supervisors and advise our chain of command in order to accomplish the mission and for them to have great faith and trust in us. I think it is something that anyone can achieve its not unreachable by any means but they have to want it as I did and put in the work. Sometimes we are faced with challenges and it's how you as an individual handle those challenges that make each of us different."

Kentucky's state command chief warrant officer, Chief Warrant Officer Dean Stoops believes Lewis was the first Kentucky warrant submitted for this award. And based upon Lewis' win, Stoops plans to submit more Kentucky warrant officers for national-level



Warrant Officer Jacob Lewis and members of the 149th Vertical Construction Company stand with a German engineer officer at Camp Spann, Afghanistan, 2012.



Chief Warrant Officer Jacob Lewis was named the Outstanding Engineer Warrant Officer for 2014. Lewis serves as the Construction Engineering Technician with the 149th Vertical Construction Company.

honors.

"CW2 Jacob Lewis is the embodiment of our State military motto of 'Unbridled Service', so it makes my job easy when we have such outstanding talent and exceptional leaders as him. I couldn't be more proud of Chief Lewis and our Warrant Officer community."

The Outstanding Engineer Warrant Officer awards are presented annually to the engineer warrant officer in each Army component, selected in recognition of their outstanding contributions to military engineering by demonstrating technical and leadership ability. Lewis is scheduled to receive the award in May at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo.

With new bragging rights in his field, Lewis is also taking the next step in his personal life as he and his fiancée are planning their wedding for later this year.

"Life is too good right now," he said. "I will just count my blessings each day and go out and try to be better than yesterday."



Up for the challenge

Meet the 63rd TAB's newest Soldier



Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Gina Vaile-Nelson
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

There's always that one. The young Soldier, fresh out of Advanced Individual Training (AIT), who shows up, loves the Army and smiles a lot.

For Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade, it's Spc. Madison Witzleb. She can run through the tactical operations center, affectionately known as the "TOC-mahal," and if you blink, you'd miss her. She's got a voice that will command even the hardest of hearing to attention if a distinguished visitor walks in. And a smile that her leaders and fellow Soldiers say can make any long day of training seem better.

"Spc. Witzleb is constantly looking for ways to better herself and is never satisfied with just doing what she has been asked to do," said Sgt. Maj. Kevin Wilkins, aviation operations chief for 63rd TAB. "She displays a willingness to learn as much as she can and she always has a smile on her face.

"My advice to our young Soldiers," Wilkins said is, "display the same enthusiasm and dedication that Spc. Witzleb does."

That passion for success is what makes Witzleb stand out in the crowd, and what landed her front and center before State Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Chumley April 23. The 18-year-old aviation operations specialist was the first 63rd TAB Soldier to receive a coin during the unit's annual training in support of Vibrant Response, which also happened to be her first coin ever.

"My face turned 50-shades of red," she said, "but I was able to smile because I was on an excitement rush. I'd never received a coin before that."

The challenge coins, a military tradition, are presented in recognition of special achievement. Witzleb was nominated by leadership to receive the coin for her professional work ethic and balanced attitude.

Witzleb said her first coin is something she will remember for a while, "the first words I said were: 'I finally have one my dad doesn't have!'"

Competition is in her blood. She was on her high school rifle team, plays golf, runs like the wind, and hopes that being in the Guard will help her compete with – and exceed her older brother's physical fitness abilities.

"One day I will be able to beat him," she said.

Besides the competition, her family is also good for inspiration, she said. Her father had a large impact on her decision to join the military, and her mother's advice has kept her going, especially this AT when she really didn't know what to expect.

"Coming into this (Vibrant Response) as my first exercise, it was nerve racking," she said. "I was afraid of not being able to succeed in my tasked position.

"My mother always taught me to hold my head up high, even in a time of doubt," she said. "I love a good challenge and this exercise holds up to its name."

As the newest member of the 63rd TAB, Witzleb has many more challenges ahead for her Guard career. She'll attend Morehead State University this fall to study criminology and take Reserve Officer Training Corps classes. She's looking forward to also earning her status as a Kentucky Woman Veteran.

"Being a female veteran who can succeed in this career is an amazing accomplishment," Witzleb said.

"I know many more have come before me, and they are providing some very large boots to fill," she said, "but I am up for the challenge."



Kentucky National Guard Spc. Madison Witzleb's smile and positive attitude keeps the 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade's Tactical Operations Center a little less stressful during USARNORTH's Vibrant Response 2015 exercise at Camp Atterbury, Ind.

Soldiers of the 201st Engineer Battalion, 577th Sapper Company detonate a C-4 charge during demolition training at Fort Knox, Ky., May 15-16, 2015. A C-4 charge blast takes 1.34 seconds after detonation.



Taking Charge

Sapper Company Blasts Through Training

Story and photos by Sgt. Brandy Mort

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The terrain rumbled as pieces of a wooden door shot out in every direction. From the looks of the scene, you'd think a tornado had ravaged the area. Instead, it was a silhouette charge the 577th Sapper Company had attached during their demolition training.

Soldiers of the 201st Engineer Battalion, 577th Sapper Company, participated in standard demolition training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, May 15-16.

Capt. James Schmitz, 577th Sapper commander, said Sapper teams are essential for troops to advance through breached obstacles, such as a collapsed building, safely. He said this training helped when they deployed to Afghanistan in 2009.

"Proper demolition training is very essential," said Schmitz. "It is vital to get it right before we are tasked to do it in the future, whether it's for our training exercise in Louisiana or a future deployment. We need to do it right, here so we can do it

right, there."

Sgt. John Howard, Sapper noncommissioned officer, has 10 years experience in the engineers. It's that experience, he said, that keeps the unit proficient. He said each year, leadership uses lessons learned to improve the training.

"When I was new, I got vital training during this time and I use things I have learned through the years as I teach other junior enlisted to do the same," he said.

Traditionally, Sappers are combat engineers who advance with the front-line infantry and are some of the first people sent to assess damages caused. Howard said training the younger Soldiers in their craft is similar to the role of the combat engineer sweeping the battlefield; they make sure the path is safe and clear before others go through.

"As a Sapper, we are the first people sent into the building to ensure the foundation is stable," said Howard. "I use the same method as a platoon sergeant if I don't tell them the proper



Soldiers of the 201st Engineer Battalion, 577th Sapper Company attach a silhouette charge to a mobile door frame during demolition training at Fort Knox, Ky., May 15-16, 2015. A silhouette charge provides a hole in a door so Soldiers can gain access into a building.



Soldiers of the 201st Engineer Battalion, 577th Sapper Company inspect a mobile door frame before attaching a silhouette charge during demolition training at Fort Knox, Ky., May 15-16, 2015.



information, they won't be able to be a strong foundation for their legacy."

Staff Sgt. Aleksandr Vinogradov, a combat engineer, agrees that good leaders start from the beginning of their career.

"New Soldiers to the unit are like sponges," said Vinogradov. "They will absorb anything you teach them. It is important to set a good example and train them the correct. We need to train for the future, not for the present."

The team trained in various types of C-4 charges; a simulation charge, shape charges, Bangalore charges, urban breaching, and mine clearing, also known as, MCLC. During urban breaching they learned about linear door charges, and silhouette charges. Sappers use what they learn in these scenarios for reforming the terrain for new structures, or to demolish existing structures.

"During urban breaching, we are able to see that different

charges do different things," said Howard.

"A linear door charge will split a door in half, while a silhouette charge will create a hole in the door big enough for a person to walk through. If we don't use the correct one in a non-training environment, we may be in trouble."

Schmidt said that safety and proficiency are two very important topics he focuses on at all times.

"My goal is to have everyone perform proficiently at their tasks and most importantly practice proper safety at all times. I have no doubt that my Soldiers will succeed in both aspects whether in training exercises or in real world scenarios." 🇺🇸

Historic signing



Maj. Gen. Zakaria Cheik Ibrahim, (left), Djiboutian Armed Forces (FAD) chief of defense and Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini, Kentucky National Guard (KNG) adjutant general, sign a State Partnership Program agreement at the Kempinski Hotel, Djibouti, June 2, 2015.

Djibouti, Kentucky National Guard become state partners

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Nathan Maysonet

Combined Joint Task Force, Horn of Africa

For 22 years, the National Guard has partnered with the armed forces of allied countries to build and strengthen military, political, economic and societal relationships.

In a historic first for East Africa, Representatives from the Kentucky National Guard (KNG) and the Djiboutian Armed Forces (FAD) ratified a state partnership agreement in a signing ceremony held at the Kempinski Hotel in Djibouti City, June 2, 2015.

“Ten African countries already benefit from this program and we are honored to be the eleventh African country and the first to benefit from East Africa,” said Maj. Gen. Zakaria Cheik Ibrahim, FAD chief of defense. “This follows from the new partnership that our two countries are committed to. Since the meeting between our two heads of state in

May 2014, the cooperation between our two countries has strengthened positively and we are very optimistic to see, in the coming years, a considerable expansion of our defense and security cooperation.”

The State Partnership Program (SPP) originated from a U.S. European Command program that paired reserve component soldiers and airmen with Baltic States in 1991. The National Guard Bureau later proposed pairing states with three nations emerging from the collapse of the Soviet Bloc. These partnerships became the SPP of today.

“The globalization of our societies has made our world smaller and borders are now blurred by our ever-changing world,” said National Guard Bureau Joint Chief of Staff Gen. Frank Grass. “In that short time period, the National Guard

and states continue to build close and lasting personal relationships with our partner nations around the world.”

The program provides host countries with a skilled force capable of helping to train and develop the host nation’s defenses and security, disaster response, crisis management, and interagency cooperation.

“The SPP links a unique component of the Department of Defense with the armed forces of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship by means of a tailored, small footprint, high-impact security cooperation engagement that fosters long-term enduring relationships with allies around the world,” said Maj. Gen. Edward Tonini, KNG adjutant general.

Djibouti is already a key regional partner with the U.S., and is engaged in humanitarian and counter-terrorism operations throughout East Africa. The FAD has an extensive relationship with the personnel assigned to Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa, which includes Kentucky Guardsmen, who are a force multiplier to the region, explained Tonini.

“This is not a double partnership, it’s a force multiplier,” said Tonini. “Having a partnership with Djibouti allows us the opportunity to engage in mutually beneficial exchanges at all levels of the military as well as the civilian world.”

According to Lt. Col. Shawn Keller, KNG State Partnership Program Director, there are several areas where the KNG can cooperate with the FAD including both military and civilian engagements. 🌐

■ **More.** Read full story and get more photos at KentuckyGuard.com



Representatives of the Djiboutian Armed Forces (FAD) attend the Kentucky National Guard and FAD State Partnership Program agreement signing ceremony at the Kempinski Hotel, Djibouti, June 2, 2015.

MACP

Sgt. Brad Jenkins demonstrates how to set up a strike on assistant 1st Lt. Bryson Yarbrough during a Modern Army Combatives class Feb. 2, 2015 at Boone National Guard Center in Frankfort, Ky.



Beyond the mat

Soldiers from the Kentucky Army National Guard’s 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment conducted Modern Army Combatives Program training at Boone National Guard Center in Frankfort, Kentucky Feb. 7, 2014. Sgt. Brad Jenkins, the KYARNG’s only master trainer, taught

the class. Jenkins, a student of martial arts, has devoted more than half his life to

Story and photo by Capt. Rob Cooley
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

mastering various aspects of self-defense, including jiu-jitsu.

“The benefits of combatives training are numerous,” said Jenkins. “I no longer run, but scored a 280 on my last Army Physical Fitness Test because of the cardio value of my mat time.”

Sgt. Lerone Simmons, a Public Affairs Specialist with the 133rd said, “I can see how combatives could help raise my APFT score, it forces me to work my core and stabilizer muscles.”

Jenkins pointed out the reach of combatives training goes beyond the Soldier’s physical dimension.

“Imagine I teach a private straight out of boot camp to put an arm bar on his commander,” he explained, “not only does that instill confidence in his physical abilities, but also his confidence to approach leadership with issues he may be having; whether family concerns, personal challenges, or even suicidal thoughts.”

“My hope is that our commanders realize the full potential of Army combatives training,” said Jenkins. “It would be nice to infuse combatives into other Army Warrior Tasks like room clearing, detainee operations, vehicle searches, or to fill training schedule whitespace.” 🌐



KENTUCKY DERBY
FESTIVAL
KDF.org

Guarding the fun

In the weeks leading up to the first Saturday in May, Kentucky rolls out the red carpet for celebrities, horse fans and party goers from all walks of life. Standing at the side of local, state and federal officials are members of the Kentucky National Guard.

A Trophy's watch

Story by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond
Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs

After 79 years, the Kentucky Guard knows a thing or two about assisting the City of Louisville with the security of the Kentucky Derby. Since 1936, the commonwealth's Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen have been involved with the colossal task of ensuring the safety of more than 250,000 spectators at the Kentucky Oaks and Derby weekend. That tradition continued for the 141st running of the historic races at Churchill Downs, May 1-2.

"We've done this so many times it's like automatic for us," said Capt. Brandon Davisson, commander of the 617th Military Police Company. "The weekend has gone very smooth and I know Louisville Metro (Police Department) is happy to have us here."

More than 200 Guardsmen took their usual stance in the streets around the track directing traffic and securing pedestrian gates inside as record numbers of spectators jammed Churchill Downs. Soldiers and Airmen were also on hand for security in the winners circle and a select few were tasked with guarding the Kentucky Derby Trophy.

Of the roughly 200 Citizen-Soldiers, a good number of them were working their first Derby. Davisson said the 198th's history of working the Derby has provided a wealth of experience that has been passed on from NCOs to younger Soldiers to continue the success of the operations.

Among the new faces at the track was 2nd Lt. Sarah Powell who, even as a freshly appointed MP officer, served as officer-in-charge of security.

"My role is a small one, but there are so many big pieces that go into this operation, there's the community piece, the interagency cooperation and there's our own inner workings to ensure leaders and subordinates know what they need to get the job done," she said. "This allows us to grow together and to develop our own style of working the Derby for future success,



Staff Sgt. Christopher King assembles the Kentucky Derby Trophy at Churchill Downs in Louisville, Ky., May 2. In the spotlight all weekend, the trophy detail was tasked with the security of the trophy.

but right now, it's business as usual."

Pvt. Demitri Ray with the 617th was working his first Derby and was selected for the trophy detail that secured the "priceless" Kentucky Derby Trophy. He has only been with his unit since August of 2014, but his NCOs said Ray is among the best of the new recruits into the company, a reason he was chosen to assist with the prestigious assignment.

"I feel like I have the best duty here," he said. "It tells me I'm earning the respect of my unit and motivates me to keep working hard and earn leadership assignments and further my career as a MP."

Ray and the other six Soldiers escorting the trophy were certainly in the spotlight of the weekend, but 198th leadership said each Soldiers on duty represented years of hard work to create such a polished undertaking.

Powell said the ability to be a part of the big picture is a great benefit to the Soldiers and the units in the commonwealth.

"It's interesting because you get to several levels up of operation which you don't normally get to see and to understand what it takes to coordinate with multiple agencies and individuals within the community, which is so important in the National Guard," said Powell.

■ **More.** Read full story and see more photos at KentuckyGuard.com



Photo illustration by Staff Sgt. David Bolton

Maj. Jason Finley, medical operations officer with the Kentucky National Guard's 41st Civil Support Team, scans crowds entering Churchill Downs for the 141st Kentucky Derby in Louisville, Ky. May 2, 2015.

Force Maximizer

Story by Staff Sgt. David Bolton
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

They listen. They watch. They wait. In the shadow of the iconic twin spires, the Kentucky National Guard's 41st Civil Support Team helped ensure the safety of the Derby crowd at Churchill Downs for the 141st Run for the Roses. Thirteen years of Derby support has taught CST members one thing: this is a joint effort.

"Derby support is a complete team effort," said Maj. Kris Morlen, 41st CST commander. "Local law enforcement, hazardous material specialists, medical and 41st CST members come together for large events to comprise, what has come to be known as, the Joint Emergency Services Unit."

According to Morlen, members of JESU patrol the grounds in small, four to five-person Joint Hazardous Assessment Teams to look for signs and symptoms associated with chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear material exposure. The JHAT use an array of devices that scan for radioactive isotopes, elevated levels of carbon dioxide, ammonium nitrate, neutrons and other potentially harmful elements.

■ **More**, Read full story and see more photos at KentuckyGuard.com

Louisville's Finest:

223rd Military Police augments LMPD

By Sgt. 1st Class Gina Vaile-Nelson
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Before sending the Louisville Metro Police officers and Soldiers from the Kentucky National Guard's 223rd Military Police Company out on foot patrol, Louisville's mayor, Greg Fischer and Metro Police Chief Steve Conrad had two important messages: stay safe and keep Louisville safe.

"I thank you LMPD and Kentucky Guard," Fischer said, "we can't do this without you."

More than 1,200 officers made up the combined force of LMPD, Kentucky Guard, Jefferson County Sheriff's Office, Kentucky State Police and federal law enforcement agencies. LMPD and the Guardsmen conducted foot patrols that roved the waterfront from 4 p.m., until the last spectators receded from the downtown area.

"We are very grateful for what the National Guard provides us," said Sgt. Phil Russell, Louisville Metro Police commander of media, public relations.

"With a half-million people in downtown Louisville, we absolutely

need the support of the National Guard. We are grateful for the extra set of eyes and the partnership that we hope continues," he said.

The partnership comes easy for the Louisville-based 223rd MPs. While unit leadership didn't have an exact number of Soldiers employed by LMPD, their network of police contacts is extensive. Several Soldiers are employed by civilian police departments, and are familiar with the way civilian departments operate.

"We conduct training for events like this when we get our field time," said 1st Sgt. Mike Ochs, 223rd MP Company first sergeant. "We get briefings from the mayor and police chief, and they always comment on how critical the support of the Kentucky Army National Guard is.

"It's good for our Soldiers to hear that, it really puts everything into perspective as far as what our role is. We always have good camaraderie with LMPD during Thunder and Derby support; there is never any animosity that this is their turf, we work as one." 🇺🇸



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Gina Vaile-Nelson

Pfc. Allison Shontz, Pvt. 1st Class Dillion Morvel and 1st Lt. Maria Burns, military police assigned to the 223rd Military Police Company patrol River Road from Seventh Street to Ninth Street April 18, in support of Thunder Over Louisville security detail. More than 1,200 Law Enforcement Officers and 140 military policemen patrolled the Riverfront to ensure crowd safety.

Warrant shatters glass ceilings

Story by Chief Warrant Officer Joseph Lyddane

1/623rd Field Artillery



The title “mechanic” is synonymous with the terms hard work, grease, oil, and more often than not, male. Although inequality remains prevalent between men and women in the workforce, there are those amongst the projected 159.4 million females in the United States proving that women

can dominate, excel, and out-perform males at their own game.

One Kentucky Army National Guard Soldier decided to break the mold in pursuit her own aspirations. Emerging from humble beginnings, Chief Warrant Officer Melissa Fredericks took the advice of her mother who told her: “you can be anything you want to be if you work hard for it.”

When Fredericks joined the Kentucky Army National Guard in 1999 as a high school senior, she

set her sights on the male dominated Military Occupational Specialty of 63W (Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic) and was assigned to the 326th Ordnance Detachment in Glasgow. She attended basic training and graduated as Honor Graduate as her Advanced Individual Training.

After attending both Eastern and Western Kentucky Universities, she received orders for her first mobilization. While serving on orders for a pending deployment, she transferred to the Nashville Auto Diesel College (NADC) and excelled. She contributed to the school’s newspaper and worked as an Outback server. She graduated in 2004 with the prestigious Craftsman Award for having a 95 percent shop average.

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

“There was a defining moment when I realized that being in the National Guard meant more than just showing up for drill and ‘doing your job,’” said Fredericks. “I was very

young when we got mobilized it became clear to me that if I wasn’t proficient at my job, someone could get killed. That’s when it became serious for me.”

The experience and credibility established during her time with Thompson Machinery led to her becoming the first full-time female mechanic to be hired at the Combined Support Maintenance Shop as a Heavy Mobile Equipment Repairer. A promotion and new responsibilities validated her hard work and efforts.

“This was the first time I felt that I could impact my organization beyond just being a good mechanic,” she said.

As a staff sergeant, Fredericks was the first female shop foreman, senior mechanic and equipment specialist. She continued to climb the ladder, graduating honor graduate of her Warrant Officer Basic Course.

Fredericks’ first assignment as a surface maintenance mechanic warrant was for the 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery. As the first female field maintenance shop chief in the state, she deployed in 2013 to Jordan, where she provided area maintenance support for contingency operations to include Marines, Special Forces, civilian contractors and UAV launchers.

“There was something new and challenging every day,” she said.

Her attitude and approach are exactly why she was nominated for the 2014 Warrant Officer of the Year award.

“I can’t take personal credit for my accomplishments,” said Fredericks. “I’ve had some outstanding mentors throughout my career. Our organization has a focus on mentorship, both in receiving and providing, at all levels, NCOs and officers.”

According to Fredericks, being a warrant isn’t exactly a walk in the park. “It’s not easy and I don’t think it’s for everybody. But if you love what you do and you want to continue being a part of your specialized field and make it better, then the warrant officer program is perfect for someone with that mind set and desire.”



Courtesy Photo

Melissa Fredericks being promoted to the rank of CW2. Early on in life Fredericks took the advice of her mother who told her, “You can be anything you want to be if you work hard for it.” (Propes is Fredericks’ maiden name)



Courtesy Photo

Chief Warrant Officer Melissa Fredericks (left) and 2nd Lt. Stephanie Scott, both of 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery, pause during training at Wendell H. Ford Regional training Center in Greenville, Ky. July, 2012.

KENTUCKY AIRMAN RECEIVES BRONZE STAR FOR ACTIONS IN AFGHANISTAN



Col. Matthew Davidson (left), commander of the 24th Special Operations Wing, presents Staff Sgt. Nicholas P. Jewell, a combat controller in the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, with the Bronze Star Medal during a ceremony Feb. 7, 2015 at the Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville, Ky.

Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Vicky Spesard
123 Airlift Wing Public Affairs

A combat controller from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron was awarded the Bronze Star Medal here Feb. 7 for meritorious service while deployed to Afghanistan, where he engaged enemy forces and deterred their advances.

Staff Sgt. Nicholas P. Jewell served as a Joint Terminal Attack Controller assigned to an Army Special Forces team from Aug. 12, 2014, to Nov. 10, 2014, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Jewell was tasked to provide tactical advice and assistance to Afghan Army Commando teams performing combat operations in northeastern Afghanistan when he and his team came under small-arms fire.

As rounds impacted within feet of his position, Jewell ran to cover behind a ridge line and immediately returned fire while simultaneously relaying enemy locations to aircraft overhead, according to the award citation. He then controlled an immediate air-to-ground engagement with high explosives from an AH-64 attack helicopter, resulting in multiple enemies killed in action.

"So obviously he found himself in a bad spot," said Col. Matthew Davidson, commander of the 24th Special Operations Wing, who officiated the award ceremony and presented the medal to Jewell. "He went out and saved his teammates and saved the mission. It's folks like him that we want to emulate."

Jewell also was recognized for his actions during a clearing operation when his element came under direct small-arms fire. He immediately coordinated efforts between ground signals intelligence forces and overhead aircraft to locate and engage the enemy fighting location with devastating effects.

"What we have asked Nick to do, and his teammates to do — in fact what we ask a lot of Americans out there to do for us sometimes — they have extraordinary responses to that," Davidson said. "Like (Jewell) did on numerous occasions."

The Bronze Star Medal was authorized by executive order on Feb. 4, 1944, and is awarded to service members who have distinguished themselves by heroic or meritorious achievement or service in connection with military operations against an armed enemy. 

Taylor working to make a difference at Kentucky Air Guard



Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Vicky Spesard

123 Airlift Wing Public Affairs

As the nation honors the accomplishments of women in the military during National Women's History month, the 123rd Airlift Wing reflects on one of its own, Master Sgt. Zakiya Taylor, a mentor to young people, an acknowledged leader among her peers and a decorated Airman answering the call to duty around the world.

An 18-year veteran of the Kentucky Air National Guard, Taylor joined the wing just after finishing high school, with the encouragement of her parents to help pay for college. She never intended to make it a career.

"I got the love of travel from my musician father, who took me with him when he performed around the world," Taylor explained. "I knew that the Guard would allow me to travel as well and help me further my education."

After completing her bachelor's degree in sociology and psychology at Western Kentucky University, Taylor decided to continue her career in the Guard, where she got her opportunity to see the world. Taylor's career has taken her to deployments in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Europe, Afghanistan and Africa.

"I have had the opportunity to learn all these different cultures and fellowship with all these different people," Taylor said. "In that process I have learned that we are not very much different. We all want the same things: good health, wealth and security for our families."

Fellowship through mentoring is a passion for Taylor, who worked throughout her high school summers as a camp counselor for youth at the Metro Parks summer camp in Louisville. While in college, she became a dance instructor for a local youth arts program.

She continued her desire to mentor in her Guard career when she accompanied a group of young Army ROTC cadets to Burkina Faso, Africa.

"This was a great leadership opportunity for me," she said. "I was solely responsible for these cadets, getting them to their mission location and taking care of them from start to finish. It has made me a better leader. I know the cadets' experiences will make them better leaders, too."

Leading by example is just one of the many characteristics that has brought Taylor to this point in her career. In March, she was honored as the Kentucky Air National Guard's 2014 Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

"As a leader and as a woman, it is exciting to be honored alongside all of the men," Taylor said. "It shows that we can do this. We have come so far and had so many challenges. I think when an award like this happens, it shows that women are breaking down barriers, moving forward and making progress." 🌈



Master Sgt. Zakiya Taylor stands with her parents after receiving the award for 2014 Kentucky Air National Guard Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year during a ceremony held at the Kentucky State Fairgrounds March 14, 2015. Taylor, who is a services manager for the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Force Support Squadron, credits her parents' encouragement for her successful military career.

7 years of perfecting response

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Gina Vaile-Nelson

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Since 2009, the Kentucky National Guard's 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade has held the responsibility of aviation response unit for national Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear-High Yield Explosives (CBRNE) disasters.



In April, members of the 63rd TAB participated in Vibrant Response, the U.S. Army North's (ARNORTH) premiere exercise to manage response efforts between federal, state and local interagency partners during times of disaster or terrorist attack.

"The 63rd TAB is trained and equipped to conduct Mission Command in any environment, whether wartime or peace," said Lt. Col. Chris A. McKinney, officer in charge of the 63rd TAB's Command and Control CBRNE Response Element B (C2CRE-B) mission.

"This exercise, and several others that we conduct throughout the year, assist our staff in refining internal response process," he said. "The bottom line is that each time we train and exercise the various response aspects of possible catastrophic scenarios, we collectively improve our TTPs and response with not only ARNORTH, but also with our federal, state and local interagency partners."

The 63rd TAB Soldiers and aviators "deployed" to Camp Atterbury, Indiana where

they immediately set up a Deployable Rapid Assembly Shelter (DRASH) and began 24-hour support operations. The scenario was a nuclear detonation (terrorist attack) centered in the Kansas City, Missouri area.

"Our process, which is constantly being improved and changed to address various events under any OPTEMPO prepares our assigned Soldiers for all our mission sets," McKinney

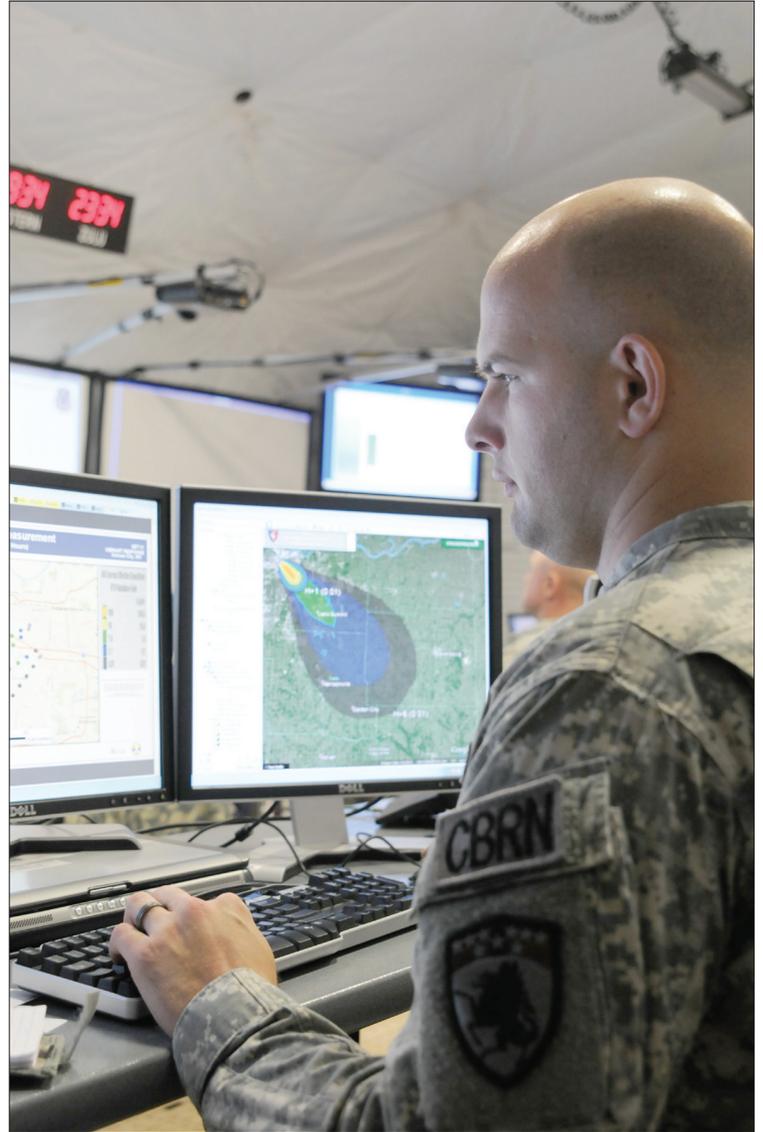
said. He said the knowledge the 63rd has gained during each exercise is what allows the brigade to provide the best aviation response to any event, specifically the 63rd TAB's potential response to a New Madrid Seismic Zone Scenario.

"While we hope this is a mission set we are never called to execute, the citizens of Kentucky need to feel secure that all efforts will be made to assist their loved ones in mitigating damage and alleviating suffering," he said.

McKinney, along with Col. Michael Stephens, 63rd TAB commander, said that the Soldiers of the 63rd take the C2CRE-B mission seriously and work hard to streamline the response process.

"The nature of our dual mission maximizes the overlap in training required for us to conduct life saving missions and minimize human suffering, regardless of the incident's cause," Stephens said.

"I see such teamwork in our folks," he said. "They simply do the job they are entrusted to do and they do it very well."



1st Lt. Jerome Debord monitors a radioactive plume module as part of the Vibrant Response 2015 at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, April 23. As the chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear officer for the 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade, Debord is responsible for updating commanders of CBRNE threats to personnel and aircraft.



Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Means, an air traffic controller, secures a proper fit on his gas mask during Vibrant Response 2015, at Camp Atterbury, Indiana April 27.

Kentucky's winter athletes compete

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond
Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs Office

For the first time, the Kentucky Guard sent a team to ski and shoot against the best of the best biathlon athletes in the National Guard. Guardsmen from 23 other states joined Kentucky at the 40th National Guard Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt., Feb. 28 to March 5.

"Competing in a biathlon is a very unique experience for anyone and especially so for Kentucky Guardsmen," said Capt. Stephen Smith with the 41st Civil Support Team. "It's been a great challenge for the four of us, but also very rewarding."

Along with Smith were teammates Sgt. 1st Class Diane Mortenson, Joint Force Headquarters, and Staff Sgts. Joel Ray Campbell and Eric Shackelford, both with the 41st CST. They joined more than 120 other Guardsmen from across the country to compete in the National Guard's rendition of one of the oldest winter sports.

The five-day event pushed the Soldiers to their physical limits with daily races averaging 10km. With roots in Scandinavian military training, a biathlon is a rigorous test of endurance, speed and marksmanship. Athletes alternate racing cross country ski loops with target shooting from the prone and standing positions.

"Kentucky may be known for good shooters, but not for skiing," said Mortenson, who was the only team member to have previously participated in a biathlon event. "We were kinda like the Jamaican Bobsled Team up here."

According to Lt. Col. Brian Demers, team coordinator, Kentucky Guard



Staff Sgt. Eric Shackelford climbs a hill on 7.5km loop portion of the Patrol Race as part of the 40th annual National Guard Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt., March 4, 2015.

Soldiers have attended regional summer and winter events, but they've not competed as an organized team prior to this year. In 2012, Demers was asked to put a team together, but without equipment, experienced athletes or a solid understanding of the sport. It was not an easy task.

"Kentucky has some real potential to make a niche for itself in the National Guard Biathlon Program," said Demers.

"Our inaugural team exceeded most people's expectations of what a southern state could accomplish."

Despite lacking a climate conducive to cross country skiing, the team practiced on skate skis and tried to learn as much as they could about

biathlon in a short time prior to the championships. But some necessary skills are ingrained in each Soldier from basic training.

"Competing in such a demanding event calls upon Soldiering skills that are on the basic level for every Soldier, you have communicating, shooting and you have movement," said Smith. "And those three things we have done continuously all week."

Regardless of their preparation, the event was still an entirely different experience. Campbell has shot competitively for years and was excited to put some well-aimed shots downrange; after skiing several miles in between shots, the veteran shooter has a new respect for the sport.

"The pace of the biathlon is unlike anything I have done before," said Campbell. "Biathlon combines cross country skiing up to 15 kilometers, stopping and as fast as possible place a number of precise shots into a target no bigger than a silver dollar at 50 meters. It's said that biathlon is the most difficult of the Olympic sports and I am a complete believer after the week I spent doing it." 🏔️



A stick of C4 explosives is suspended in a Bomb Containment Vessel during Explosive Ordnance Disposal training at the Fern Creek Fire Department in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 11, 2014. The vessel is the Kentucky Air National Guard's newest piece of EOD equipment, allowing personnel to detonate explosives on-site with no repercussions to nearby people or structures.



Kentucky Air Guard receives new bomb containment unit

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Phil Speck
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

The Kentucky Air National Guard has a new piece of equipment that allows specially trained Airmen to safely detonate bombs and other explosives without harming nearby personnel or structures. The gear, known as a Bomb Containment Vessel, does exactly what its name implies, according to Staff Sgt. Timothy Baker, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician for the 123rd Civil Engineer Squadron here. The capability can be especially useful if EOD is called upon to dispose of explosives in populated areas like the city of Louisville.

"If an improvised explosive device or any other sort of explosive is discovered anywhere in the area, EOD can destroy those explosives in a safe and contained manner without the worry of the destruction of any structures or bodily harm to bystanders," Baker said.

The Kentucky Air Guard's EOD team is one of the first three Air Guard units to receive the vessel, he added. Prior to its arrival, only one other Bomb Containment Vessel existed in the state of Kentucky.



Staff Sgt. Timothy Baker, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal technician for the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Civil Engineer Squadron, prepares to detonate C4 inside the unit's new Bomb Containment Vessel at a Fern Creek Fire Department training site in Louisville, Ky., Nov. 11, 2014.

■ [More](#) , Read full story at [KentuckyGuard.com](#)



Capt. Stephen Smith fires from the standing position during the 40th annual National Guard Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt., March 5, 2015. Each competitor carried an eight-pound rifle through each race and was required to shoot at least five shots from the prone and standing positions at targets 50m away in between laps.

Campbell was also intrigued by the unique atmosphere of a military sporting event where everyone was the same, no rank, no uniforms, but same expectations. On the range and through the course, fellow Guardsmen were just athletes, including former Olympians and world class biathlon competitors. Campbell said no matter their skill level, everyone was helpful and volunteered to help the Kentuckians learn.

“Our inaugural team exceeded most people’s expectations of what a southern state could accomplish.”

— Lt. Col. Brian Demers
Kentucky biathlon team coordinator

“Out of the 120 athletes we have here, there’s over 30 novices, which I think is a testament to the program,” said Maj. Gen. Steven Cray, adjutant general for Vermont. “We need to attract states like

Kentucky, to make a commitment to the sport and allow it to grow. Not only is it a great program from the biathlon side, but the benefit to the states and units in terms of physical fitness is dramatic.”

Thanks for making us famous



After a quarter of a century service dedicated to telling the stories of the men and women of the Kentucky National Guard, David Altom, deputy public affairs officer for the Kentucky National Guard, retired July 30.

Altom began his military career in 1970s, at the close of the Vietnam War, as a military policeman. In the 80s, Altom served in Germany as a public affairs specialist, building his portfolio and credibility as the voice of the Soldiers. He deployed to the Persian Gulf War, where if you have the time some day over a green tea, he will tell you all about waiting for WMDs to hit in self-made bunkers.

Although Altom has “been there and done that,” he enjoys nothing more than telling the story of the Kentucky Guard. He’s seen the best of times and the worst of times, side-by-side with our leadership and families. A professional listener, his cube was often where Soldiers from all ranks would turn for a counseling or mentor session. The only interruption would be the ring from a reporter.

Here’s to you Dave Altom, may you and your family enjoy this new chapter in your life; and may you enjoy telling your own stories for years to come.