

Bluegrass Guard

Vol 16, Issue 1

SERVING THE MEN AND WOMEN OF KENTUCKY'S ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

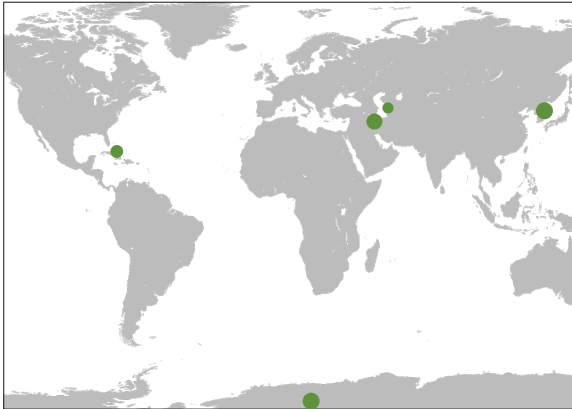
OUR *LAST*
CONVOY
IN IRAQ



Bluegrass Guard

SERVING THE MEN AND WOMEN OF KENTUCKY'S ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Vol 16, Issue 1



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Cover photo by Sgt. Scott Raper, 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade



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In the early morning light of a cool November day, the Soldiers of Charlie Co. 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry gathered at their trucks for another mission. Gear was stowed and the mission brief was given just like any other. This mission however, will be remembered a bit differently than previous ones. The gear they packed was everything they had. And the brief did not include details of a convoy to escort; the trip consisted of their vehicles only. The journey they readied themselves for would take them south. Headed for Kuwait. And out of Iraq. As the last truck rolled out of the gate at Victory Base Complex, the last Soldier of the 1/149th Infantry waved good-bye to the base and looked forward to their next role in the closing of Operation New Dawn.



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Unbridled Service

Bluegrass Guard

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Pure and Simple

Photo by Capt. Brian Mattingly, 103rd BSB

Water purification equipment is set up by members of the 103rd Brigade Support Battalion in Bledsoe, Ky., Feb. 8. The Kentucky Guard Soldiers helped provide local residents clean, drinking water during a water shortage.

From the 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:

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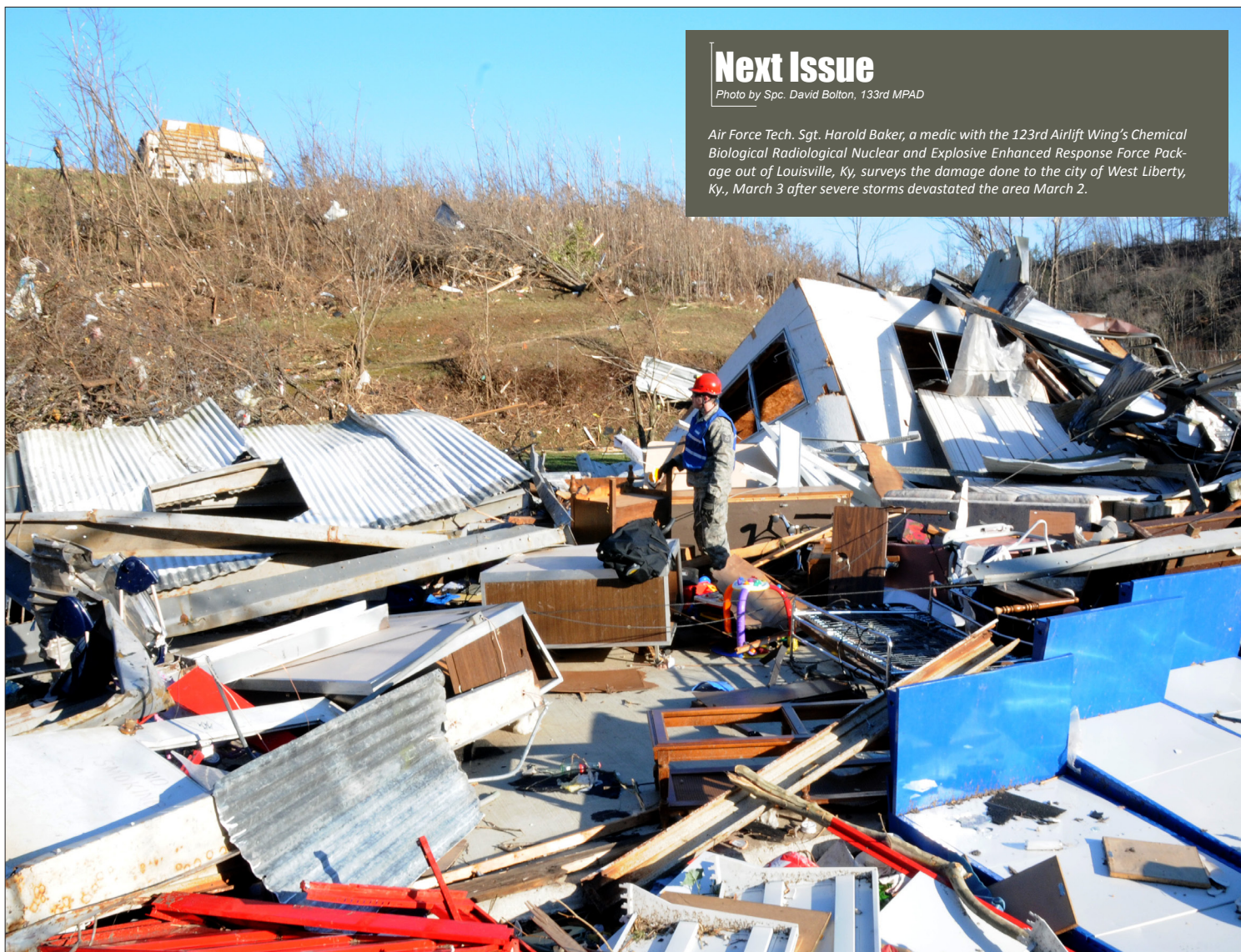
3. Like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/kentuckyguard and look for your submission there too!



Next Issue

Photo by Spc. David Bolton, 133rd MPAD

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Harold Baker, a medic with the 123rd Airlift Wing's Chemical Biological Radiological Nuclear and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package out of Louisville, Ky, surveys the damage done to the city of West Liberty, Ky., March 3 after severe storms devastated the area March 2.



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COL CAMPBELL PHOTO GOES HERE

AROUND T

Kentucky **NATIONAL**
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STAFF SGT. DANIEL MCSPADDEN PREPARES TO LOAD A MAGAZINE DURING A RIFLE COMPETITION AT CAMP SANTIAGO JOINT MANEUVER TRAINING CENTER, PUERTO RICO, JAN. 14. PAGE 8



MASTER SGT. JASON SMITH READS A SHIPPERS' DECLARATION FOR DANGEROUS GOODS TO ENSURE THAT A 400-GALLON LIQUID OXYGEN TANK IS PROPERLY PREPARED FOR FLIGHT JAN. 18, WHILE DEPLOYED TO MC-MURDO STATION, ANTARCTICA. PAGE 10



THE WORLD

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AIR FORCE TECH. SGT. BUCKY HARRIS, A RESIDENT OF LIETCHFIELD, KY. PREPARES FOR HIS FIRST MISSION IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN ON FEB. 10. PAGE 14

SPC. JOSH BENNETT, BROADCAST JOURNALIST WITH THE 133RD MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT, REVIEWS THE FOOTAGE HE SHOT DURING THE MORALE WELFARE AND RECREATION TRIPS OFFERED DURING YAMA SAKURA 61 IN OSAKA, JAPAN, JAN. 28. PAGE 12



PFC. CHARLES ELLIOTT, 149TH MANEUVER ENHANCEMENT BRIGADE STANDS STRONG DURING A SANDSTORM IN IRAQ ON OCT. 19. THE 149TH MEB WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR SHUTTING DOWN MILITARY OPERATIONS IN IRAQ. PAGE 17



TROPIC THUNDER



Kentucky Marksmanship Team competes in Caribbean

Story and Photos by: Sgt. Scott Raper

Public Affairs NCO, scott.r.raper@us.army.mil

CAMP SANTIAGO, Puerto Rico – As snowflakes and daily temperatures dropped across the bluegrass, several Kentucky Guardsmen enjoyed a warm alternative in the Caribbean. They are members of the Kentucky National Guard Marksmanship Team who traveled to the tropical climate to compete in the 2012 Puerto Rico State Match.

“It’s a chance to meet with military and civilian professionals, to build relationships and to gain more experience in different kinds of matches,” said Staff Sgt. Eric Dean, a state marksmanship coordinator. “Kentucky has been competing in Puerto Rico for about twenty years.”

Annually the Puerto Rico National Guard sponsors the event held at Camp Santiago Joint Maneuver Training Center in the southern city of Salinas. A mixture of Soldiers and civilians competed in four full days of shooting with both rifle and pistol matches. Teams from North and South Carolina, Texas, New York and Mississippi also traveled to the sun-filled island to shoot against Puerto Ricans on their home turf.

The ranges were busy with the sporadic gunfire from the well-aimed rifles and pistols of the competitors throughout the event. With striking mountains rising as the backdrop, targets were hung at distances of up to 600 yards for the .223 service rifle shooters. Matches included prone, standing and sitting positions. Within earshot of the rifle rounds, those with pistols walked between

the 25 and 50-yard line to check their shots. Pistol matches included .22 LR, 9mm and .45 ACP ammunition.

“The wide variety of rounds and events helps us out with the fundamentals of marksmanship,” said Dean. “We do some things differently here, but all in all, it’s great practice for us.”

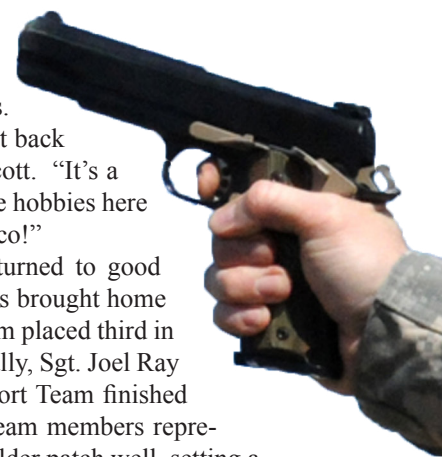
Practice for one Soldier is exactly what was needed to return to routines and comfortable territory. Chief Warrant Officer Greg Scott deployed last year to Iraq with the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade. Having just returned in December, the re-

integration continues for Scott. And a shooting match in the Caribbean is a good start, as he took third in the Rifle Marksman Class.

“This is my first chance to get back into the swing of things,” said Scott. “It’s a special feeling to get back to some hobbies here at home. And, hey, it’s Puerto Rico!”

Scott’s teammates also returned to good form as both rifle and pistol teams brought home awards from the match. Each team placed third in the overall results. And individually, Sgt. Joel Ray Campbell of the 41st Civil Support Team finished second in Rifle Master Class. Team members represented the long rifle on their shoulder patch well, setting a high note to begin their competitive season.

“This match is a pre-cursor to state, regional and national matches ahead of us,” said





Dean. “It’s a great beginning... And it’s in the tropics, certainly better weather than Kentucky right now, so it’s a really nice experience.”

If you were to think that the team was provoking some jealousy, you may be right. The annual trip to Puerto Rico is also a recruiting tool for the team to showcase the opportunities for future shooters.

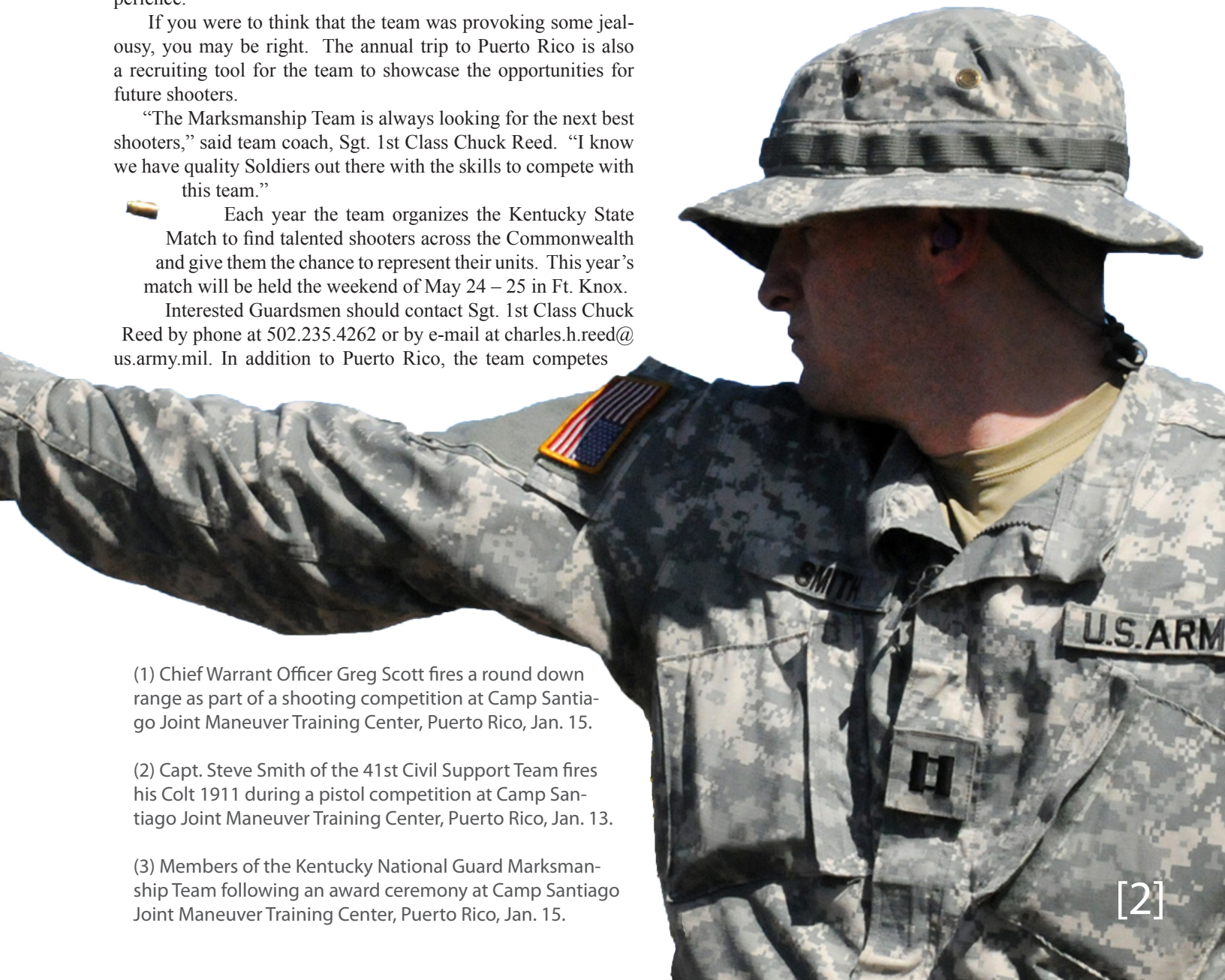
“The Marksmanship Team is always looking for the next best shooters,” said team coach, Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Reed. “I know we have quality Soldiers out there with the skills to compete with this team.”



Each year the team organizes the Kentucky State Match to find talented shooters across the Commonwealth and give them the chance to represent their units. This year’s match will be held the weekend of May 24 – 25 in Ft. Knox.

Interested Guardsmen should contact Sgt. 1st Class Chuck Reed by phone at 502.235.4262 or by e-mail at charles.h.reed@us.army.mil. In addition to Puerto Rico, the team competes

annually in several matches across the southeast and actively pursues new opportunities for competition.



(1) Chief Warrant Officer Greg Scott fires a round down range as part of a shooting competition at Camp Santiago Joint Maneuver Training Center, Puerto Rico, Jan. 15.

(2) Capt. Steve Smith of the 41st Civil Support Team fires his Colt 1911 during a pistol competition at Camp Santiago Joint Maneuver Training Center, Puerto Rico, Jan. 13.

(3) Members of the Kentucky National Guard Marksmanship Team following an award ceremony at Camp Santiago Joint Maneuver Training Center, Puerto Rico, Jan. 15.



CHILL MODE

Kentucky Airmen fly south for the winter to support scientific research at the bottom of the world

Story by: Tech. Sgt. Jason Ketterer

Public Affairs NCO, jason.a.ketterer@us.army.mil

KENTUCKY AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, LOUISVILLE, KY. — The term “flying south for the winter” usually invokes thoughts of tropical climates and sunny beaches, but the reality couldn’t be more different for two Kentucky Air National Guardsmen.

Tech. Sgt. Raymond Graves and Master Sgt. Jason Smith, both assigned to the 123rd Logistics Readiness Squadron here, have been supporting Operation Deep Freeze in Antarctica since December, providing assistance to the McMurdo Station scientific research facility located at the bottom of the world.

Blanketed by snow and buffeted by freezing temperatures, McMurdo Station is operated by the National Science Foundation and conducts research into such subjects as astrophysics, biology, geology and climate systems, according to the foundation’s web site. The facility is kept functional thanks to Operation Deep Freeze, which tasks the New York Air National Guard’s 109th Airlift Wing with flying resupply missions and airlift sorties across the region using C-130 aircraft that are fitted with landing skis, Graves said.

Graves and Smith are augmenting the 109th from mid December to late February by inspecting cargo slated for transport or airdrop at McMurdo Station and several other, even more remote sites.

“The mission I’m tasked to perform ensures that the supplies the scientists need to survive and perform their research roles are safe for air movement and that these supplies reach them in the quickest possible timeline,” said Master Sgt. Jason Smith, who serves as noncommissioned officer in charge of joint inspection and rigging for the operation’s fourth rotation of the 2011-12 season.

Smith and Graves’ responsibilities also include traveling to the remote camps to inspect cargo. After traveling to the geographic South Pole, for example, Graves inspected outbound cargo for

proper packing and restraint.

“At these (remote) camps, they have trained contractors who know how to build cargo and restrain it to pallets for military airlift, but they are not manned with a military representative to inspect their cargo prior to getting on the plane,” noted Graves, NCOIC of joint inspection and rigging for the operation’s third rotation of the 2011-12 season.

“Another responsibility is to ensure that enough parachutes are packed and enough emergency food and fuel are rigged, in case there was the need for emergency airdrop support,” he added.

The fact that Kentucky Airmen were selected to augment Deep Freeze is a source of pride for both troops, who say it reflects well on their unit’s can-do reputation.

“I believe we were asked by the 109th specifically because on several occasions we have worked together with their personnel and we continue to have a great working relationship with their members,” Graves said. “They understand our level of commitment and dedication when it comes to how we approach any mission.”

[1] The Kentucky Air National Guard’s Tech. Sgt. Ray Graves inspects outbound cargo on an ice runway Dec. 28, 2011, while deployed to McMurdo Station, Antarctica. Graves supported Operation Deep Freeze as noncommissioned officer in charge of joint inspection and rigging for the third rotation of the 2011-12 Deep Freeze season. (Courtesy Photo)

[2] A New York Air National Guard LC-130 lands on an ice runway at McMurdo Station, Antarctica, on Jan. 18, 2012, during a resupply sortie flown in support of Operation Deep Freeze. New York requested the assistance of two Kentucky Air National Guardsmen for Deep Freeze, which supports scientific research at the bottom of the world. (Photo by Air Force Master Sgt. Jason Smith)



UNBRIDLED SE

Story by Spc. Brandy Mort

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, PAO@kentuckyguard.com

www.yamasakura.com

OSAKA, Japan – What started off as a whirlwind of a mission evolved into a great working and learning experience for the 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment as they embarked on a mission to Camp Itami located on the outskirts of Osaka, Japan.

Members of the Kentucky National Guard's 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment provided direct public affairs support to the Yama Sakura 61 exercise at Camp Itami from Jan. 23- Feb. 3.

The members selected to participate coined the nickname, the Japan 5. The Japan 5 included Sgt. 1st Class Michael Oliver, acting 1st Sgt, broadcast journalists Staff Sgt. Rebecca Wood and Spc. Josh Bennett, and print journalists Staff Sgt. Fredrick Varney and I, Spc. Brandy Mort.

For one member of the Japan 5 team it was a second chance to visit home.

"I was extremely excited to hear about our Japan mission," said Oliver, "It gave me an opportunity to come back to my birthplace. "

The Japan 5 began their trip by flying out of Louisville, Ky. International Airport. An unexpected tornado in Louisville delayed all flight schedules forcing the team to spend the night in Chicago.

After spending the night in "The Windy City", the team finally boarded a plane headed for Tokyo. Fifteen hours later the team reached Camp Itami, Japan.

With droopy eyes and a serious case of jet-lag, team members managed to sit through a briefing conducted by the in-processing staff at Camp Itami. Maj. Randall Baucom, Chief of Public Affairs U.S. Army Japan, introduced himself as the Yama Sakura 61 exercise Public Affairs Officer and gave

the team the overall mission objective, guidelines and procedures.

The very next day after the arrival the Japan 5 got the ball rolling. Their mission was to provide direct Public Affairs support for the Yama Sakura 61 exercise.



Yama Sakura is a bi-annual, bilateral computer simulated command post exercise designed to strengthen military operations and ties between the U.S. Army and the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force.

Since most of the Japan 5 team are traditional Guard members, Yama Sakura gave them an opportunity to work in an active Public Affairs Office.

"This mission has helped me work under pressure and produce products with a quick turn-around," said Spc. Josh Bennett. "That's something I wasn't used to before coming to Japan."

During their mission the Japan 5 produced 19 news stories, including nine news articles and 10 video productions.

"MPADs, I have found, come in all shapes and sizes," said Baucom, "The

133rd is one of the top two National Guard MPADs I have worked with in my 9 years as a Public Affairs Officer."

The overall mission proved to be a success for the Japan 5 team.

"I'm very proud of the job accomplished by the 133rd MPAD during Yama Sakura 61," said Varney, print journalist for the 133rd MPAD, "We have represented the unit, the state, and the Kentucky National Guard well."

[1] Members of the Yama Sakura 61's Public Affairs Office tell the stories of the personnel associated with the exercise. Members include: Mr. Hideo Kawada, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Oliver, Maj. Randall Baucom, Spc. Josh Bennett, Airman 1st Class Laura Yahemiak, Staff Sgt. Fredrick Varney, Spc. Brandy Mort and Staff Sgt. Rebecca Wood. (Photo By Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Bell)

[2] Yama Sakura 61 begins with an opening ceremony for the U.S. Army Pacific and the Japan Ground Self Defense Force Jan. 30. (Photo by Spc. Brandy Mort, 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

[3] U.S. Army Pacific Commander Lt. Gen. Francis Wiercinski and Middle Army Commander of the Japan Ground Self Defense Force Lt. Gen. Ryuichiro Arakawa shake hands during the bilateral press conference Yama Sakura 61 Jan. 30. (National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Fredrick P. Varney, 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

SERVICE IN JAPAN





Life on THE FARM

Story by: Staff Sgt. Paul Evans

Kentucky ADT 4 Unit Public Affairs Historian Representative, PAO@kentuckyguard.com

FORWARD OPERATING BASE PASAB, Afghanistan— Talk to a Kentuckian around this small military base in the mountains of southern Afghanistan, and you will very likely get a feel for the nervous, excited vibe here.

For Soldiers of Kentucky's Agribusiness Development Team 3, who served the people of Afghanistan since April 2011 by teaching more effective farming and business methods, the excitement is centered on finally going home. Meanwhile, ADT 4, who arrived during the first week of February 2012, looks forward to building on ADT 3's success helping the Afghan people.

"It's been different (serving in Afghanistan), I can say that much," said ADT 3's Sgt. Darrell Buchanan, a 37-year-old native of Owensboro, Ky., before adding, "I think we're leaving it (the mission) in good hands."

"We're more than ready to take over the mission. We trained really hard over the past few months," said Sgt. Amanda Behling, a 25-year-old from Louisville, Ky.

While ADT 4's mission will be the first of its type to teach farming in southern Afghanistan, ADT 3 spent their last few months in country helping get ADT 4's living accommodations set up the south. The Team also helped establish contacts and get ADT 4 familiarized with routes before beginning the process of handing over operations to their replacements.

"It's been a challenging last couple months for our deployment," said ADT 3 Commander Col. Neil Mullaney, a native of Louisville, Ky., referring to their move from northern to southern Afghanistan.

"ADT 3 has gone above and beyond to make this as comfortable as it possibly can be. They moved (south) to come here and set up shop for us and they've done an excellent job," Behling stated.

As 2012 progresses, Kentucky's Agribusiness Development Team 4 will take on the difficult task of continuing to build on the good reputation established by their predecessors before Kentucky ADT 5 takes over the mission in late 2012.

"We focused a lot on education and capacity... we did do some individual improvements for farmers as well," Mullaney reflected. "But in order to have a long-term sustainable impact, we knew that was through education, so that's what we really focused on."

"I think the key thing that ADT's can do is close the loop on the value chain," explained Mullaney about the issues faced in their mission. "Afghan farmers have been farming for thousands of years... we're not teaching them anything new. The problem is their post-harvesting techniques, getting goods to market, basically completing that value chain."

Buchanan took a few minutes to reflect on lessons learned in Afghanistan from his perspective. "I've learned to not take as

many things for granted anymore. Little things that used to annoy me with the kids before seem trivial now. I've just learned a lot about appreciating what you have because it could always be a lot worse," recalled Buchanan. "ADT 3's been a great team, though. I've enjoyed everybody here," he added, noting his excitement at getting home to his wife, kids and 8-month-old daughter.

Buchanan's parting advice for ADT 4 was simple. "Always keep your eyes and your ears open, because you can always learn something new every day. If it gets to the point that you think you know everything, that's probably when you're going to get hurt," said Buchanan.

"I think Col. Barrier (ADT 4 Commander) and his team are going to do a fantastic job," concluded Mullaney.

In the end, both Afghanis and Kentuckians will likely continue learning from one another during the Agribusiness Development Team's 4th rotation, even if ADT 4 has big shoes to fill replacing its predecessors.



[1] Soldiers with ADT 3, Task Force Hurricane, inspect a greenhouse in Mahmud-e Raqi district, Kapisa province, Afghanistan, Dec. 28, 2011 (Photo by Spc. Amber Leach)

[2] Tech. Sgt. Bucky Harris, a resident of Middlesboro, Ky., rested with an axe during a work day in southern Afghanistan of Feb. 16, 2012. (Photo by U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Paul Evans)

EMPOWERING

Afghan Women

Story by: Sgt. 1st Class Michael Oliver
Public Affairs NCO, PAO@kentuckyguard.com

PARWAN PROVINCE, Afghanistan – Kentucky National Guard Agribusiness Development Team 3 is leaving an impact on the women of Afghanistan.

The Directors of Women's Affairs in the Provinces of Kapisa, Pawan, and Panjshayr conducted their very first Tri-Provincial Women's Council meeting with the help of the ADT 3 Female Engagement Team.

The unit's Female Engagement Team mentored the three Province DoWAs on how to prepare and execute each council meeting. These meetings are meant to educate the Afghan government leaders on women's affairs and how to better meet the needs of the Afghan women.

Capt. Carla Getchell and Capt. Paula Thrush lead the Female Engagement Team in these three provinces of Afghanistan and enjoy the opportunity to work with the women.

"These women are stronger when they are united," said Getchell. "They can start working together to solve one another's problems."

Future projects for the team include a honey bee and poultry training center, fish farm, cold storage, solar food drying, kitchen garden and livestock for villagers.

"I hope that these women will continue to work alongside each other to make their lives better in everything they get to do,"

said Sgt. Claudia Rector, KYADT 3. "I hope that their courage is passed down to their daughters and granddaughters and that one day they will pick up the torch and run with it."

[1] Agribusiness Development Team 3's Female Engagement Team helps to educate the local Afghan women to empower them. From left to right: Capt. Carla Getchell, Staff Sgt. Jane Rothstein, Heather Carrier, Sgt. Claudia Rector, Capt. Paula Thrush. (Courtesy Photo)





We are on the verge of giving back the base better than we found it; peacefully transitioning the terrain we once fought for back to the sovereign nation of Iraq.



- Col. Scott Campbell, Commander
149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade





CASING OF THE COLORS

Story and Photo by: Capt. Andi Hahn

149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade Public Affairs Officer, PAO@kentuckyguard.com

VICTORY BASE COMPLEX, Iraq—The 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade took on a historic and monumental mission last year that brought a close to Operation New Dawn and the end of the war in Iraq.

The 149th MEB served as the last garrison command of the largest and most intricate U.S. base in all of Iraq, Victory Base Complex. Their mission was to provide base defense operations and force protection for all of VBC as well as life support operations to sustain all tenants on the camp during the withdrawal of troops.

“We asked the 149th MEB to do the impossible,” said Brig. Gen. Paul J. LaCamera, Deputy Commanding General of the 25th Infantry Division. “We asked them to close the biggest base in Iraq while still providing life support and force protection to the significant population of service members and civilians that still remained. And they did it with overwhelming success.”

Victory Base Complex has become synonymous with the heartbeat and the center of gravity for U.S. operations during the Iraq campaigns. VBC alone consists of more than 60 miles of perimeter, 20,000 acres, 19 separate camps, and housed 24,000 service members and civilians at the height of this year.

The most challenging mission for the brigade was to working to transfer authority of all VBC to Iraq. This included transitioning several of the camps inside VBC to the Government of Iraq, Iraqi Ground Forces Command, Iraqi Special Operations Forces and the 6th Iraqi Army for force protection upon withdrawal from the base.

Col. Scott Campbell, 149th MEB Commander, said it’s a momentous accomplishment for Task Force Legion and a significant contribution to the overall effort.

“We are on the verge of giving back the base better than we found it; peacefully transitioning the terrain we once fought for back to the sovereign nation of Iraq,” Campbell said. “This is a huge milestone but the mission in Iraq is not complete with the transfer of VBC.”

In the four months the 149th MEB was in command of garrison operations, they managed the prime power contract that provided power to over 6,000 personnel on VBC during the drawdown. They provided contracting officer representative support to 23 contracts valued at \$470 million dollars and processed more than 600 work orders for tenants on the base.

“The 149th MEB accomplished a lot during their short, but critical time in Iraq,” LaCamera said. “I am humbled and honored to have worked alongside the leaders and Soldiers of Task Force Legion.”

[1] Col. Scott Campbell, 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade Commander and Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Johnson, case the brigade colors representing the end of mission for the unit in support of Operation New Dawn at Victory Base Complex, Iraq, Nov. 28.

CHARLIE COMPANY CREW COMPETITION

[1]

Story and Photos by: Sgt. Scott Raper
Public Affairs NCO, scott.r.raper@us.army.mil

VICTORY BASE COMPLEX, Iraq – For Soldiers, most days begin with a little physical training. A run or lifting some weights usually satisfies most. But when your day begins with pull-ups, then dips followed by changing a tire in full battle rattle, on to a tire flip and finishing with a run, it is probably more than just PT.

Soldiers of 1st Platoon, Charlie Co., 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry Regiment found out just how much more during a company competition at Victory Base Complex in Baghdad.

“The idea was to give the guys a little morale boost,” said Sgt. 1st Class Matthew Roberge. “We did it to build some crew cohesion and also to refine the skills and abilities of each crew.”

Soldiers of Charlie Co. stay busy in Iraq as they continue to run convoy escort missions throughout Iraq as U.S. Forces withdraw from the country. The company was originally stationed at Camp Speicher in Northern Iraq. As part of the drawdown plan, the company was relocated to VBC and will eventually push south to Kuwait.

Once the entire company was settled into their new home at VBC, Roberge was able to schedule the competition for everyone to participate. Word got out about the intense competition and an active duty unit, 123rd Brigade Support Battalion from 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, also wanted to participate.

“It doesn’t always happen. We are constantly running missions, so to have everyone here at the same time is what we were hoping for, a nice change of pace for

the guys,” Roberge said.

The competition was a simple idea; teams of three where each team competes in an event and is rewarded with points based upon their place of finish. The team with the most points wins. The efforts given to complete the challenges were not easy.

The morning began early with pull-ups and dips.

Following breakfast, with full gear weighing them down, teams were timed in their task of changing a tire on their MRAP’s (Mine Resistant, Ambush Protected).

After the last lug nut was secured, the event was ahead of schedule.

“We set aside 20 minutes per team for the tire changing,” said Roberge. “I didn’t imagine we would have Soldiers finish in five or even three minutes. It’s very impressive how some of these Soldiers work.”

A short rest period preceded the next round which was a combined task. Each team had to flip a 400-pound MRAP tire 50 meters, then choose one member to dash to a pile of disassembled weapons and put each one back in working order. Yet again, Soldiers exceeded expectations and quickly finished to keep the day on track.

The mixture of competition and training was about

more than just winning and the Soldiers were aware of the relevance of the tasks.

“All this helps; it puts you under pressure to be the best team,” said Pfc. Nicholas Hayes. “Outside the wire you are under pressure too, so this helps us prepare both mentally and physically.”

A written exam was thrown in to test the Soldiers’ knowledge of Infantry fundamentals and to allow their lunch to settle before the culminating event. Signal Hill is a prominent landmark on VBC. A run up, down and around is roughly three miles. But a simple run just would not fit into this contest. Upon completing the three miles, each team then grabbed a water filled fuel can and dashed once more to the top and back down to finish the event and the day.

“Outside the wire you are under pressure too, so this helps us prepare both mentally and physically.”

– Pfc. Nicholas Hayes

[2]



Once at the bottom and in true athletic competitiveness, Pfc. Robert Schram said, "I want to go Disneyworld!"

"It feels good to have it over and done with," said Sgt. Dathan Cottrell. "I am proud of my team. They did a real good job. It was as hard as I thought it would be. Now it's time to rest since we have a mission tonight."

Almost 50 Soldiers competed in the event with the opportunity to showcase their talents and abilities. To most it was an enjoyable day, some said it was even fun to endure the grueling tasks.

"It was for bragging rights. And it showed they are capable of doing some amazing things and that they can really work as a team," said Roberge.

[1] Soldiers of Charlie Co., 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry Regiment place a tire on a MRAP (Mine Resistant, Ambush Protected) during a timed "tire change" event in the Charlie Company Crew Competition at Victory Base Complex, Iraq on Nov. 4.

[2] Soldiers of Charlie Co., 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry Regiment tighten a lug nut on a MRAP (Mine Resistant, Ambush Protected) during a timed "tire change" event in the Charlie Company Crew Competition at Victory Base Complex, Iraq on Nov. 4.

[3] Soldiers of Charlie Co., 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry Regiment flip a 400-pound MRAP (Mine Resistant, Ambush Protected) tire 50 meters during a timed event in the Charlie Company Crew Competition at Victory Base Complex, Iraq on Nov. 4.





[1]

(1) A vehicle idles as Soldiers of Charlie Co. 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry, prepare for convoy mission at Victory Base Complex, Nov. 22. The mission would be the last for the 1/149th from VBC as the unit left Iraq as part of the scheduled draw down of U.S. Forces.

(2) Spc. Travis Raper of Charlie Co. 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry climbs from his vehicle as he prepares to depart Victory Base Complex, Nov. 22. The mission was Charlie Co.'s last from VBC as they headed south for Kuwait.

Photos by: Sgt. Scott Raper

Public Affairs NCO, scott.r.raper@us.army.mil



[2]





Surf & TURF

Kentucky Airmen conduct life-saving training at Taylorsville Lake

Story by Master Sgt. Phil Speck

123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs, PAO@kentuckyguard.com

Photos by: Senior Airman Max Rechel

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(1) Chief Master Sgt. Joan Hazel, superintendent of the Kentucky Air National Guard's Aircrew Flight Equipment Section, demonstrates how Airmen can disentangle themselves from parachutes.

(2) Medical evacuation troops from the Kentucky Army National Guard hoist Capt. Jennifer Nash, a Kentucky Air Guard C-130 pilot, into a UH-60 Blackhawk.

(3) Col. Barry Gorter (far left), commander of the 123rd Operations Group, sets up a life raft with other Airmen.

(4) Master Sgt. Brian Bauer, a flight engineer with the 165th Airlift Squadron, releases his parachute canopy during a water-survival training exercise.

(5) Senior Airman Micah Haddix, a loadmaster with the 165th Airlift Squadron, prepares to release himself from a parachute suspended in a training rig.

TAYLORSVILLE, Ky. — More than 120 aircrew members and intelligence specialists from the Kentucky Air National Guard conducted life-saving land- and water-survival training at Taylorsville Lake here June 9 and 10, 2011.

The training, which covered topics like land navigation and emergency egress from a downed aircraft, is required for aircrew members every three years, said Lt. Col. Ronald Whelan, commander of the 123rd Operations Support Flight. It builds on an extensive three-week combat-survival course that all aircrew members must complete in Spokane, Wash., as part of their initial training.

"The scenarios we're training for here are certainly the kinds of things we hope will never happen in real life, but we need to be prepared for them," Whelan said. "The idea is that our reactions will become second-nature in the event of a real emergency."

Chief Master Sergeant Joan Hazel, who helped organize the training, said repetition is key. "We hear stories, over and over again, about how this information comes back to the forefront of crewmembers' brains during real-world emergencies and they're able to use their knowledge," said Hazel, superintendent of the Kentucky Air Guard's Aircrew Flight Equipment Section, which conducted the course. "It's really good stuff."

The land portion of the training covered radio usage, compass-reading, land navigation, concealment techniques and fire-craft — the use of flares and other incendiary devices. Instructors also provided a "hanging-harness" course, which teaches aircrew members how to extract themselves from trees if their parachutes get snagged after jumping out of a plane, Hazel said. Water-survival training gave aircrew members the opportunity to deploy and use rubber survival craft such as a 20-person boat or a one-person raft. Students were then pulled across the lake by a motorboat to simulate what it would be like if they had landed in the ocean by parachute, and the tides had begun to drag them across the surface of the water by pulling on the parachute canopy. Students were required to release their canopies to stop the dragging action.

"Training like this gives us the opportunity to get out here and work with equipment that we don't get to work with that much," said Capt. Casey Clark, a C-130 pilot with Kentucky's 165th Airlift Squadron. "I've really appreciated the enthusiasm of the flight-equipment folks we come out here to work with," he added. "They genuinely have a passion for what they do, and they really impress upon us the importance of knowing the equipment and helping us learn how to use it accurately so that we can help ourselves in situations we hope we never get into."

Calling uwait

Kentucky's Home Team Skypes with Kentucky's Forward Team

By Lt. Col. Kirk Hilbrecht

State Public Affairs Officer, kirk.hilbrecht@us.army.mil

Photos by: Sgt. Scott Raper

Public Affairs NCO, scott.r.raper@us.army.mil

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Governor Steve Beshear, Adjutant General Edward Tonini, UK's Coach John Calipari, and forward Anthony Davis video-conferenced with members of Kentucky's 1204th Aviation Support Battalion serving in Kuwait on Feb. 14.

During the chat, Coach Cal was made an Honorary Kentucky Guard Member by Governor Beshear and Maj. Gen. Tonini.

"It's always a privilege to speak to you Soldiers while you're doing such a great job for the Commonwealth and our nation," Beshear told the Kentucky Guardsmen. "I have to thank my wife, Jane, for making this video-teleconference happen."

"Your Governor, your TAG, your Kentucky Coach and all of us back home want you all to know how much we support you and important missions you do for Kentucky and our Nation," Tonini told the 1204th. "I may be watching a UK basketball game with you all, as I've done with several of our deployed Guardsmen in the past."

"Guys, I really appreciate it," Calipari told the Guardsmembers dressed in Kentucky blue. "And I tell you, we're so proud of all of you over there, and what you do, and the courage you have. I can't begin to tell you how impressed, and what you do, not many can do it. And to stand up for all of us here, and to make the commonwealth proud, which is what you do for all of us, we thank you."

"Everyone here is on cloud nine," said Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Walton, 1204th ASB. "We all want to thank the Kentucky Army National Guard, the TAG, and especially the Governor and his wife for making this happen for the 1204th ASB. A special thanks also goes out to Coach Cal and Anthony Davis."



[1] Pictured from left to right are Maj. Gen. Ed Tonini, Kentucky's adjutant general, UK Coach John Calipari and Kentucky's Governor Steve Beshear. Coach Calipari was made an honorary guardsman during a Skype call with



[L] Coach John Calipari and Maj. Gen. Ed Tonini video-conferenced with deployed members of the 1204th Aviation Support Battalion in Kuwait.

[R] UK center Anthony Davis displays his impressive wingspan behind Coach John Calipari and Gov. Steve Beshear during a Skype with members of the 1204th Aviation Support Battalion in Kuwait.



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Good to Hook

Photo by Sgt. Scott Raper, 149th MEB

Pvt. Joshua Bain of Charlie Co. 1st Battalion, 149th Infantry checks gear lashed to the outside of his vehicle as he and his crew prepares to depart Victory Base Complex, Nov. 22. Charlie Co. packed everything they had and secured some to the outside of vehicles when they ran out of room inside. The Soldiers left VBC for the last time on their way out of Iraq.

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