

Bluegrass Guard

Vol. 20, Issue 1 - December, 2016

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

**Kentucky Air
National Guard
in Operation
Maple Flag**

pg. 6

**Air Crews
Fight Kentucky
Wildfires**

pg. 8



AROUND THE



JFHQ - The Kentucky Guard welcomed families of fallen U.S. service members at the 7th annual Survivors Day at the Races at Churchill Downs Nov. 6. More than 1,000 family members and friends were in attendance.



63rd TAB - Aviation Soldiers traveled to both Germany and Italy to participate in Exercise Judicious Response with U.S. Army Africa Oct. 9-22.



75th TC - Soldiers of Bravo Co. 1/149th Infantry take two of the three spots at this year's Best Warrior competition in Greenville, Ky., Oct. 27-29. Spc. Zachary Cox was named Soldier of the Year and Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Lewis earned Senior NCO of the Year.



138th FAB - Pfc Jonathon Doker and the 138th participated in their largest warfighter exercise of the year at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., Nov. 9-17.



238th RTI - Lt. Col. Brandye Williams took charge of the 2/238th Modular Training Battalion during a change of command ceremony at the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky., Oct. 22.



On the Cover:

Airman 1st Class Alex Koehler, a loadmaster for the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing, uses the C-130 aircraft's rear vision device in the airspace above Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake, Alberta, on May 31, 2016. More than 30 Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard were here to participate in Maple Flag, an aerial combat training exercise involving forces from multiple countries. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Joshua Horton)



E GUARD



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149th MEB - Lt. Col. Timothy Starke relinquished command of the 198th Military Police Battalion to Lt. Col. John Blackburn during a change of command ceremony in Louisville, Oct. 30.



123rd AW - Chief Master Sgt. Joan Hazle, the outgoing superintendent of the Aircrew Flight Equipment Office, officially retired concluding more than 30 years of service to the active-duty Air Force and Kentucky Air National Guard.



IN THIS AIR GUARD-FOCUSED EDITION...

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For more Kentucky Guard news, visit www.kentuckyguard.dodlive.mil and www.123aw.ang.mil



Sentry Aloha

Story by Master Sgt. Phil Speck / 23rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Photos by Senior Airman Robert Buchberger, / 65th Airlift Squadron

More than 60 Airmen from the 123rd Airlift Wing and three C-130s arrived at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, between Aug. 8 and 30 to participate in exercise Sentry Aloha, a large-force exercise designed to test aircrews with war-time scenarios involving fighter aircraft.

The Hawaii Air National Guard led the exercise, which was conducted around the Hawaiian Islands, said Lt. Col. Randall Hood, chief of tactics for the Kentucky Air National Guard's 165th Airlift Squadron. Aircrews flew multiple scenarios, acting as both friendly and hostile forces while integrating with a variety of aircraft, including F-15s, F-16s and F-22s.

"The goal for us was to integrate with the fighters," said Hood, who served as the unit's mission commander for Sentry Aloha. "To see what they can provide us, see what our limitations are and to interact so we're speaking the same language. You don't want the first time that you go into the big fight on a large scale to be the first time our crews interact with fighters. You want to learn how they speak and how they talk."

For 2nd Lt. Travis Carter, a pilot in the 165th Airlift Squadron, the exercise was eye-opening.

"At first it was kind of like listening to a new language, but after hearing them talk and we would go into a debrief after the exercise, we got to listen to them speak the

low-level training, and heavy equipment and Container Delivery System airdrops.

Hood said Sentry Aloha provided many crewmembers with their first opportunity to train over open water. Normally, a C-130 can fly low over land and hide from the enemy, but that's not possible over

water. Aircrews were able to hone their evasion skills during Sentry Aloha by escaping aggressors, which boosted their confidence and validated the tactics that they have been taught.

"You can read about it in a book, and you can train to it, but to go out and actually do it is really a big deal," he said. "I hope these guys never have to execute the tactics they learned, because if they do, it's not a good day. But at the same time, by doing these things we develop confidence and abilities to do these things well and safely."

Carter described the training scenarios as "an exciting experience."

"We would go into a virtual box in the sky, a fighter aircraft would come and engage us, and we would have to defend against them. That was an experience to see what the aircraft was capable of, and you as a pilot try to defeat all of the tactics they presented to you. It was really an exciting experience."



An aircrew from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 165th Airlift Squadron banks a C-130 Hercules over one of the islands of Hawaii.

lingo in person and see the animation that followed with it, and you could decipher what they were saying," Carter said. "At the end of the exercise, I felt like I could pretty much understand what they were talking about."

The aircrews also had time to train for less kinetic missions like search and rescue, special operations insertion via high-altitude low-opening airdrops, unfamiliar

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State partnerships thriving for Kentucky Guard

Story by Capt. Aaron VanSickle, *Kentucky National Guard State Partnership Program*

Photos by 1st Lt. Michael Reinersman, *Kentucky National Guard*

As the Kentucky National Guard closed out its annual training season and prepared for a new fiscal year, its State Partnership Program kicked into

The Kentuckians met with leaders from the Djiboutian Air Force to participate in discussions of aircraft operations and maintenance processes, procedures and lessons-learned within their respective air forces. The assessment that the Kentucky Guardsmen conducted of the Djiboutian Air Force served to evaluate both fixed and rotary wing aviation assets, training programs, maintenance and logistics procedures and

KYEM personnel and Guardsmen were able to hear SNGR experiences on how they dealt with the earthquake, which was of benefit to KYNG/KYEM as we are charged with updating the current New Madrid Seismic Zone response plan.

"This exercise covered all of our expectations, and we are very excited to be working with Kentucky again," said Jorge Martínez, Under Secretary for Preparation and Response to Adverse Events. "This is my second time to Kentucky, the first being many years ago, and I'm impressed by the how KYEM does business. I hope that this is a beginning to future collaboration between our organizations."

Kentucky's incoming SPP coordinator, and



Sgt. 1st. Class Garry Petty, fire support NCO, assigned to HHB, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, Kentucky National Guard and members of the Djiboutian Artillery Regiment observe the impact of an 155mm round from a M109A6 Paladin.

gear with three military exchanges.

Kentucky Soldiers played host to members of Djibouti's military Aug. 16-24 for a tour of military operations in the commonwealth. The field artillery Soldiers visited the 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery in the field at Fort Knox, Kentucky for a live-fire exercise. Djibouti recently acquired the M-109 howitzer and is looking to develop an artillery program of instruction for their Soldiers. The visit allowed participants to discuss numerous options for future training opportunities with Kentucky and Djibouti.

"This was a great event, very useful to see how a U.S. artillery battalion operates," said Lt. Col. Mohammed, Djibouti Artillery Regiment commander. "The Kentucky National Guard has great expertise with the M-109, and we look forward to working with them in the future to enhance our own capabilities."

In a unique joint venture, Kentucky Soldiers and Airmen traveled to Djibouti Sept. 17-21 for an Air Force security cooperation orientation.

capabilities. Information from this visit will be used to develop future engagements.

Kentucky then welcomed officials from the Ecuador National Disaster Management Agency Sept. 19-23 in Frankfort.

Secretario de Gestion de Riesgos traveled to Kentucky to meet with members of Kentucky Emergency Management and the Kentucky Guard. The Ecuadorians observed the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program (CSEPP) exercise that KYEM conducted.

The Ecuadorians were able to observe how Kentucky would handle a massive disaster response and our coordination between multiple levels of government. This could serve useful to them given the tragic earthquake that affected Ecuador earlier this year.



Sgt. 1st Class Jared Deatley assigned to Bravo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 138th Field Artillery, Kentucky National Guard orients Cpl. Souleiman Abdillahi Habaneh, Djiboutian Artillery Regiment azimuth of fire with the M2A2 Aiming Circle.

Maj. Lawrence Carta said the exchanges were just a small taste of what's hopefully to come.

"These visits are solid reminders of Kentucky's dedication to our state partners and the mission of the program to build relationships and benefit from military to military engagements as well as government to government exchanges," he said.

"The Kentucky National Guard will do we can to ensure these partnerships thrive."



EXERCISE: Maple Flag

**Kentucky and Georgia Airmen train along
side multi-national force**



Story and Photos by Senior Airman Joshua Horton,
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

More than 30 Airmen from the 123rd Airlift Wing and two Kentucky Air National Guard C-130s arrived in Edmonton, Canada between May 26 and 28 to participate in Exercise Maple Flag, an aerial combat training simulation involving troops from multiple countries.

The large-scale exercise is staged annually at Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake to allow junior aircrews to gain experience in a combat environment, said Lt. Col. Charlie Hans, chief of scheduling for the Kentucky Air Guard's 165th Airlift Squadron and the unit's mission commander for Maple Flag.

"What we've found over many years is that when pilots enter combat, their highest chance of failure is within their first 10 sorties," Hans said. "So if we can get them into a simulated combat environment and provide

"The goal is to get proficient at mission planning which includes working with other countries and aircraft"

them with some experience, then they have a much higher chance of survival."

During the exercise, the Kentucky troops will be working with Airmen from Dobbins Air Reserve Base, Georgia, along with military forces from Canada, Germany, France and Great Britain.

Airman 1st Class Alex Koehler, a Kentucky Air Guard loadmaster who is participating in Maple Flag for the first time, said he hopes the experience will allow him to "coordinate more efficiently during wartime operations."

"I hope to receive the training necessary for me to aid the Kentucky Air National Guard in maintaining a high level of mission readiness," Koehler said. "Hopefully, as a newer and younger member of the unit, this training will help me to become a more well-rounded crew member."

Hans notes that one of the goals is making sure aircrews are proficient at dealing with air-to-air and ground-to-air threats.

"We can't shoot back in a C-130," Hans said. "Our only defense is to basically hide and survive, and then get our mission done and get out of there."

"The other goal is to get proficient at mission planning," Hans continued. "When we go out and fly, there's a ton of stuff that goes on behind the scenes. This includes working together with the other countries and aircraft in order to achieve objectives and putting all that information together for a mission."



A Kentucky Air National Guard C-130 aircraft flies in the airspace above Canadian Forces Base Cold Lake, Alberta, on May 31.




Airmen from the 123rd Airlift Wing load a Kentucky Air National Guard C-130 aircraft.



Airmen from the 123rd Airlift Wing unload cargo from a Kentucky Air National Guard C-130 aircraft upon arriving in Edmonton, Canada.

HELP FROM THE AIR



Sgt. Robert Brumfield keeps his eyes on a wildfire to release water from a bambi bucket attached to a UH-60 Blackhawk in southeastern Kentucky, Nov. 7. Photo by Sgt. Tom Harrington

KENTUCKY GUARDSMEN FIGHT WILDFIRES FOR FIRST TIME IN 15 YEARS

Kentucky National Guard Public Affairs Staff Report

For the first time in 15 years, the Kentucky National Guard was called upon to assist with a wildland fire emergency in the commonwealth, Nov. 3 - 23.

The event was also the first in that timeframe to generate a state of emergency declaration from the governor's office to activate state partners in order to support firefighting efforts.

More than 300 wildfires burned more than 48,000 acres in southeastern Kentucky according to the Kentucky Division of Forestry.

"One fire got out of our fire lines and beyond our capabilities, that's when we asked to call in the National Guard," said Energy and Environment Cabinet Secretary Charles Snively.

Due to the combination of dry conditions, fallen leaves and suspected arson, wildfires grew throughout the region.

Within 48 hours of the first fire, helicopters from the 63rd Theater Aviation Brigade in Frankfort were actively participating in the wildfire battle.


With the use of bambi buckets, eight UH-60 Blackhawks provided water drops on fires burning in the area, while two UH-72 Lakotas were in the air as spotters for the Blackhawks and the Division of Forestry.

"Our aircrews train every year to be ready for missions like this," said Maj. Mike Armstrong, commander of the 751st Aviation Troop Command. "We are flying in support of the Division of Forestry and making an impact to fight the fires back and help those that are being affected by the wildfires."

The aircrews were responsible for dropping more than 1.4 million gallons of water through more than 2,400 bucket drops.

Kentucky Guardsmen train annually to stay proficient on aerial firefighting, but very few had experience prior to these fires.

"This has been a great cooperation with our state partners, specifically the Division of Forestry," said Chief Warrant Officer Vincent Benfatti, a UH-60 Blackhawk pilot. "We have worked tirelessly fighting these fires, which has served as an invaluable learning and training opportunity for our aircrews."



UH-60 Blackhawks battle wildfires in Letcher County, Kentucky, Nov. 10. Photo by Sgt. Tom Harrington



2,490

buckets dropped

1,494,000

gallons of water

577

flight hours

66

personnel

316

confirmed fires

48,214

acres burned

**A UH-60 Blackhawk fills a bambi bucket from
Pan Bowl Lake in Jackson, Kentucky, Nov. 6.
Photo by Staff Sgt. Scott Raymond**

FITNESS corner

By Lt. Col. Armand Bolotte, *123rd Airlift Wing*

Fitness: To me, fitness is only part of the overall goal, and that is a healthy body. It is more than just exercising. It's the mind and the body working in harmony to produce a healthy body. I believe that 50 percent of one's health is mental, 40 percent is nutrition and the remaining 10 percent is actual physical exercise.

Mental

Until it changes between the ears, nothing is going to happen. You have to create the mental attitude and desire to be fit that starts by making a decision to become healthy. Thought proceeds action. In order to get my mind focused, I make it a priority to review my goals multiple times a day. (Here's a tip: Put your goals on the wallpaper of your cellphone). This helps me focus on what it is I am seeking to achieve. I spend time reading books, watching videos and listening to podcasts about health, nutrition and how to keep fit in order to focus on staying healthy.

Nutrition

It's not about diets, but a change in lifestyle. For me, it was a process and I have to say I committed to that process. I had to learn the right things to eat — proteins, good carbs such as fruits and vegetables, low and good fats, avoidance of high-sugar drinks and processed sweets (my kryptonite). When I started to understand what food is and what it does to the body, I started thinking differently about what I put into my body. The example I like to remember is: You wouldn't put cheap, corn-based gasoline in a Ferrari and expect it to run at peak performance, would you? If I want my body to lose weight, get stronger and feel more energetic, I look for foods that will help achieve that goal, and I try to avoid the junk.

Exercise

It's a lot more fun than trying to eat healthy and focusing on my goals, for sure! It's funny. When we are young and agile, we can bend and twist all kinds of ways, but as we age, things start tightening up. In order to combat these effects at 51, I don't lift heavy weights like I did in my 20s. Nowadays, my focus is more on using my own body weight and spending a lot more time stretching. Yoga has become a part of my Saturday morning routine. For the annual physical fitness assessment, I start running about two to three months ahead of time and incorporate sprinting as part of the overall cardio process.



Jewell named Air National Guard Outstanding NCO of the Year

Story by Staff Sgt. John Hillier, Air National Guard Readiness Center Public Affairs

A commitment to training and improving the people around him is what motivates Tech. Sgt. Nicholas P. Jewell, the Air National Guard's 2016 Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

Jewell is a combat controller with the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron at Kentucky Air National Guard Base in Louisville. He was selected for this honor because of his professionalism both on the battlefield and in the training environment.

"Relationships are huge in this business," Jewell explained. "Trying to establish and maintain those relationships, and putting a face or name to the job is critical, because it's probably not the last time that you're going to work with that pilot or that person helping you make a mission happen. That way, they know who they're supporting."

"The most rewarding thing we do is a deployment," said Jewell. "We go out into a battlefield and integrate air power. It's not me alone, it's all of us who are bringing that to bear;

I'm just the one who's communicating it. Everyone else is backing that big picture. There are so many people who come into play and it's very rewarding when you can reach back and thank people for helping you get out there and do your job."

When mission success depends on each team member doing his or her part, there is no shortage of experienced mentors to be found.

"I can't say that my mentor was any one person," said Jewell. "When I think 'mentor,' I think about the team dynamic - especially what we have in special tactics. I have brothers who would do anything for me, and I've been surrounded by men who have been out on the battlefield doing our job at the highest level. They helped make me who I am, and they're a huge contribution to my success. Special tactics is a family like that, and that's my mentorship. It's definitely not just one person."

The life of a special tactics Airman is a continuous cycle of training and deployment, and Jewell exemplifies a dedication to improving not only his own skills, but also those of the team around him. His experience in planning and leading pre-deployment training missions for his team proved invaluable when he was tasked with standing up a joint forward observer course for the Iraqi Army.

"My plan is to mentor the next team members who come along in all the ways that I've been mentored," said Jewell. "I show them my mistakes and my flaws, make sure that they learn from me and keep to our high

standard. I feel like if you can take the Airmen below you and make them better than you, then you're doing your job. If you can do that, you've had success"

When asked about the Air Force core value most important in his job, Jewell does not hesitate to respond.



Tech. Sgt. Nicholas P. Jewell, a combat controller assigned to the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, Kentucky Air National Guard, stands near a trail at Joint Base Andrews, Md. (Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Marvin R. Preston)

"My favorite is integrity," he said. "The reason behind that is sometimes it's hard to do the right thing when nobody's looking. Actually, it can be hard to do the right thing even when everyone is looking. But having integrity helps everyone else around you. You set an example, set the tone."

"And I've made my mistakes too, just like anybody," he said. "We say that integrity is to do the right thing even when nobody's watching, but really, your Airmen are watching you."

Jewell comes from a family of Kentucky Guard members. His father retired from the 123rd after serving over 20 years; an uncle also served in the unit and Jewell's brother serves with in the 123rd with him today.

"I learned about combat control and special tactics while I was in college and it looked like a great challenge," said Jewell.

"Nothing in the job is repetitive, it's always something different. The Guard is kind of a family tradition for us. I knew there were good education benefits, but I wanted that adventure, too. I was looking for the next great thing I was going to do, and I got lucky and found something that I love."

A combat controller's job can take him anywhere in the world, and Jewell has trained and deployed with both U.S. and coalition forces across the globe.

"We go all over the states to train. Of course, I've been to Iraq and Afghanistan, and all over Europe. My top trip was definitely Spain. Their food is amazing, but the people there - the lifestyle they lead, it's so different than us. It's low key, not the 'go, go, go' lifestyle like we have here. We saw the Rock of Gibraltar; that was very cool. The old forts were amazing, too."

But all the adventure in the world can't match being home.

"After we return from training or deployment I still get to come home, and that's pretty nice," he said. "Especially when you have kids - my family's close by and they help out a lot. That's the great thing about being in the Guard here is you can set roots. For a family, it's the best dynamic that you could have."

"I still travel, and I'll continue to see more and more of the world. I've been all over the world, all over the U.S., but Kentucky's home."

Bluegrass Medical

INNOVATIVE READINESS TRAINING



Master Sgt. Nikki Nazworth (left), and Tech. Sgt. Gloria Wilson, Kentucky Air National Guard, help patients check-out after receiving medical care.

Story by 1st Lt. James W. Killen, **Photos by** Master Sgt. Phil Speck 123rd Airlift Wing, Public Affairs

More than 200 members of the U.S. Armed Forces, including scores of Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard and Sailors from the U.S. Navy Reserve, completed a 10-day mission in Western Kentucky that served local residents with over 13,000 medical, dental and optometry procedures at no cost to the patient. The mission, called Bluegrass Medical Innovative Readiness Training, was a unique collaboration between the Department of Defense and the Delta Regional Authority, a federal agency charged with economic development in the Mississippi Delta region, explained U.S. Air Force Maj. Amy Mundell, a medical administrative officer in the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Medical Group.

Several types of care were offered at three sites -- Carlisle County High School in Bardwell, Graves County High School in Mayfield and Paducah Tilghman High School in Paducah. Those services included medical screenings, dental exams and extractions, optical exams, non-emergency medical treatment, and single-prescription eyeglasses, said Mundell, who

served as the mission's officer-in-charge.

From July 18, when the clinics first opened, until they shut down on July 27, the military team performed 1,834 medical procedures, 4,483 dental procedures and 6,685 optometry procedures, according to U.S. Navy Lt. Zach Remmich, mission training officer.

The group also delivered more than 1,800 pairs of prescription eyeglasses, all made on site, and filled over \$20,000 worth of prescription and over-the-counter medications free of charge. In total, the clinics served more than 4,000 patients and delivered care with an economic impact of more than \$1.5 million.

IRT missions are designed to provide military health care professionals with an opportunity to train in a real-world setting, where members must deploy to a remote location, set up clinics and begin providing care, much as they would when responding to a natural disaster or military operation. For many serving on this mission in Western Kentucky, the larger benefit was the opportunity to make a difference in the community by caring for uninsured or underinsured patients.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Donna Stewart, special medical element officer for the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing and one of the primary care providers at

Bluegrass Medical IRT, said she was proud of the work being done.

"We're helping the community," said Stewart, who is also a deputy medical examiner for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. "We are providing medical care in so many different ways for people who don't have access to easy medical care or are without enough money to be able to provide for basic medical needs or prescription medications."

The community deeply appreciated those services, according to Kim Durbin, superintendent of Graves County Public Schools, who addressed a group of IRT members during a meeting at Graves County High School on Monday.

"You are providing a service for our kids and our parents that is going to give them a leg up when they start school," Durbin told the servicemembers. "There are many barriers students have when learning, like medical issues, dental issues and needing eyeglasses. As I was walking in tonight, I saw the cutest little kid with brand new eyeglasses, and he was so proud!"

"That does my heart good, because you are providing our students with a service that is going to help them be successful this school year. I personally want to say thank you."

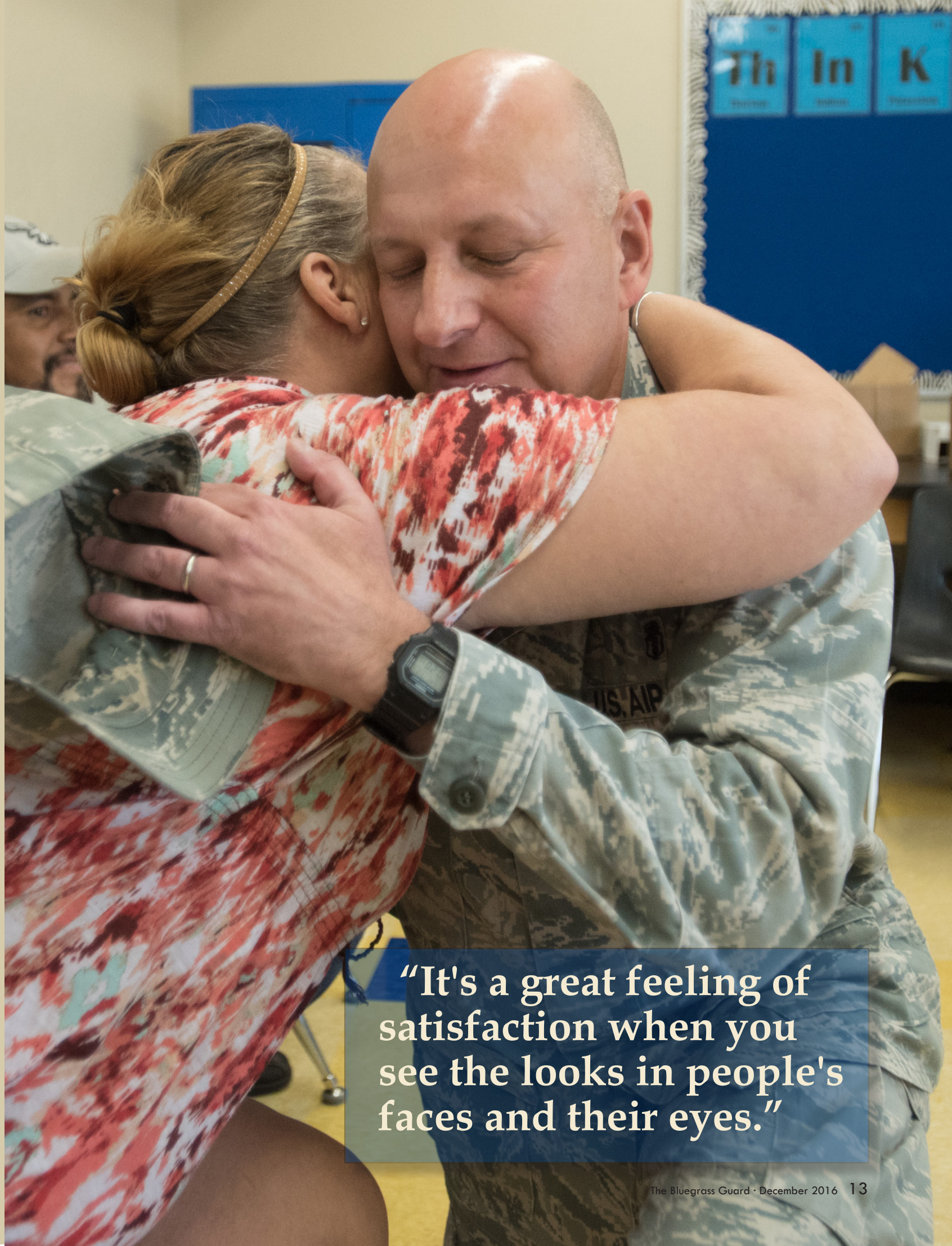
Community reaction to the IRT can also be seen on the group's Facebook page where patients like Alma Parrott posted comments expressing thanks.

"God Bless all with this program in all three locations," Parrott wrote. "Thank you for being so wonderful to us. Your training and talents were top notch. Pray this program will come back. Love n happiness to each!"

Among the many providers were junior troops like U.S. Navy Reserve hospital corpsman Hasmeed Machuca, who described the exercise as tremendously rewarding.

"It's a great feeling of satisfaction when you see the looks in people's faces and their eyes," Machuca said.

Bluegrass Medical IRT had other benefits, too, including the training opportunities provided to non-medical troops in logistics, communications, food services and the command element. "The opportunity for our supporting troops to really put their professional skills to use is a tremendous benefit to all the units



"It's a great feeling of satisfaction when you see the looks in people's faces and their eyes."



here and the development of our future readiness capabilities," Mundell said.

U.S. Navy Cmdr. Ryan Starkey, mission assistant officer in charge, was equally pleased by the high level of integration between members of the U.S. Navy, the Air National Guard and Army National Guard during the IRT mission.

"This has been one of the most successful joint military operations I have seen in my 20-year career," Starkey said.



(Clockwise from the top) Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Tina Girot provides dental care. Air Force Staff Sgt. Jonathon Engler checks a child's vision. Navy Cmdr. Sharlene Gee performs a vision test. Air Force Maj. Lauren Voegel confers with a patron. Air Force Staff Sgt. Katy Jewell processes paperwork for a dental examination from Western Kentucky resident Troy Burgess.



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Public Health Team

INNOVATIVE READINESS TRAINING

Story by 1st Lt. James W. Killen, **Photos by** Master Sgt. Phil Speck / 123rd Airlift Wing, Public Affairs

More than 150 military health care professionals have provided thousands of medical, dental and optical services at three sites in Western Kentucky since July 18 as part of a mission to serve uninsured or underinsured residents, but a smaller team has been making a big impact, too.

That group of four Airmen, all from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing, is called Public Health, explained U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Carolyn Congleton.

Public Health's usual mission is to monitor deployed environments for potential biological, environmental or safety threats so troops remain safe. In Western Kentucky, however, they've also

“Dog bites, bats and heat-related illnesses are the primary concerns”

been working with local health officials to conduct preventative education programs.

While the team may be small, their impact can be tremendous, said Congleton, chief of Public Health for the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Medical Group.

“There are only four of us on site right now, but the community outreach work we're doing can pay tremendous benefits to the health of the community later,” she said.

U.S. Air Force Capt. Lauren Lwanga, public health officer for the 123rd Medical Group, agreed.

“Public health is about prevention and education,” she said. “We want to prepare our troops and the public, because if we all know about the causes of disease, we'll know what to do to prevent them,” Lwanga said.

The Public Health team has shared its expertise with public health departments in Carlisle, Graves and McCracken counties while working with those departments to learn more about health issues impacting Western Kentucky, Lwanga said.

The team is just one component of the Bluegrass Medical Innovative Readiness Training exercise, which has deployed more than 200 Air National Guard, Army National Guard, active-duty U.S. Navy and Navy Reserve troops to Bardwell, Mayfield and Paducah, Ky., from July 18 to 27 to provide no-cost health care to area residents. To date, hundreds of patients have benefited from the program, giving the Public Health team a ready audience for preventative education.

“We've been able to use the IRT as a platform to disseminate a great deal of local public health information,” Lwanga said. “Many of those residents may otherwise never have had the opportunity to get it.”

Most of the public health issues in the local community concern animals and summer heat, according to Congleton.

“Dog bites, bats and heat-related illnesses are the primary concerns,” she said. “This being a rural area, there are no leash laws, and many dogs are not only owned as pets, they additionally guard property and farms.”

Besides community outreach efforts, Congleton releases a daily public health note for the troops here, in order to emphasize prevention and readiness. One of the major troop-related concerns in Western Kentucky is dehydration.

“Temperatures here move well into the 90s, so it is easy to become dehydrated,” Congleton said. “The more the Airmen, Sailors and Soldiers know about prevention, the less potential there is for heat-related illnesses.”

The team also works to help prevent issues related to work fatigue. Those issues can be serious, so every effort is made to keep the troops here working as safely and efficiently as possible.

“Like any military unit, our number-one priority is the mission,” Congleton said. “Through training and readiness, we ensure the health and safety of our troops who carry out that mission.”

The team has accomplished some training unrelated to the IRT mission, too.

Team members set mosquito traps -- not because mosquitos are a public health concern in Western Kentucky, but because they are in other areas of the world, and as an integral part of the 123rd Airlift Wing, Public Health could be called to deploy anywhere at a moment's notice.

“We set mosquito traps to give our troops an opportunity to understand where, when and how to set traps,” Lwanga said. “Our base in Louisville (Kentucky) does not have a great number of places to test these skills, but Western Kentucky offers that type of environment, so it's a great training opportunity.”



Lt. Col. Carolyn Congleton holds a kitten while conducting a pet safety seminar to residents of Western Kentucky as part of the IRT.

Kentucky Air Guard Civil Engineers Renovates Moldovan School



Airmen remove stone and brick work from the kitchen of Special School #12. The institution is the only school in Moldova specifically for deaf and special-needs students.

Story and Photos by Tech. Sgt. Vicky Spesard, 123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Airmen from the Kentucky Air National Guard began refurbishing the only school for hearing-impaired students in Moldova June 3, working in partnership with officials from the Republic of Moldova and U.S. European Command.

The humanitarian project will demolish the existing kitchen at Special School #12, update electrical service and plumbing, and install new tile, appliances and an improved food preparation area, according to U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Phillip Howard, commander of the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Civil Engineer Squadron. Outside the school, a new basketball court will be added.

"We're here to improve the school for the students, and that's the most important thing for us," Howard said of his unit, which is based in Louisville, Kentucky. "We want to do everything we can to make this a great project for the community."

At the same time, the project also provides the Kentucky Air Guardsmen with "an outstanding opportunity to

train in a deployed environment while strengthening bilateral relations with our Moldovan colleagues," Howard said. "We're excited to be here and excited about the project."

Working side by side with the Airmen are five Moldovan National Army soldiers stationed at the Military Academy of the Moldovan National Army. The Academy is providing living quarters for more than 35 Kentucky Airmen during the project, which is sponsored by the Office of Defense Cooperation Moldova and U.S. European Command, with funding provided by the National Guard Bureau.

U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Brendan Bartlett, chief of ODC Moldova, emphasized that no nation can confront today's challenges alone.

"What the Air National Guardsmen do here will have a profound effect on the school and on the community as a whole," he said. "We have had a long-standing relationship with the National Guard Bureau and are very grateful for their efforts here."

In addition to the renovation project, the Airmen are volunteering their time to help with minor repairs to La Via Moldova, a local after-school program for at-risk students.

Assisting in the overall effort are U.S. Army Reservists from the 457th Civil Affairs Detachment, Grafenwoehr, Germany, who are supporting communication and cultural understanding between the Air Guard and local Moldovan community.

"Our mission is to support the engineers by making sure the community understands why they are here," explained U.S. Army Maj. Kris Chow, civil affairs team commander.

The Kentucky Air Guard is expected to complete its portion of the project in mid-June before handing off the remainder of the work to the Iowa Air National Guard's 185th Civil Engineer Squadron from Sioux City, Iowa.

The overall scope of the project is two-fold, according to U.S. Air Force Capt. Adam McIntyre, the duration project manager and an engineering officer for the 185th CES.

"This project allows Guardsmen to utilize and hone their skills in new and challenging environment," said McIntyre. "But, we are also here to build a better future for the Moldovan people."



Playing soccer with local children became a daily activity for the Airmen while in Moldova.



ARMY TOTAL FORCE INITIATIVE UNDERWAY

KENTUCKY NATIONAL GUARD ALIGNS WITH THE 101ST AIRBORNE

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Alexa Becerra, 133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Soldiers from the 2123rd Transportation Company participated in a patching ceremony with the 129th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Sustainment Brigade at Fort Knox, Kentucky, Oct. 22, 2016.

The 2123rd, stationed in Richmond, Kentucky, now dons the 101st Airborne Division patch, the screaming eagle, as part of the associated units program. The 2123rd will be aligned with the 129th CSSB for training purposes until 2018. The 2123rd is the first unit in the Kentucky Army National Guard to be selected to participate in this program.

"It is an honor to be one of only two units selected to be associated with the historic 101st," said 1st Lt. S. Logan Weiler III, commander of the 2123rd. "The 101st mission for the 2123rd is to be prepared to deploy with short or no notice to austere environments with internal assets."

The program is part of an Army Total Force initiative, and its objective is to leverage the capabilities and capacities of the active component, Army Reserve and the Army National Guard as one Army, according to Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Mark Milley. The Army has scheduled 12 unit pairings across all three

components. The 101st will also partner with the 1176th Transportation Company from the Tennessee National Guard.

With this partnership, the demand to achieve and maintain readiness has been radically increased, said Wieler.

"I believe this partnership will bring a lot of opportunities for the state, more resources and also motivate our Soldiers and help with retention in the unit," said 1st Sgt. Randy White with the 2123rd.

The unit will train alongside the 129th CSSB in the spring and is also slated to conduct annual training with them, said

White.

"We are honored to have this opportunity," said Spc. Joseph Carlson, a Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic for the 2123rd. "To be able to be a part of the 101st and still be a part of the Kentucky Army National Guard is something I am very proud of, and I know my family will be too."

"The greatest change you can see in the Soldiers of the 2123rd is the Air Assault culture," said Weiler. "Soldiers are preparing for the rigorous demand of the Air Assault school and maintain 101st Airborne standards: 4 mile run in under 36 minutes and 12 mile ruck in under three hours."

After the ceremony, Brig. Gen. Scott E. Brower, acting commander of the 101st Airborne Division, surveyed the training area for the 2123rd and took time to speak to several Soldiers about the new partnership.

"How many of you want to go to Air Assault?" asked Brower. After the majority of the Soldiers raised their hands, he proceeded to explain to them the requirements and also that there are parts of the program that still need to be refined.

But as for the association, Brower reminded them that they all belong to one Army.

"As of now, I am not sure if you will still be wearing the 101st patch if Governor Bevin calls you up on State Active Duty," said Brower. "But at the end of the day it doesn't matter what patch you wear on your shoulder, the patch that matters is the one on your chest that says U.S. Army."



Kentucky Guardsmen with the 2123rd Transportation Company wear the 101st Airborne Division patch.



Brig. Gen. Scott Brower, acting commander of the 101st Airborne Division speaks to Guardsmen of the 2123rd Transportation Company.

UNIQUE PROGRAM KEEPS SPECIAL OPERATORS HEALTHY



Story and Photos by Tech. Sgt. Vicky Spesard, 123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Pararescuemen from the Kentucky Air National Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron spend their deployments evacuating troops wounded in combat, but what happens when one of them gets injured?

Master Sgt. Jeff Gantt, a pararescueman with the 123rd STS, thought his career as a special operations Airman was over as he was being medevaced out of Afghanistan.

"In my mind, I knew it was over," Gantt said. "There would be no way that I could recover from basically a broken back, and expect to jump, dive and carry a load of gear across rugged terrain."

That was two and a half years ago. Today, Gantt is on full combat status and an active member of the

squadron thanks to the development of the 123rd STS Human Performance Program.

The HPP is a holistic approach to caring for the health of special operators here, using strength and conditioning programs, performance testing, injury assessments, physical therapy, corrective exercise and nutrition education. The objective of the program is to prevent injuries with screening and proper exercise, rehabilitate existing injuries, and develop well-rounded fitness.

"The mind-set that working out is all about how hard you hit the gym and how fast your run can be was one of the major hurdles we had to overcome when the program began here at the base," said Jake Kilbride, facility manager and a soft-tissue expert.

"Breaking that mold and have us come in and show them how to do correct movements, along with injury prevention and rehabilitative techniques, we have seen chronic injuries go way down and performance levels go way up."

Performance level was a major factor to Gantt as he began using the individualized workout and rehabilitation program created for him by the HPP staff.

"It was hard coming in every day when I first started the program," Gantt explained. "I wasn't used to slowing down and working out in the way the staff wanted me to. It really was a challenge every day I came in, and the guys here would never let me quit. They encouraged me, taught me better techniques, monitored my progress and made adjustments to my plan."

Top Left: Jake Kilbride, a licensed massage therapist, administers a soft tissue massage on 2nd Lt. Russ LeMay.



Left: Senior Master Sgt. William Hardin, works out with free-weights during a session at the Human Performance Program facility.



“The guys” mentioned by Gantt are Kilbride, Rich Moravec and Will Lawhorn, all certified strength and conditioning coaches, each with additional skills and certifications.

Gantt and other STS operators say they have experienced positive results and progress, and they attribute that progress to HPP.

While the program grew in participants, it also expanded in its different capabilities. New workout apparatuses and new physical testing and evaluation equipment were added.

“One of my goals for this program is the education aspect,” explained Lt. Col. Sean McLane, commander of the 123rd STS, who was instrumental in bringing HPP to the squadron. “Teach our guys how to work out intelligently, avoid and recognize an injury; step back and get help for that injury and not just push through it.

“They’re doing a variety of techniques that teach them how to jump and absorb the force better, land better, climb better, run better,” McLane continued. “The HPP develops the operators and helps them sustain a usable career, longer.”

Having a longer career as a special operations Airman was the driving force for Gantt, whose steadfast commitment to HPP helped him get back into the physical condition that he is in today. He also credits the dedication of the staff who built a personal connection to him and many of the STS operators.

“I could walk into the facility and just by my walk or attitude I was portraying, the guys would know what my body could do that day and make adjustments to my work out on the spot,” Gantt said. “I know that I am a viable special operator because of what we’re doing here.

“I think this program adds literally years to a special operator’s operational life, which is substantial to the military. Having my health back is everything to me.”



Top: Will Lawson, lead athletic trainer and strength coach for the 123rd Special Tactics Squadron’s Human Performance Program, measures the maximal oxygen uptake of Staff Sgt. Robert Willging.

Left: Master Sgt. Jeff Gantt, uses his individualized conditioning and maintenance program designed by HPP staff, as a rehabilitation tool.

THE BEST WARRIOR

SOLDIERS COMPETE FOR TOP HONOR

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

Kentucky Guardsmen competed in what was billed as the most challenging Best Warrior Competition yet at the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Greenville, Ky., Oct. 27-29.

No one disagreed with that assessment. "This competition was the most comprehensive that we've ever done in the state," said state Command Sgt. Maj. David Munden. "As we've seen these Best Warrior competitions evolve over the years, we've realized we needed to improve ours here and add more demanding, thorough events."

For three days, competitors were tested mentally and physically in the staples of such competitions including Army Warrior Tasks, land navigation and weapon qualification. But new events like the confidence course and combat run only added to the physical toll taken by a 10-mile road march and expanded stress shoot.

"This experience is probably the hardest thing I've ever done in my life, physically and mentally, there was a lot that played into it," said Sgt. James Barnett from the 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery and this year's NCO of the Year.

"One thing that I will take from this is to constantly push yourself, realizing you're one step closer to being done with it. Whether I finished, won or lost, I know I put everything I had into this and left nothing out there."

Barnett said he will look forward to doing it again if selected but had some advice for new competitors next year.

"Ruck, study and run, that's the three keys to success," said Barnett.

Soldiers with Kentucky's 238th Regimental Training Institute assisted with the organization of the event and oversaw the execution and scoring. After scores from each day were tallied, no clear winner emerged until the last day's events, something competitors could see from their perspectives.

"Competition was fierce, all the way to the end and everyone that came here was qualified to be named Best Warrior," said Spc. Phillip Henson from Detachment 1, 207th Horizontal Construction Company.

"We can go back to our units with



Sgt. James Barnett (left) is named NCO of the Year, Spc. Zachary Cox (center) is named Soldier of the Year and Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Lewis is named Senior

NCO of the Year at the Kentucky Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition.

Sgt. James Barnett, drags a dummy during the stress shoot at the Kentucky Army National Guard's Best Warrior Competition. This was one of several events Barnett had to master to gain the title of NCO of the Year.

everything we've learned up to this point and continue to utilize that information to train new Soldiers and ourselves. This will better prepare us as Soldiers in the Kentucky National Guard."

The expanded event also gave the Kentucky Guard and the 238th a good rehearsal for the Regional Best Warrior Competition that Kentucky will host in Greenville in April of 2017.





Sgt. Tosha Cobler climbs and obstacle on the confidence course Oct. 27.



Spc. Zachary Cox, left and Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Lewis, center run during the 10-mile road march Oct. 28.



Spc. Zachary Cox low carries full water jugs during the combat run Oct. 29.



Sgt. Tosha Cobler low crawls through the confidence course Oct. 27.



Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Dickson moves through the weaver on the confidence course Oct. 27.

Nine Kentucky National Guard Soldiers from units across the state competed in the Best Warrior competition, a grueling three-day event to prove themselves worthy of the title of Kentucky's Outstanding Soldier, NCO, and Senior NCO of the Year. Only three would be awarded the coveted title, which will be celebrated at the annual Kentucky Outstanding Soldier Airman of the Year banquet on March 4, 2017, in front of family, friends, and fellow Soldiers and Airmen from Kentucky.

Fighting fire with collaboration

Air Guard experience aids Soldier training



Soldiers with the 761st Firefighting Team battle a blaze during an annual training exercise at the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center in Alpena, Mich., June 14.

Story and Photo By Capt. Matthew Riley,
761st Firefighting Team

Commanding an Army National Guard Fire Fighting Detachment is a unique opportunity for any officer.

I admit that when I received a call from my battalion commander telling me I was being moved from my command of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 206th Engineer Battalion to the 761st, I was not thrilled. I had no experience in the field of firefighting. But I saluted, moved out, and determined to make the best of it.

Little did I know the educating, eye-opening experience I was in for.

One of my first directives was to cultivate a relationship with the fire department of the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Airlift Wing. During a meeting in November 2015, the 761st was invited to join the 123rd for Annual Training (AT) at Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center in Alpena, Michigan. The training site was the second organization in the National Guard to be certified as a Joint National Training Center, claims the largest airspace east of the Mississippi River and encompasses 147,000 acres for use by ground maneuver units.

AT was set for June 12-19, 2016. The 761st and 123rd firefighters traveled to Alpena via a C-130. This mode of transportation allowed the 761st to treat the AT like a deployment and Soldiers were trained accordingly, to include a deliberate Reception, Staging, Onward Movement, and

Integration piece.

In the early stages of the joint training, several Airmen and Soldiers were apprehensive of working side-by-side. But only a couple days later everything clicked and the reluctance was replaced with requests for more of the same.

The primary focus was on completing Training and Evaluation Outline tasks such as: airfield rescue firefighting, structural firefighting/search and rescue, vehicle fire/extrication, HAZMAT incident operations, fire department maintenance and water tanker re-supply operations

A major benefit of joint training was the sharing of knowledge from subject matter experts. The majority of Soldiers assigned to the 761st are young and/or inexperienced fire fighters, while the 123rd Airmen are senior and seasoned, most of whom are civilian firefighters as well. It was incredibly profitable for our Soldiers to be instructed and validated by them.

As a firefighting team, the 761st could at any time be called to assist local civilian

agencies. The training allowed 761st Soldiers to experience integration with another firefighting agency. As a commander, it was a genuine pleasure to watch my soldiers enthusiastically throw themselves headlong into training. It was equally gratifying to see them engage so professionally with firefighters from a sister service.

A byproduct of that cooperation is a synergy for future real-world missions in Kentucky. The firefighters of the Kentucky Army and Air National Guard worked exceptionally well together. If an emergency situation in the Commonwealth of Kentucky required both military firefighting agencies to work together, we will be well prepared to do so.

Whatever doubts I had last year about commanding a firefighting unit were quickly disappearing as multiple Soldiers of the 761st commented that had learned more from this AT than during previous training events.

The Army works in mysterious ways. If someone had told me a year ago that I would soon be 'changing units, taking command of Soldiers with a job I had no idea about, and I need to work with the Air Force?' It certainly would have been one of the greatest shocks of my career.

Serving as the Commander of the 761st Engineer Detachment has proven to be a great experience and leading in a joint AT venture with the Air Guard has been the highlight.



Soldiers with the 761st Firefighting Team.

BOSS LIFT GIVES CIVILIAN EMPLOYERS UP-CLOSE LOOK AT 123RD AIRLIFT WING

Story and Photo By Master Sgt. Phil Speck, 123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

Nearly two-dozen civilian employers spent the day with the 123rd Airlift Wing Oct. 26, meeting Airmen and learning about the unit's mission as part of a "Bosslift" sponsored by the Kentucky Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

The employers, who included a mayor, a police chief and factory supervisors, also flew on a Kentucky Air Guard C-130 to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, to tour the National Museum of the United States Air Force.

Bosslifts are designed to enhance understanding between National Guardsmen and the civilian employers for whom they work when they're not on duty, explained U.S. Army Maj. Gen. D. Alan Youngman, a retired adjutant general for the Kentucky National Guard who now serves as state chairman for ESGR.

"This gives employers who have people that work for them in the Guard and Reserve a chance to see firsthand what those employees do with their military duties," Youngman said. "It really gives them an appreciation for how important these folks are to our national defense, which in turn reinforces their criticality of being supported by their civilian employers."

The day's activities began with a mission briefing by the wing commander, Col. David Mounkes, followed by a briefing on ESGR's history and purpose.

Mounkes expressed his gratitude to the employers for their interest in the Bosslift and the Kentucky Air National Guard, telling them that the role they play is "essential to the defense of our nation."

"The Air Force relies greatly on traditional Guardsmen to perform its mission, and without your support as civilian employers of those Guardsmen, we wouldn't be able to do our jobs," Mounkes said.

Youngman explained to the employers that ESGR is a Department of Defense program that promotes supportive work environments for service members through outreach, recognition and educational opportunities that increase awareness of applicable laws.

It also helps resolve employment



Employers, ESGR Representatives and Kentucky Air Guardsmen stand in front of a 123rd Airlift Wing C-130 Hercules after completing the ESGR "Bosslift".

conflicts between service members and their employers.

Following the briefings, employers were given a tour of the base and met Airmen from several functional areas, including the 123rd Contingency Response Group, 123rd Special Tactics Squadron, 123rd Force Support Squadron, the 123rd Explosive Ordnance Disposal Flight, Emergency Management and the Fatality Search and Recovery Team.

The employers then had lunch in the base dining facility and boarded a C-130 Hercules aircraft for an orientation flight en route to the Air Force museum, where they viewed an exhibit on Battlefield Airmen.

The exhibit has special significance to the Kentucky Air Guard because it includes a diorama on the Battle at Takur Ghar, during which Tech. Sgt. Keary Miller, a former pararescueman from the wing's 123rd STS, played a prominent role.

Miller was awarded the Silver Star for his actions during the 15-hour firefight on an Afghan mountain, helping save numerous comrades while repeatedly putting his own life in extreme danger.

The day's activities made a lasting impression on many of the employers, several of whom had little prior knowledge of the wing's missions or engagement in operations all over the world.

"I've driven by the base forever, and I love planes," said Tom Raver, owner of

Fireplace Distributors Inc.

He described the tours and briefings as "eye opening," adding that the C-130 orientation flight "was very exciting to me."

Craig Burcham, director of operations at Louisville-based sporting goods firm Hillerich & Bradsby Co., agreed.

"Half of everything I learned today was something new," he said. "I was unaware of how involved the Air Guard is with the community, state, country and overseas. I'm familiar with some of the IT equipment that was being used, but it was interesting to see how it was being used by the military."

Youngman said events like the Bosslift also help employers recognize the benefits of military service, which their

Citizen Airmen bring to the civilian workplace.

"The Bosslift gives employers insight into why those people are so good at work," he said. "The levels of responsibilities and skills that they demonstrate in uniform reinforce the value of that employee when he or she is at their civilian job."

"Some of these employers had no prior up-close experience with the United States Air Force and had not seen what the wing was capable of. I think everyone came in with a high level of expectation, but the 123rd Airlift Wing just blew them away with how professional, capable and competent everyone was."

Godspeed 149th MET!



Kentucky National Guard leadership joined friends and family to say farewell to the 149th Military Engagement Team at a departure ceremony in Richmond, Ky., Nov. 12. The team is scheduled to deploy to the Middle East later this month.

"Today we honor some of the best Soldiers the Kentucky National Guard has to offer and we're proud of what they do and the unique skill set they bring to this mission," said Brig. Gen. Benjamin Adams III, Kentucky's Director of the Joint Staff.

The 149th Military Engagement Team will conduct military-to-military engagements and information exchanges with regional military partners in the Middle East and Central and South Asia in support of U.S. Army Central Command.

The MET will use its members' extensive military and civilian skills to promote cooperation, regional security and regional stability one engagement and one relationship at a time with partner nations.

"Our team has a wide variety of knowledge, experience that will contribute to the success of our mission," said Lt. Col. Joseph Gardner, commander of the 149th MET. "Regardless of your political positions, Soldiers connect with Soldiers, that can help assure military to military cooperation around the globe."

Gardner took the opportunity to introduce each member of the team and the experience and skillset each brings to the mission. From law enforcement to construction project management or marketing, the wide array of talents the Soldiers bring adds to the team's abilities and its unity Gardner said. The majority of the team comes from units within Kentucky's largest brigade, the 149th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade.

"As the commander of the 149th MEB, it is with a great deal of pride that we send this team forward with our representation, our colors and our symbol," said Col. Alexander Stewart. "The opportunity to meet with counterparts of foreign nations and build long-lasting partnerships is a privilege only a few will encounter in their military careers, and it's a great tribute to the quality of the Soldiers and leadership we have in the Kentucky National Guard that this team will represent the United States in this mission."