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NING QRF & SUPER BOWL XLVIII

Stories on page 2 and 6



Pfc. Jasen Bellusci watches the area around the rail line in Secaucus as a New Jersey Transit train passes overhead carrying fans to the Super Bowl, Feb. 2, 2014. Dozens of Citizen-Soldiers with Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System mounted on Humvees were positioned along the train routes as part of a massive security for the big game at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Kryn P. Westhoven / Released)

QRF at West Orange

Cavalry was ready to ride during Super Bowl

Story by Army Staff Sgt. Landis Andrews, 444th MPAD



Spc. John Parks, B-Troop, 102nd Cavalry Regiment guides a Humvee back into position on the drill floor of the West Orange Armory on Super Bowl Sunday. More than 100 Soldiers called the armory home for the game as part of the contingency force for the NFL championship game at The Meadowlands. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Kryn P. Westhoven / Released)

On Super Bowl Sunday, the Denver Broncos and the Seattle Seahawks had one thing on their minds: winning the NFL Championship. A few miles away, a select group of New Jersey National Guardsmen stood ready with something else on their mind: the safety and security of the more than 90,000 people at Metlife Stadium, there to watch Super Bowl XLVIII.

Soldiers of the 102nd Cavalry Regiment weren't at Super Bowl parties or at sports bars watching the big game, as the rest of America was doing. Instead, they were at the West Orange Armory ready to deploy in the event of an emergency in or around the stadium in East Rutherford.

Spc. Joseph Tomb of Newark, Del., was a part of the 102nd's Sandy relief efforts and says this mission had an entirely different feel to it.

"Tonight, we are ready to deploy to the stadium in the event of a civil disturbance, act of God or some crazy, unforeseen attack," said Tomb. "For Sandy, we were more of a humanitarian force, there to help and be a comforting presence."

The 21-year-old Soldier says he and his soldiers are ready for whatever might get thrown at them.

"My Soldiers and I have gotten great training and have been advised by other guys who have been through similar experiences," said Tomb. "I have the utmost faith that if, God forbid, we get deployed in the event of an emergency, we will be ready for whatever gets thrown at us."

Sgt. 1st Class Mauricio Vega was on this same field for a Welcome Home event for the 50th Brigade Combat Team but says he didn't want to see the field during the game.

"I told my guys, 'we were on the 50 yard line of this field before,'" said Vega. "But, if we find ourselves in that same spot tonight, some-

thing went horribly wrong and we are going to have to help fix it."

Even though they are on call, these men won't be missing the biggest game of the year. In the cafeteria of the armory, they set up a projection screen and concert-style speakers so they can see and feel the game. And, on top of that, Spc. John Parks tried to ensure that his battle buddies got to have the Super Bowl party feel.

"I reached out to a lot of local establishments and they were all more than happy to donate food, snacks and other favors that allowed us to have a party of our own," said Parks. "None of us are going to be able to be with our family and friends during the game, so I wanted to make sure that we could have a good time even though we would be on call."

Consequently, Costco, BJ's, Sam's Club, Buffalo Wild Wings and T.G.I. Fridays were among the stores that donated to the party. But, one local establishment took it one step further.

"Market Place donated a six-foot sub for us to eat during the game and asked for us to spend a bit of time with them," said Parks.

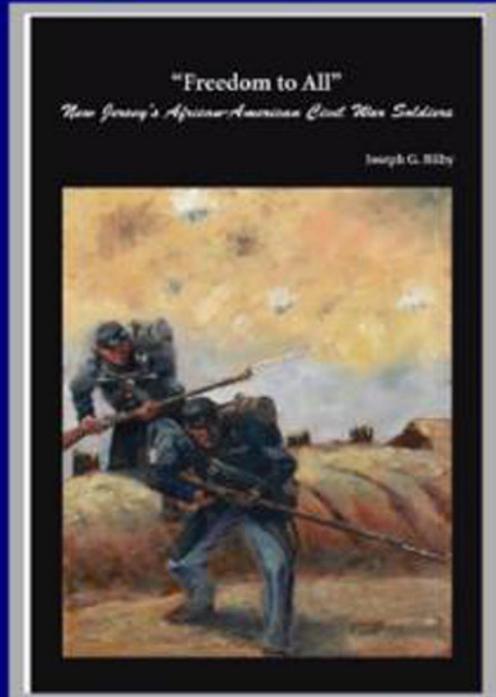
In addition, they presented them with a certificate of appreciation and took a group photo with them in front of their vehicle, said Parks. "They really made us feel welcome and we could tell they genuinely wanted to help us out."

Vega says his guys are happy to be supporting the NFL's biggest game and will have their own Super Bowl stories to tell. Whether they get called to the stadium or not, they were a part of the experience and are proud of it.

"Some of our men have been on three or four deployments, and they all will tell you that there is nothing better than being activated in support of the State of New Jersey," said Vega.

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Federal agencies partner to protect veterans educational programs



New Online complaint system empowers students, strengthens enforcement

The Departments of Veterans Affairs, Defense, Education and Justice, along with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and the Federal Trade Commission announced Jan. 30, the launch of a new online complaint system designed to collect feedback from veterans, service members and their families who are experiencing problems with educational institutions receiving funding from federal military and veterans educational benefits programs, including benefits programs provided by the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the DOD Military Tuition Assistance Program.

The centralized online reporting system is designed for veterans, service members and eligible dependents to report negative experiences with educational institutions; and gives the federal government the information needed to identify and address unfair, deceptive, and misleading practices and ensure high quality academic and student support services are available for veterans, service members, and their families.

“The online complaint system empowers veterans and their dependents and provides them a direct line to VA and our partner agencies,” said Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary for Benefits, Department of Veterans Affairs. “The feedback we receive from veterans, service members and their families will help us strengthen enforcement of the ‘Principles of Excellence’ for institutions of higher learning serving veterans and their families to ensure students are receiving the education benefits they have earned and deserve.”

“Our service members and their families now have an easier and efficient way to provide feedback on their civilian educational

experiences, which will ensure we have the right information to identify and address any negative practices,” said Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Jessica Wright.

Students can submit a complaint if they believe their school is failing to follow the Principles of Excellence, (i.e. unfair recruiting practices, credit transfer or change in degree requirements) through the centralized online reporting system accessed via the [Department of Defense](#) and [GI Bill](#) websites. When feedback is received, agencies will contact the school on behalf of the student and work toward a resolution. Complaints and their resolution will be forwarded to the Federal Trade Commission Consumer Sentinel Network, accessible by over 650 federal, state and local law enforcement agencies for use in enhancing and coordinating law enforcement investigations.

Executive Order 13607, signed April 27, 2012, addresses reports of unfair, deceptive or misleading behavior toward veterans, service members and their families pursuing higher education and directs agencies to establish, implement and promote compliance with “Principles of Excellence” for educational institutions receiving funding from federal military and veterans educational benefits programs for America’s veterans, service members and eligible dependents, including preventing abusive and deceptive recruiting practices. The new online complaint system is one of a range of tools being implemented by the federal government to ensure that service members, veterans and eligible dependents have access to meaningful information about the cost and quality of educational institutions.



After winning the New Jersey National Guard Spouse of the Year award, Randi Cairns was selected as one of three National Guard spouses to compete for the Military Spouse of the Year. Below she tells us a little about herself and her goals if she is chosen the winner of MSOY.

Voting for the winner of MSOY is going on now and you can help Randi by voting for her at <http://www.msos.militaryspouse.com/vote/#view/19583/1763895>.

Tell us a little bit about you! I'm a proud military spouse and mother of four (Katie, PJ, Connor and Sara). I have been the Family Readiness Group (FRG) leader for my husband's several deployments, also served in that role during his time as a Company commander and have worked continuously with military family support efforts for more than 20 years.

In addition, I was honored with a Chamber Choice Award from the East Brunswick Regional Chamber of Commerce Charitable Foundation for outstanding contributions and service to community and country (2009) and with the Chairman's Award from the New Jersey Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve in recognition of exceptional support of service members and their families (2010). I was recognized by Babble.com as a "mom changing the world" and by Harlequin More Than Words as a "real-life heroine who is improving her community" (both in 2011). I received a "shout out" on the Colbert Report (2012) and was recently the recipient of the National Infantry Association's Shield of Sparta - Heroine of Infantry award (2013). I currently serve on the Military Family Advisory Network's Advisory Board.

Hobbies: I love cooking and feeding people, reading and every moment I get to spend with my hubby and four kiddos.

Share something funny/random/interesting about you: I gave birth to my third child in a restaurant bathroom less than 45 minutes after my obstetrician told me I wasn't in labor. My son is now 10 and is still known locally as "the Olive Garden baby"!

What is something you've learned from being a military spouse? I've learned that I'm far stronger than I often give myself credit for. But more important, I've learned that I don't always need to be strong and that there's an amazing community of military spouse support available to me!

In your opinion, what is one of the most important issues facing military families? Visibility (more specifically lack thereof) is one of the most important issues to impact our families. When such a small percentage of our country's population serves on behalf of an entire nation - it is easy to overlook their service and sacrifice. This is particularly the case for our Guard and Reserve families who live in civilian communities and are often far removed from support and resources.



In your opinion, what is one of the best aspects of being in a military family? PRIDE! My family knows the cost of freedom and it's a price we're proud to pay. My children take nothing for granted - they're generous, compassionate and patriotic and, while I'd like to take full credit for lots of that, I know that their experiences as military kids have promoted those very same values.

What is one thing you would want to accomplish with the MSOY title? When I first met my husband, I didn't know what it meant to be a military wife. I just knew that I loved a Soldier. And that my love was strong enough to weather whatever life might hand us. In those early days, Ian was a typical "weekend warrior". I lent him to the Army one weekend a month and two weeks during the summer. And I missed him terribly when he was gone. Especially those two weeks - they were a lifetime without him.

But September 11th changed that. Suddenly, he was deploying as often as the Active Duty guys - New Orleans, Guantanamo, Afghanistan. I was in a new world struggling to "keep it together" on the home front. To make sure the kids were hanging in there and that the house remained standing and that life remained as "normal" as is possible when someone you love is a world away and in danger.

And I knew I wasn't alone. But our families are often invisible. The communities where the typical citizen Soldier lives don't understand the 24/7 implications of being the ones left behind when a Soldier is called to serve. Military spouses frequently go into "survival mode" when their Soldier deploys. If it's not bleeding or hungry, it's not an emergent need. We have a right to step outside of survival mode, to have needs met before a crisis arises and to live in compassionate and supportive communities.

Everything I do is about building those kinds of communities. We've heard time and again (and with more budget cuts in the works we'll see even more clearly) that we will need to rely upon "outside sources" to provide the support and services our military families deserve. My goal is to make EVERY community one that our families can turn to in need. It is my intention to give voice to the families who also serve when their loved ones are called to duty. And to call to action the communities in which they live.

I have spent the past 20 years advocating for military families. The MSOY title would allow me to continue this mission with far greater reach and impact.



Volunteer Ed Celentano, right, of Paramus, serves hamburgers to veterans during the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home at Paramus' Super Bowl XLVIII party Feb. 2, 2014. Dozens of residents watched the big

game at several TVs in the Home's multi-purpose room while enjoying snacks donated by White Castle, Hooters and local supermarkets. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by 1st Sgt. Kryn P. Westhoven / Released)

Cavalry rides into weeds of the Meadowlands

Story and photo by 1st Sgt. Kryn P. Westhoven, 444th MPAD



With a train rolling past and the Meadowlands in the distance, Pvt. Andrew Howard, Alpha Troop, 102nd Cavalry Regiment, watches the rail line before going back to a long distance view of the area with Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System. Howard was a member of several teams using Humvees to protect fans traveling to and from the Super Bowl.

The Soldiers of the 102nd Cavalry Regiment, New Jersey National Guard, turned the mission of watching over rail lines on Super Bowl Sunday into a training event. They did this by using the security mission on roadsides and in the Meadowlands marsh grass as chance for young troopers to get more experience.

"It gives us an opportunity to do our jobs within our community," said Staff Sgt. John Cosel, readiness noncommissioned officer for Alpha Troop out of the Dover, N.J. armory. "...as well as give us some extra training time on our equipment to show how diverse the equipment can be."

The Citizen-Soldiers joined hundreds of local, county and New Jersey Transit police to make sure the commuter train route to MetLife Stadium was safe for the thousands of fans that would be attending the big event.

Using the Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System mounted on Humvees, the Citizen-Soldiers were an important part of the security team. The advance imaging allowed for views of potential trouble makers several miles away. In addition, besides fixed position teams patrolled the rails.

"This is a chance to be flexible and apply what they know as reconnaissance professionals and help out local law enforcement," added Cosel.

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The National Guard Association of New Jersey is holding its annual **membership drive** through **31 March 2014**. All commissioned and warrant officers in the New Jersey Army and Air National Guard are eligible for membership in the association.

The goal of the NGANJ is to promote the interests of our membership, their families and all members of the NJ National Guard. Your membership in the association helps us achieve those goals. For further information on the association, visit our website at www.nganj.org. Information on membership dues can be found at www.nganj.org/membership.

You can pay directly online via credit card or you can pay through your unit representative. If you need assistance finding your unit representative to the NGANJ, send an email to secretary@nganj.org for further information.



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