

GUARDLIFE

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Above: Sgts. Nick Lam, right, and William J. Camp Jr., both with the 21st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team, look for evidence at a weapons of mass destruction factory during a full-scale Homeland Response Force exercise involving units from the New Jersey and New York Army and Air National Guard at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 16, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

Cover: A UH-60 Black Hawk with the 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion, New Jersey Army National Guard, lifts a group of Airmen with the 227th Air Support Operations Squadron, New Jersey Air National Guard, for an extraction exercise at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 21, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

Staying strong, moving forward

By Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General of New Jersey

“If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself.” – Henry Ford

We are serving in the New Jersey National Guard at a time of great challenges – and even greater opportunities.

It’s no secret that Department of Defense budgets are shrinking. Any loss of money and overall military force structure will be shared by the National Guard. The unfortunate reality is that the Active Components and the National Guard are competing for resources. And within the National Guard, states are competing against one another for funds vital to their mission.

The best defense against tight budgets is to maintain a strong and viable force that can operate in a joint environment. It’s a battle that New Jersey is prepared to win. Our recruiting and retention numbers are among the best in the nation. Our force is taking on new missions and training hard to make sure it can execute existing missions to the highest standards possible. In the end though, the New Jersey National Guard’s best assets are its Airmen and Soldiers. You.

Inside this edition of Guardlife, you’ll see plenty of examples of the top-notch training the New Jersey National Guard uses to prepare for real-world missions.

In February, the 177th Fighter Wing began its drill with an exercise in how it would respond if it learned some of its Airmen had been exposed to the Ebola virus while deployed. The critical exercise enabled the unit’s Medical Group to rapidly respond to a public health emergency while allowing the Wing’s mission to continue.

In April, the Army Guard’s 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry was a key player in the Homeland Emergency Response Force training exercise on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. The exercise, which involved local, state and federal agencies, demonstrated how a cohesive team could effectively respond to the catastrophic collapse of a large building.

Other training featured in this issue marked a milestone for the New Jersey National Guard. More than 150 Soldiers from the newly-formed 104th Brigade Engineer Battalion performed their first annual training at Fort Indiantown Gap. The new unit greatly adds to the capabilities of the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team.

This issue of Guardlife also demonstrates that the New Jersey National Guard remains a key part of our nation’s security. Inside, you’ll find stories about the deployment of the 328th Military Police Company for the security mission at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and the deployment of Airmen from the 108th Wing for support of U.S. Central Command missions overseas.

But I think some of the best stories inside this edition of



Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, right, The Adjutant General of New Jersey, along with members of the New Jersey National Guard leadership, welcome home Soldiers with the 1-114th Infantry, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., May 17, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

Guardlife are about our people.

You’ll meet Senior Airman Ashley Chytraus who scored “excellent” on her annual Physical Fitness Test on June 14. Just 358 days earlier, she was in a medically-induced coma following a horrific motorcycle crash. Chytraus fought her way through a painful rehabilitation and returned to duty and peak physical fitness because she refused to quit.

You’ll also meet Master Sgt. Olivia M. McMahon, the Air Guard’s Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year, and Senior Airman Thomas A. Shea, the Air Guard’s Airman of the Year, as well as some of the competitors in the Army Guard’s Soldier of the Year competition. You’ll notice a common thread in all their stories: they set lofty goals for themselves.

Finally, you’ll meet Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour and Nico Fluri. They are leaving our ranks to join the “Long Grey Line” at the U.S. Military Academy. Okyere-Bour was admitted to the West Point Class of 2019 and Fluri, who will attend the West Point preparatory academy next year, will be in the class of 2020. Both credited their service in the New Jersey National Guard with inspiring them to apply – and for preparing them for the challenges that lie ahead. I have no doubt both will emerge from West Point as second lieutenants.

So enjoy this edition of Guardlife. Hopefully it will remind you of the opportunities the New Jersey National Guard creates for its Airmen and Soldiers to achieve even their loftiest goals.

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Above: Pvt. Marc Laspino with the 114th Infantry Regiment practices Honor Guard maneuvers at the National Guard Armory in Lawrenceville, N.J., Feb. 12, 2015. The Soldiers were trying out for a coveted position on the Honor Guard team. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released)



Facebook: New Jersey National Guard. Twitter: @ NJNationalGuard. Flickr: NJ National Guard

328th deploys to Cuba



Staff Sgt. Hamlet B. Brito, along with Soldiers of the 328th Military Police Company, sing the Army Song at a Salute to Troops ceremony at the National Guard Armory in Cherry Hill, N.J., March 29, 2015.



*Story by Spc. Devon Bistarkey
444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*

*Photos by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs*

Company commander, Capt. Matthew R. Neamand leads the 328th Military Police Company at a Salute to Troops ceremony at the National Guard Armory in Cherry Hill, N.J., March 29, 2015.

The job for the Soldiers of the 328th Military Police Company is to protect, secure and guard without judgment during their yearlong deployment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

“This is what you sign up for; and this is the mission that needs to get done,” said Sgt. Nicholas DiRenzo, a four-year veteran with two prior deployments under his belt.

A deployment to a high-profile environment surrounded by a whirlwind of political opinion demands the Cherry Hill-based MP company execute their mission with professionalism and military bearing. Limited access to the area, which serves as a military prison for unlawful combatants, has inflated public curiosity on what actually happens there.

For 1st Lt. Domenico Lazzaro, executive officer of the 328th, the opportunity to serve overseas, regardless of location, is something he is proud to do. Lazzaro views the prison as a necessity.

“GITMO is a tool that helps us to take action and defend our rights as citizens against people who don’t subscribe

GITMO is a tool that helps us to take action and defend our rights as citizens against people who don’t subscribe to our philosophies.

**1st Lt. Domenico Lazzaro
Executive Officer
328th Military Police
Company**

to our philosophies,” said Lazzaro.

All of the MPs have undergone extensive training to prepare for the detainee operations mission. The unit spent their two-week Annual Training period at Joint Base McGuire-Lakehurst-Dix, completing pre-mobilization tasks including combatives training, room clearing, and use of pepper spray.

The pepper spray training, which included Soldiers spraying each other to



Sgt. Tiffany K. Disanzo, listens to the State Senator Jim Beach, 6th District, as he addresses the Soldiers of the 328th Military Police Company, which will deploy to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

“This is a hardworking unit, a group of problem solvers and doers who are very efficient because there is a certain degree of trust that we can accomplish any mission.”

1st Lt. Domenico Lazzaro



Above: Pfc. Oscar A. Barrera, center, poses for a photo with his family after the Salute to Troops ceremony.



State Senator Jim Beach, left, 6th District, and Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, second from left, The Adjutant General of New Jersey, present the New Jersey state and the United States flags to 1st Sgt. Ammon Moore, right, and Capt. Matthew R. Neamand, commander, 328th Military Police Company, during the Salute to Troops ceremony. The Company was honored by family, friends, the New Jersey National Guard leadership and elected officials.

understand its effects, made an impression on Spc. Harshel Patel.

“That was painful,” said Patel, a finance student at Mt. Claire University

who knew he was putting a gap in his college career when he volunteered for this deployment.

The challenges of any deployment

include putting Soldier’s home life on pause. Each Soldier has made their military service a top priority for this mobilization that has including long drill weekends and even longer periods of time away from their families and careers. Benefits of their training come in the form of invaluable job experience for Patel who aspires to work for the DEA after graduation and DiRenzo who currently serves as a police officer on the civilian side.

“This is a hardworking unit,” Lazzaro said, “a group of problem solvers and doers who are very efficient because there is a certain degree of trust that we can accomplish any mission.”

That mission for the next year will be to secure and hold detainees and provide security as inmates make movements between legal appointments and leaving the camp.

“It’s our turn to serve, and were proud to do it,” said Lazzaro.

FLY AWAY

Photos by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs



Above: Capt. Michael Sojka, Assistant Logistics Planning Officer, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, New Jersey Army National Guard, briefs a Humvee driver prior to loading onto a C-17 Globemaster III from the New York Air National Guard's 105th Airlift Wing during a deployment exercise at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., May 11, 2015. The exercise, part of the unit's annual training, was to test the transportation capabilities of the 50th IBCT. Right: Loadmaster Master Sgt. Andy Grimes, 105th Airlift Wing, New York Air National Guard, directs a 50th IBCT light medium tactical vehicle onto a 105th Airlift Wing C-17 Globemaster III. Below: IBCT Soldiers begin loading their personal gear onto a New York Air National Guard C-17.



THIS COULD BE THE BENCHMARK AS FAR HOW THE BRIGADE CAN MOVE ANYWHERE IN THE NATION, OR THROUGHOUT THE GLOBE.

Capt. Michael Sojka
Assistant Logistics Planning Officer,
50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team



Meet the Millers

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen, 108th Wing Public Affairs

The Guard is family.

Case in point.

Danielle Bunyea and Keith Miller first met at Port Hueneme, Calif., Danielle was from Washington state and Keith was from New Jersey.

“We were both at the same tech school in 2008,” said Senior Airman Keith Miller.

Danielle was training to become a vehicle management and analysis technician – Keith was attending the vehicle maintenance school. Danielle’s school was six weeks, while Keith’s was eight months.

They became friends.

And it might have ended there, except their initial assignment placed them both at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Montana.

The friendship continued.

Vehicle Maintenance is divided into two or three sections, depending on the size of the base. At Malmstrom, Danielle worked in the vehicle management section, which managed the fleet of military and commercial design vehicles and heavy equipment, while Keith worked in the vehicle maintenance shop.

“I worked on Humvees and MRAPs (mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles),” said Keith. “Danielle handled the administrative and parts ordering.”

Being on active duty also meant that they deployed a lot.

“Between the two of us, we have spent years a part due to deployments,” said Staff Sgt. Danielle Miller. “Keith might be on a seven-month deployment



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Keith Miller, right, describes to Staff Sgt. Danielle Miller what broke on the starter for a six-passenger pickup truck at the 108th Wing Vehicle Maintenance Shop at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Jan. 11, 2015.

and I would be on seven month deployment, but our time together might only be a month between deployments.”

That time apart strengthened their relationship.

A change in the Malmstrom leadership got them thinking about new options. Danielle wanted to go to school to get her degree in nursing and with all the deployments, she had the Post-9/11 GI Bill to pay the way.

This led them to think about joining the Guard.

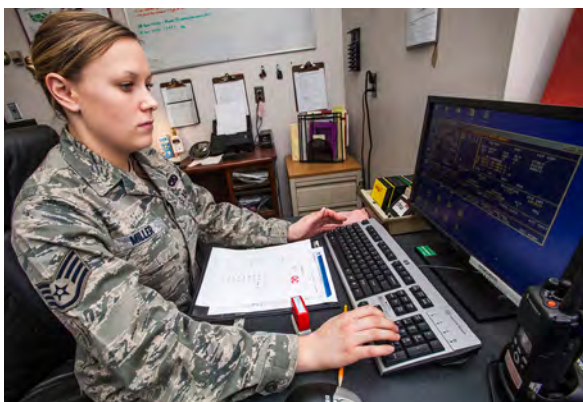
“Our whole goal was to stay together in the Guard,” said Keith.

“After we decided to join the Guard it was either Washington or New Jersey,” said Danielle. “He has a large family back here and I could go to school anywhere, so we decided on New Jersey.”

Danielle arrived at the 108th Wing in September 2013 while Keith went on terminal leave and didn’t join the unit until November. Both work in the 108th Wing Vehicle Main-



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Keith Miller, replaces a starter on a six-passenger pickup truck.



U.S. Air Force vehicle management and analysis technician Staff Sgt. Danielle Miller, enters a work order at the 108th Wing Vehicle Management Section.

tenance and both have the same jobs they had at Malmstrom.

They got married.

Being in the same shop has a lot of pluses.

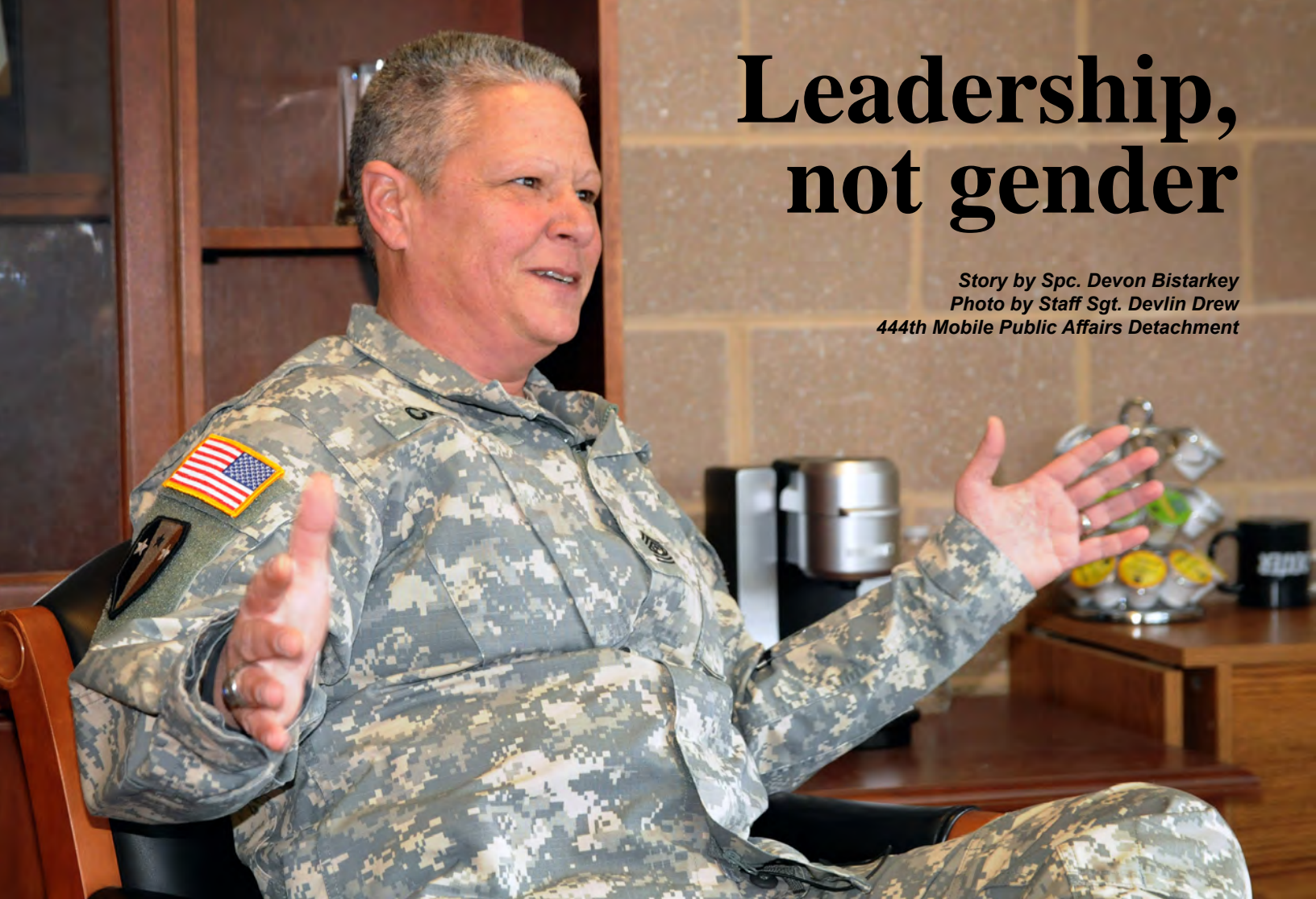
“When you discuss military aspects of the job, you don’t have to explain everything because we work in the same shop,” said Danielle.

Another is training and deployments. “We have to do all our training together,” said Danielle. “Here in the Guard we can volunteer for the same deployments.”

As a family, in the Guard.

Leadership, not gender

Story by Spc. Devon Bistarkey
Photo by Staff Sgt. Devlin Drew
444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



In a month that celebrates women's history, Command Sgt. Maj. Paula M. Cantara reaches her 32 year service mark.

Currently the top senior enlisted female in the state, Cantara has seen women's role in the military evolve during her accomplished career.

"Coming up in the organization, females hit master sergeant and stopped," said Cantara, "Now that glass ceiling is lifted and females have the potential to be recognized."

Cantara is the second woman to reach sergeant major in the New Jersey National Guard.

The rank, she says, should not be dictated by gender, but by a Soldier's ability to lead.

"When I put on this uniform I am not a female, I am a Soldier," Cantara said, "We all have the same requirements, we have to pass physical training and we all have to be proficient in our military occupational specialty."

The command sergeant major recognizes the unique position she holds

as the State's highest enlisted female who serves as an administrator, an advisor for training, and a mentor in charge of the National Guard Joint Training and Training Development Center at Joint

**IF I SEE
SOMEONE WITH
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THEM IN THE
RIGHT
DIRECTION.**

Command Sgt. Maj.
Paula M. Cantara

Base McGuire-Lakehurst- Dix. The key to her success starts from taking a genuine interest in her soldiers. Cantara has a reputation for being the type of leader who demands honesty from her soldiers in exchange for them receiving the in best training and mentorship.

"If I see someone with potential, I will steer them in the right direction," said Cantara, who encourages her soldiers to be ambitious enough to do their best.

With a major upcoming training exercise involving various outside agencies including State Police, DEA and Reserve and National Guard Cantara stays engaged with soldiers on snowy ranges qualifying their weapons.

Cantara sees her role as paving the road for future female enlisted leaders.

Her message to Soldiers is always this: "Never say 'I won't be in that position.' If I can make it, you can make it."

TACP FAST ROPE

Photos by
Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
New Jersey National Guard
Public Affairs



Tactical Air Control Party Airmen from the 227th Air Support Operations Squadron, New Jersey Air National Guard, received recertification training on the Fast-Rope Insertion Extraction System (FRIES) by Soldiers from the Long Range Surveillance C Company, 1-158th Cavalry, Maryland Army Na-

tional Guard, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 21, 2015.

Aerial support was provided by UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters from the 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion, New Jersey Army National Guard. This was the first time the 1-150th has performed fast roping with their own heli-

copters and equipment in New Jersey.

FRIES is used when a fast exit from a rotary-wing aircraft into a restricted area, including water operations, is required. It provides a method for inserting and extracting special operations personnel where an aircraft cannot land.



Above: Tactical Air Control Party Airmen from the 227th Air Support Operations Squadron perform Fast-Rope Insertion Extraction System training from a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter with the 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 21, 2015. Left: A 1-150th AHB UH-60 Black Hawk slowly lifts a group of 227th ASOS Airmen during an extraction exercise. Right: ASOS Airmen are lifted by a UH-60 Black Hawk during an extraction exercise.





328th Trains

Soldiers from 328th Military Police Company perform fire and maneuver exercises at the urban operations site at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., March 20, 2015. The Company is deploying to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, later this month. (U.S. Air National Guard Photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

108th Airmen of the Year

By Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen, 108th Wing Public Affairs

Master Sgt. Amanda L. Marotta, Tech. Sgt. John C. Hoffecker and Senior Airman Tyshawn G. Jenkins.

Marotta serves with the 108th Civil Engineer Squadron as an emergency management specialist.

Hoffecker is a senior intelligence analyst with the 204th Intelligence Squadron.

Jenkins works as a fuels systems technician with the 108th Maintenance Squadron.

What do they have in common?

They were chosen as the 108th Wing's Airmen of the Year.

These individuals' skills, training and volunteerism epitomizes the 108th.

According to 108th Civil Engineer Squadron commander, Lt. Col. Paul E. Novello, Marotta is a motivational leader, who transformed an inexperienced Emergency Management Shop into a premiere flight that was lauded by the Air Mobility Command inspectors during the Unit Effectiveness Inspection where the Wing received a highly effective rating. In addition, she was handpicked as the Ancillary Training Tiger Team subject matter expert. Marotta also works with Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst units to improve emergency management capabilities base-wide.

Hoffecker, notes Lt. Col. Robert Kelly, the 204th Intelligence Squadron commander, was specifically chosen for a Title 10, active duty tour where he served as an intelligence instructor. During the tour, he trained 300 intelligence and security forces Airmen. He also served as the noncommissioned officer in charge of the 607th Air Operations Cell in Exercise Ulchi Freedom Guardian in South Korea. Finally, Hoffecker was chosen to develop the National Guard Bureau's 20 lesson, 40-hour anti-terrorism level II mobile training course, which filled a national level need for force protection training certification for the Air National Guard.

Maintenance Squadron commander Col. Steven F. Jamison said that Jenkins is an outstanding role model for peers and demonstrated his organizational skills by creating new safety books for all shops assigned to the Wing's Accessory Section. He assists in the training of newly assigned personnel and in retraining personnel. Jenkins was part of a group that created an annual confined space training program that emphasized emergency procedures.

In addition to these accomplishments, the Airmen embody the characteristics that define how the Air National Guard and specifically, the 108th is an integral part of the community.

Hoffecker volunteers with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs support program by driving five veterans who have no means of transportation to their appointments at VA hospitals.

Marotta was recognized during National Volunteer Week for dedicating more 100 hours to the Salvation Army of Mercer County.

Jenkins is a member of the Wing's Honor Guard, which is serves as a visible example of the Air Force in ceremonies ranging from change of commands to funerals for veterans.

They also represent what is unique to the Guard – a dedication to education.

Jenkins is working on his master of business administration degree. He currently has a 3.7 grade point average, all while at the same time passing the Air Force Officer Qualifying Test.

Marotta not only earned a bachelor's in work force education, but also made the dean's list with a 4.0 grade point average. She is currently working on her master's degree in homeland security. To top that off, she completed the senior non-commissioned officer correspondence course and was selected for the SNCO academy class.

Hoffecker has four associate degrees from the Community College of the Air Force, the fourth being in intelligence studies. While attending the Defense Intelligence Agencies Counter Terrorism Analysis Course, he was the honor graduate.

These three individuals have set an impressive benchmark.

Congratulations Master Sgt. Marotta, Tech. Sgt. Hoffecker and Senior Airman Jenkins.



Top and middle: Master Sgt. Amanda L. Marotta and Tech. Sgt. John C. Hoffecker. (U.S. Air National Guard photo illustrations by Tech. Sgt. Carl Clegg/Released) Bottom: Senior Airman Tyshawn G. Jenkins. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Julia Pyun/Released)

OUTBREAK EXERCISE HELD AT 177TH

Story and photo by Airman 1st Class Amber Powell, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



Capt. Lisa Robinson with the New Jersey Air National Guard's 177th Fighter Wing at Atlantic City International Airport, N.J., checks Airmen in during the base's Ebola-like disease containment exercise on Feb. 8, 2015.

The 177th Fighter Wing has taken action against the threat of disease by conducting a Ebola-like virus exercise.

The Air Force instructs each Wing to conduct a Public Health Emergency exercise each year and this year's emergency was exposure to the Ebola virus while deployed.

As Airmen entered the gates of the wing Feb. 8, 2015, those participating in the exercise were given cards identifying them as infected or exposed to Ebola. The exercise was of dual use. Those infected would be receiving their Hepatitis B shot and those who were exposed, a flu shot. They were to report to the on base clinic immediately.

"In the real world this could happen," said Capt. Lisa Robinson with the 177th Fighter Wing Medical Group. "These are diseases we could see and it's necessary we're prepared for it, especially the Medical Group."

Those who were exposed were briefed on the signs and symptoms of the disease. This prepares the Airmen in case

THE INCUBATION PERIOD, THAT IS, THE TIME INTERVAL FROM INFECTION WITH THE VIRUS TO ONSET OF SYMPTOMS, IS TWO TO 21 DAYS.

symptoms appear later. Infected Airmen were quarantined.

"The Disease Containment Plan is put into place to mitigate the effects of the disease while enabling mission recovery and sustainment," said Lt. Col. Jamie Ruffing, the 177th's Fighter Wing's Public Health Officer. "It is intended to provide a generalized assessment of the wing wide understanding of the importance of disease containment and mitigation of disease impact while ensuring the wing retains a high level of readiness."

"The results of this exercise will influence changes in the Wing's response to both naturally occurring and man-made disease threats to the base and increase our readiness posture should a real world event occur," said Ruffing.

According to the World Health Organization, the incubation period, that is, the time interval from infection with the virus to onset of symptoms, is two to 21 days.

Turning Green into platinum

BY SPC. DEVON BISTARKEY
444TH MOBILE PUBLIC AFFAIRS DETACHMENT

IN A DIMLY LIT STUDIO, TWO SPOTLIGHTS SHINE ON STAFF SGT. NICK YOUNG, A COMBAT DOCUMENTATION AND PRODUCTION SPECIALIST WITH THE NEW JERSEY ARMY NATIONAL GUARD.



(U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released)



(Courtesy photo)

Poised and confident, the 13-year veteran finds himself on the other side of the camera. The role reversal is something Young is getting used to as his music career takes off. The accomplished soldier never expected to be recognized for his outside ambition.

"I have become more comfortable about being public with my talent and what I do," says Young, whose urban pop duo Epoch Failure's breakthrough EP will be featured in a new movie starring Jessica Alba and Samuel L. Jackson.

Young describes Epoch Failure's genre as mash up of electronic, pop and rock with a message of perseverance and drive.

"I'm very glad I can put something positive into the world," says Young, who creates music he feels comfortable playing in front of his two-year-old daughter and grandmother. Lyrics from the single *Champion* encourage listeners to pursue dreams and overcome challenges:

Obstacles are only rocks for the climbing

It's a race against the clock and you've got the perfect timing

I've got the heart of a champion and I will not give up

(*Champion*)

Raised in Trenton, Young and his music partner, Billy Joe, met through a military friend. Two young artists trying to make their way as soloists joined forces in 2011. Both grew up in impoverished neighborhoods and dreamed of success in a cut-throat business.

The fledgling group overcame the typical music-business hurdles: crooked managers, empty ballrooms and even emptier bank accounts.

But they forged forward, Young says, believing the music deserved their best effort, whether they had one fan, or a million.

With the release of their self-titled EP and its increasing digital retail sales, the fan base is growing.

Young isn't sure what the future holds.

"I feel like this is where I'm supposed to be. Now that I'm here, I'm thinking of the next place I'm supposed to be."

Guard's future tied to diversity

Story and photo by Master Sgt. David Moore, New Jersey Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

The more the New Jersey National Guard looks like the state it serves, the stronger it gets.

And the better the diverse voices of its 8,500 Soldiers and Airmen are heard within the organization, the healthier it will become.

To reach these aims, the National Guard Diversity Council met Feb. 8 at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst to consider policies aimed at making sure the organization reflects the racial, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds of the Garden State.

"I want to make sure our military matches our civilian population," said Brig. Gen. Robert Bolton, the New Jersey Air Guard commander and council chairman. "When everybody has a voice ... we are much stronger.

The diversity council was formed in June 2014 and one of its first projects was the development of a survey, which the entire force will complete by the end of next month. During the meeting, the council members representing each of the Army and Air Guard's major commands also reviewed historical data, including the racial makeup of previous officer candidate classes.

Another of the council's initiatives is the development of a mentorship program within the Guard.

Army Guard Col. John E. Langston, commander of the



Joint Training and Training Development Center serves at the council deputy chairman and he believes the mentorship program is critical.

When Langston, who is African American, first joined the military, he said he didn't focus on issues such as equal opportunity and essentially tried to learn everything on his own. But he noticed that as he rose in the officer ranks, subordinates of color began asking him for career advice.

"I felt by serving on the council and developing a solid mentorship within the Guard was a way for me to give back to the people for their military service," Langston said.



Congressmen visit to safeguard installations

Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General of New Jersey, briefs congressmen and local military officials on the capabilities of the New Jersey National Guard during a congressional visit to

safeguard military installations at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Feb. 6, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released)

CHAPLAINS TRAIN FOR TRAUMA

Story and photo by Airman 1st Class Julia Pyun, 108th Wing Public Affairs

“In our field, we’re given a lot of training on counseling and pastoral skills,” said Capt. David Kahler, a 108th Wing chaplain.

“This training was specific to taking care of our Airmen. It helped me to look back on some traumatic events that have happened over my time as a chaplain. Going forward, I have the tools now where I can create better traumatic event management plans for whoever I might be serving under.”

From Jan. 12 to Jan. 16, Kahler and other chaplains and chaplain assistants, both Air Force and Army from all over New Jersey, participated in the Army’s Traumatic Event Management course held here at the Joint Force Headquarters building.

The TEM course has been around for four and half years and was created by the Walter Reed Army Institute

of Research in San Antonio. The facility researched and gathered data to create a model for managing crisis situations.

“The goal is to enhance unit cohesion and effectiveness, said Val Wilson, a training specialist for the TEM course. “Feedback received said it was extremely beneficial, when bad things happened, individuals who took the course had a plan and knew what was going on with the military members.”

Annually, the class holds six resident training courses in San Antonio and four scheduled mobile trainings to places such as Germany, Hawaii and Korea. They will go to units who have requested for the course, but not all units know about it.

“Word spreads. Other folks will talk about this training and say, ‘Hey this was excellent because it prepares us for crisis management,’” said Wilson. “The National Guard is always called upon to respond to natural disasters. This training fits that requirement for them.”

Lt. Col. Yaakov Bindell, the 108th Wing chaplain and the state support chaplain, was the one to coordinate this training session. He contacted all the units in New Jersey and notified them of this training. From there, anyone available and motivated showed up on the first day. The class had 24 members who were separated into four groups.

“We do a lot of small group work,” said Michael J. Hagan, another training specialist. “The focus is applying their knowledge to our program versus us teaching them something brand new. We try not to do a lot of lecture.”

The groups had many assignments involving discussions to



Chaplains, left to right, Army Lt. Col. Wilfredo Santiago, Air Force Lt. Col. Yaakov Bindell and Army Capt. Joshua Cox, from the Army Support Activity Fort Dix, the 108th Wing and the 72nd Field Artillery Brigade respectively, discuss their lesson list during the Traumatic Event Management Course Jan. 14, 2015, at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. (U.S. Air National Guard Photo by Airman 1st Class Julia Pyun/Released)

come up with plans or solutions. A lot of emphasis was put on being active and preparing for the unknown.

“Start training for trauma before it happens not waiting until it happens and trying to figure out what to do then,” said Hagan. “The more preparation you have beforehand, the easier it is to manage and go through the trauma when it does happen.”

Each member had the opportunity to voice their opinion and input their experience. Role playing was the key way to incorporate hands on learning. Immediate feedback between classmates reinforced the ideas discussed during the week.

“I enjoyed the group work, especially the role-playing,” said Staff Sgt. Jennifer Robledo, a 108th Wing chaplain assistant. “My absolute favorite part was when we got to come together as a group and teach the class. It was so much fun.”

“Each group was given a different assignment from sleep hygiene class to stress management,” said Hagan, another training specialist. “They’ll take these general topics and have an hour to put together a 12 minute presentation. Not just briefing someone, but really training them.”

At the end of the week, the training proved to be very beneficial.

“This woke up the importance of really knowing your resources,” said Robledo. “You’ll never know when you might need to pull them out for someone or even yourself. Something so simple can make the greatest difference. I feel confident that if there was an event to happen, we’ll be able to respond.”

“We challenged them from day one,” said Wilson. “This group got really involved, the training has been excellent.”



MAKING THE CUT

*By Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley
Photos by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht
New Jersey National Guard
Public Affairs*

You need to know more than just how to fold the flag to join the New Jersey Army National Guard Honor Guard.

How much more? Enough to fill five very long days.

On Feb. 8, ten Soldiers graduated from the rigorous 40-hour program required to join the New Jersey Army National Guard Honor Guard, which provides a dignified military presence at the funerals of more than 4,000 Veterans a year.

Over the course of five days, the candidates marched thousands of times across the drill floor of the Lawrenceville armory, lifted, carried and placed a mock coffin hundreds of times and spent many excruciating minutes motionless except for the movements required to rack and re-rack the charging handle of their 9-pound M-14 rifles.

There were no complaints, even as the rifles grew heavier and beads of sweat began popping from the Soldiers' brows.

"I love what the Honor Guard represents, 'duty, honor,'" said Spc. Alexis Rosado, a 23-year-old jeweler from West Windsor. "It's an honor to be able to do this."

A position on the Honor Guard is perhaps the most visible job in the New Jersey Army National Guard.

"At a military funeral, we only get one chance to get it right," said Staff Sgt. John Alvarado, one of the Honor Guard's trainers. "We may be the only face of the military the family ever is going to see. If we mess up, it reflects poorly on all of us."

The newly-minted Honor Guard members join the organization at a critical juncture. The program was launched in 2005 and for many years drew much of its manpower from National Guard Soldiers who served with the unit as a full-time job. That changed in the past year as budgets across the U.S. Department of Defense began to constrict. Seventeen full-time positions turned into three. Requests for the Honor Guard's presence, however, made no such decline.

To keep pace with requests, the Honor Guard now leans heavily on a group of 200 traditional drilling Guard Soldiers who participate in funerals on an as needed basis. And they've been needed. The Honor Guard is only slightly behind pace to eclipse more than 4,000 funerals again this year.

Spc. Kerry Evans, the Honor Guard's full-time program manager, said Soldiers who must juggle jobs, families, schools and life in addition to additional military duties are the key to the program's future.

"This program will rise and fall on the shoulders of the traditional drilling Soldier," Evans said.



Honor Guard Soldiers practice casket and funeral maneuvers at the Lawrenceville Armory, N.J., Feb. 12, 2015.

At a military funeral, we only get one chance to get it right. We may be the only face of the military the family ever is going to see. If we mess up, it reflects poorly on all of us.

**Staff Sgt. John Alvarado
Honor Guard Instructor
New Jersey Army National Guard**

That's why the weeklong programs to induct new members are so important.

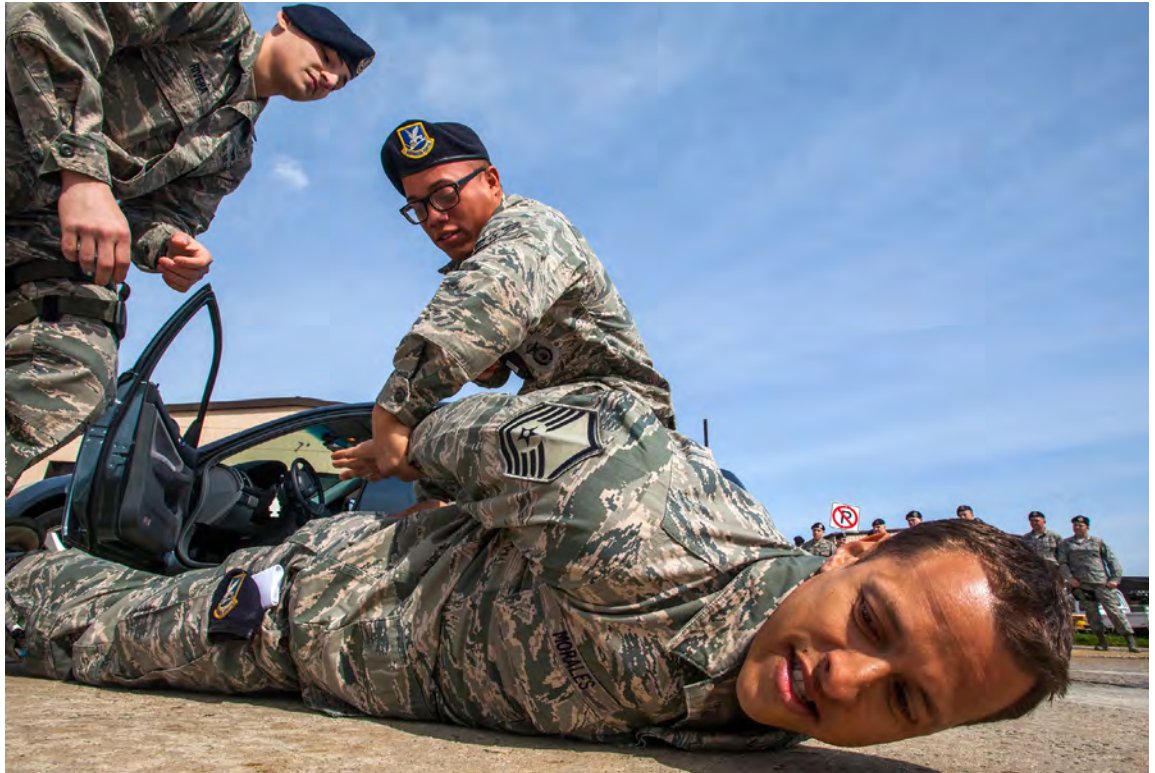
The week begins with "Zero Day," which includes a general overview about Honor Guard duties and the extra commitment it requires. Soldiers are already pre-screened to ensure they meet the Army's physical fitness and body composition requirement. Looking sloppy in the dress uniform is not an option.

The other requirements come slowly over the course of the week. Although every Soldier has a basic grasp on how to march, turn and salute, the Honor Guard takes it to a new level.

Continued on Page 20

SF gets hands-on training

Security Forces Squadron Airmen with the 108th Wing Senior Airman Jamie Rivera, left, and Airman 1st Class Justin Rodriguez, center restrain role player Master Sgt. Rafael Morales Jr., during a high risk traffic stop scenario at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 19, 2015. The required annual training, which emphasized how to deal with a variety of traffic stops, is comprised of one day of classroom training and one day of practical hands-on training using vehicles and role players. Through the training, the Airmen are better able to resolve any scenario they encounter in real life. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)



MAKING THE CUT

Continued from Page 19

“For a new Soldier coming in, they think ‘I know how to do a facing movement,’” Alvarado said. “Well, not like we do it.”

The Soldiers learn how to execute facing movements while keeping their heels together, which makes the turn more fluid – and more difficult – especially in dress shoes on slippery grass.

Other movements, such as parade rest, are the reverse of the norm, with hands folded in front instead of behind the back.

But the biggest challenge involves moving gracefully, in unison, through a tight space with a coffin. The movements require silent commands executed after passage of a set number of seconds.

“Everything we do is attention to detail,” Alvarado said.

One of the reasons the training to join the Honor Guard is so intense – aside from the fact Soldiers have a week to absorb all the material from a manual as thick as a phone book – is that funeral details are

both physically and emotionally draining.

It’s not uncommon for an Honor Guard team to perform multiple burials on a duty day.

For that reason, Soldiers are counseled to only accept the duty on a day they’re prepared to give it all they have.

“If Honor Guard can’t be the most important thing you do that day, it’s not something you should be doing that day,” Evans said.

It sounds like a fair bargain to the Honor Guard’s newest members.

Eleven years ago, Pvt. Marc Lospina’s family buried his grandfather, a World War II veteran who meant the world to him. Lospina, 22, a college student from West Depford, said he fixated on the honor guard that day.

“They were so sharp, so dignified,” Lospina said. “All I could think was ‘Someday, I want to do that.’”

An encounter with an honor guard at a funeral for a family friend also planted the seed in Pfc. Chris Robinson’s mind.

“It stuck with me. I saw how they con-

nected they were to the family,” Robinson said. “And I saw what it meant to the family that the military thought enough to send that honor guard.”

For Sgt. First Class Luis Layme, joining the honor guard is simply a logical extension of what he’s done for the better part of an 18-year career that’s included four combat deployments.

“I’m a non-commissioned officer and it’s my job to take care of Soldiers,” Layme said. “In the honor guard, I’m still taking care of Soldiers. It may have been many years since they wore this uniform, but they’re still Soldiers.”

That’s how Evans looks at it. He said that he’s made a special effort to reach out to funeral directors to make sure they are aware that all Veterans are entitled to an honor guard. He’s made a special push to ensure that word gets out to advocates for homeless veterans as well.

“The funeral is the last opportunity to thank a Veteran for his service,” Evans said. “We shouldn’t ever miss an opportunity to do that.”

A HAIL OF BULLETS FROM 500 FEET

By Spc. Devon Bistarkey
444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht
New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs

“Target. 3 o’clock. Combatant vehicle. Engage,” are the instructions radioed to Staff Sgt. Torie Fisher, crew chief with the New Jersey Army National Guard’s 1-150 Assault Helicopter Battalion during aerial gunnery training over Warren Grove Range on April 16.

At 500 feet, the UH-60 Blackhawk slowed to 35 miles an hour to give Fisher time to engage the targets. The M240 Bravo machine gun opened up with a rat-a-rat burst and dust danced around the targets, retired armored vehicles, junked pickup trucks and concrete bunkers.

“This is what we do,” said Fisher whose day started with early morning aircraft prep, a flight brief and ammunition loading – just another day at the office. The veteran crew chief with two Iraq deployments is in her element inside the aircraft working with a crew that makes sure to have fun and stay safe up there.

The multi-phase crew coordinated training focused on weapons familiarization. Once over their target tables at the 177th Fighter Wing’s Detachment 1, Warren Grove Gunnery Range the door gunner engaged targets identified by pilot, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Sturtevant. The

crew’s targets included tanks, vehicles, conex boxes and village structures.

“It’s a lot of fun,” said Sturtevant, “this is something that we look forward to every year.”

The second part of the training exercise included a “hot-fuel” at Coyle Drop Zone where soldiers refueled the aircraft while the engine was still on and blades and still spinning. From there, a rapid exit in the Black Hawk for the return flight to the Army Aviation Support Facility on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst to prepare for another night run.

Once safely back on the ground, Sturtevant’s answer was simple when asked how his crew performed during their mission: “Flawlessly.”

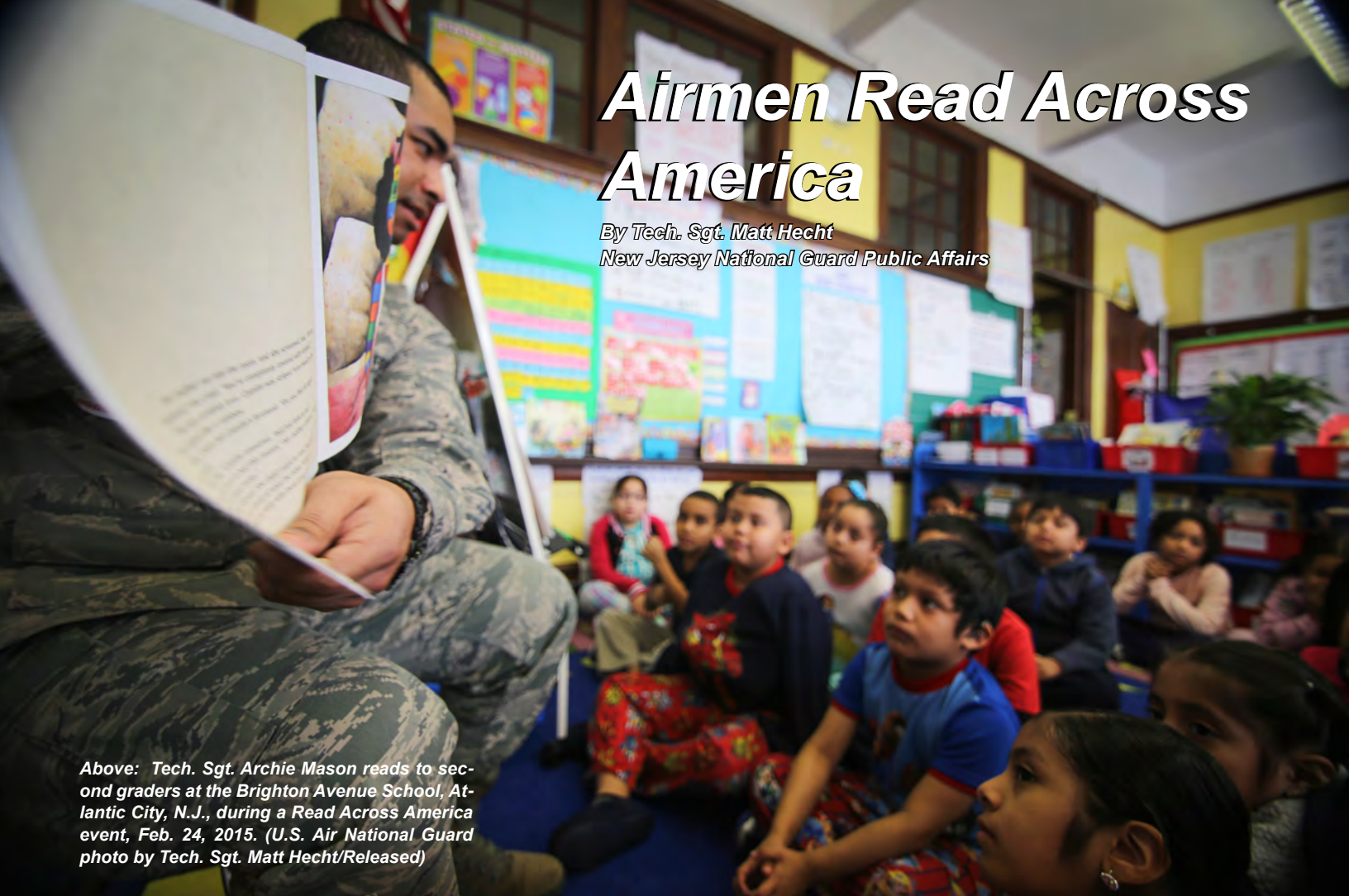
It’s the only standard accepted at 500 feet.

Above: Sgt. Don Seymour, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief from the 1-150 Assault Helicopter Battalion, New Jersey Army National Guard, fires down on targets with an M240B machine gun at the 177th Fighter Wing’s Detachment 1, Warren Grove Gunnery Range, N.J., April 16, 2015. Below: Staff Sgt. Torie Fisher, center, a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crew chief from the 1-150 Assault Helicopter Battalion, preps 7.62 ammunition on the flight line before a training mission at the Army Aviation Support Facility, on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J.



Airmen Read Across America

By Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht
New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs



Above: Tech. Sgt. Archie Mason reads to second graders at the Brighton Avenue School, Atlantic City, N.J., during a Read Across America event, Feb. 24, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released)

The sounds of chattering children, musical instruments and teachers instructing students echoed through the halls of Atlantic City's Brighton Avenue School. With the creak of the front doors opening, the noise level dipped as Airmen from the New Jersey Air National Guard entered the building.



Airman 1st Class Hannah Bartlett, center back row, 108th Wing, poses for a group photo with Tayler Adams' fifth grader class at the Brighton Avenue School. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

"It meant a lot to see how much they enjoyed listening. It's a very rewarding feeling."
Tech Sgt. Janeen MacGray, New Jersey Joint Force Headquarters

The five Airmen, representing Joint Force Headquarters, the 108th Wing and the 177th Fighter Wing, all came together to participate in Read Across America.

Founded by the National Education Association, Read Across America coincides around the time of renowned children's author Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2, and features military and community members coming together to read

children, so I really don't get a chance to sit down and have these interactions, so it's nostalgic for me, but, more importantly, the children, the looks on their faces, the surprise; it's amazing to be a part of that type of transaction."

"You know they're getting something out of it, and at the same time we're getting something out of it," said Mason. "It was a great experience."

Airman 1st Class Hannah Bartlett, an administrator from the 108th Wing, read Peggy Rathmann's *Officer Buckle* and *Gloria* to fifth grader. After she finished, Bartlett answered student's questions on everything from military food to what adventures she had been on.

"I went to Guam with the Wing," said Bartlett. "That was fun, but it was a lot of hard work."



Airman 1st Class Hannah Bartlett, 108th Wing, reads Peggy Rathmann's *Officer Buckle* and *Gloria* to a group of fifth graders during the event. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

to children in local schools.

The Airmen were greeted by Courtney Mitchell, who acted as the teacher-military liaison.

"It means so much to the kids to have the National Guard here," said Mitchell.

Mitchell then lead the Airmen to the classrooms where they would be reading to students.

Tech. Sgt. Archie Mason lightened the mood with a short question and answer session before he began reading, asking students if they liked books as much as their siblings.

"To come out and talk to the children is really great," said Mason, a recruiter with the 177th Fighter Wing. "I have older

It means so much to the kids to have the National Guard here.

COURTNEY MITCHELL
TEACHER-MILITARY
LIAISON

Tech Sgt. Janeen MacGray, from New Jersey Joint Force Headquarters, was overwhelmed with all of the smiles she faced as she read to the second graders.

"It meant a lot to see how much they enjoyed listening," said MacGray. "It's a very rewarding feeling."

In New Jersey, Soldiers and Airmen of the New Jersey National Guard volunteer to participate in these events. The Department of Defense encourages all members of the Armed Services to participate in the Read Across America program.

Each Airman received a card from their classroom signed by the students thanking them for their time and for promoting literacy.



1-114th returns

Photos by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs

Above: Spc. Danielina Pimentel, 1-114th Infantry, New Jersey Army National Guard, hugs her daughter at the Joint Training and Training Development Center, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., May 18, 2015. Right: Spc. Humberto Cortaza holds his daughter outside the Center. Below: Sheila Heaney hugs her son Sgt. Kevin Heaney. The 450 Citizen-Soldiers returned home from a nearly year-long deployment where they served in command and control, conducted oversight for mission planning and administrative support, provided security at facilities, control points, perimeter towers and radar sites in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



NDI

Seeing the UNSEEN

Story and photos by
Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
108th Wing Public Affairs

Senior Airman Lucas Derflinger, non-destructive inspection journeyman, 108th Wing, performs a process control using a ketos ring and a central bar conductor on the magnetic particle inspection unit prior to inspecting aircraft parts at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., March 7, 2015. The process control involves magnetizing the part, which is then bathed in a suspended particle bath. The bath seeps into the defects and when it is exposed to ultraviolet light – black light, causes the defects to become florescent and visible.



Staff Sgt. Dean C. Schwaner, non-destructive inspection craftsman, 108th Wing, performs an eddy current inspection on the nose landing gear wheel rims of the Wing's KC-135R Stratotankers.

They're known as the NDI shop and its Airmen have a simple mission: make the invisible, visible.

The job of making sure the 108th Wing's KC-135R Stratotankers are structurally and mechanically sound falls on the four Airmen of the Non-Destructive Inspection shop. They take safety seriously.

The Air Force NDI Program was established in 1958. And just like its name implies, it all about inspecting and checking aircraft parts and surfaces – the aircraft's skin – in a way that does not damage the part. Common inspections are the aircraft's high load and vibration areas, the aircraft skin and landing gear.

During the latest inspection, two of its members – NDI craftsman Staff Sgt. Dean C. Schwaner and journeyman Senior Airman Lucas Derflinger – were busy preparing their equipment to find out if there was anything wrong with some parts that could potentially threaten lives and the Wing's mission.

"NDI shop members attend a 10-week course in Pensacola, Fla.," said Master Sgt. Raymond J. Joubert, NDI noncommissioned officer in charge. "They must then complete 16 months of on-the-job training before they can work

on any part of the aircraft without supervision."

NDI also works on the flight line performing scheduled and unscheduled aircraft maintenance. Scheduled maintenance is based on trends of past airframe hours that result in structural defects. The unscheduled maintenance occurs when a crew chief or a maintenance technician suspects there is a possible defect during a routine inspection.

At the Wing, NDI Airmen use a variety of methods for testing: Eddy current, ultrasonic testing, fluorescent dye penetration, magnetic particle and optical inspection. In addition, they also inspect engine oil lubricant for abnormal-wear metals. They are also trained to conduct x-ray inspections, but that is done working with the 87th using their equipment.

"Some of the setup procedures can take hours or even a day," said Schwaner. "In some cases, the actual inspection may take only 30 minutes."

The shop, which is located in the corner of the maintenance hangar, has two rooms where the testing is done. In one room, Schwaner gets ready to perform an

eddy current inspection on a set of tire rims for the Stratotankers nose landing gear. Next door, Derflinger is checking the magnetic particle inspection unit to make sure it is properly calibrated before inspecting aircraft parts.

"With the magnetic particle inspection unit, the part gets magnetized, creating north and south poles," said Derflinger.

Once the part is magnetized, it is then bathed in a suspended particle bath. This oil based bath contains fine iron particles which coat the part. The liquid seeps into the defects and when it is exposed to ultraviolet light – black light, causes the defects to become fluorescent and visible.

"This enables the technician to determine depth and length of the defect," said Derflinger.

The lights are turned off, plunging the room into near darkness. The only light comes from some red-lit switches on the inspection unit. Derflinger bathes a ketos ring – a round flat doughnut-shaped piece of metal used to calibrate the machine – with the suspended particle bath. He then turns on a hand-held black light

"Some of the setup procedures can take hours or even a day. In some cases, the actual inspection may take only 30 minutes."

Staff Sgt. Dean C. Schwaner, NDI Craftsman

unit and the ring glows in a sickly pale green color. Derflinger increases the magnetic level and the calibrated defects on the ring appear brighter. The unit is now ready to test parts.

One of the items that gets a lot of attention are bolts.

"We do 6,200 bolts using the bath," said Derflinger.

In the other room, Schwaner checks the eddy current tester by placing the probe on a test piece, which is shaped exactly like the Stratotanker's nose land-

ing gear tire rims. The probe sends out a current, which flows through the object creating a magnetic field. The test piece has built-in flaws which appear as jagged lines on the readout screen of the test unit. A straight line means there are no flaws.

The tester checks out and Schwaner begins testing the three rims. Each rim is made out of solid aluminum and weighs close to a hundred pounds. The rims come in two pieces, so there are actually six pieces to test.

Schwaner lifts one of the rims and

places it on a revolving table that looks like an oversized lazy susan. Placing the probe along the curved edge of the rim, Schwaner revolves the rim while watching the tester for any disturbing readouts. None appear and he proceeds to repeat the process with the next five pieces.

While the process is tedious, it is paramount to the safety of the air crew and to the success of the mission.

"It has to be right on the money," said Schwaner.

MADDUX VISITS JT2DC



First Sgt. Darrin Turner, right, explains the movement system on the virtual interactive combat environment to Maj. Gen. Jonathan A. Maddux, center, Program Executive Officer for Simulation, Training and Instrumentation, and Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, The Adjutant General of New Jersey, at the Joint Training and

Training Development Center at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., March 12, 2015. Maddux visited the Center to see how the various training simulators are being integrated into Reserve training. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

Rodeo roundup



*Story and photos by
Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
108th Wing Public Affairs*

*Airmen from the
108th Wing check
each other to ensure
their mission-oriented
protective posture
gear is on correctly
at Joint Base Mc-
Guire-Dix-Lakehurst,
N.J., March 6, 2015*

Airmen are spread across the hangar floor adjusting their M50 Joint Service General Purpose gas masks, zipping up their Mission-Oriented Protective Posture gear, tugging on boots and pulling on protective gloves.

It's organized chaos.

It is also a great example of the buddy system in action.

During the Wing's annual Warrior Week, the 108th Global Mobility Squadron's hangar was turned into an oversized open classroom for the Expeditionary Skills Rodeo. On one side, Airmen were trained with their MOPP gear; on the other side, the chaos is traded for tables in a more traditional classroom environment. Members of the Wing's Medical Group refreshed a group of Airmen's emergency medical skills.

It's all about re-familiarization with the wearing of the MOPP suit and mask, self-aid and buddy care, as well as a host of other skills.

The Rodeo also covered Explosive Ordnance Reconnaissance, Counter-Improvised Explosive Device Awareness;

Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive Defense Awareness Course; CBRNE Defense Survival Skills, Training for Deploying Warfighters and Law of Armed Conflict.

"It gets us in line with NGB's (National Guard Bureau's) new ancillary train-



Airmen practice self-aid buddy care skills during the Wing's Expeditionary Skills Rodeo.

ing program that basically streamlines our computer-based training and our hands-on training fundamentals," said Master Sgt. Amanda L. Marotta, Emergency Management Superintendent, Readiness and

Emergency Management Flight, 108th Civil Engineer Squadron.

Each Airman ensures that their wingman's gas mask is on correctly, the MOPP suit's hood properly covers the gas mask; the boots that look like oversized winter children's boots, are pulled over the combat boots and that the entire MOPP ensemble is properly sealed.

Each Airman is a second set of eyes during the training.

This critical training and its curriculums are tested and evaluated through exercises and inspections. These skills are the necessary foundation for all Airmen to work effectively in a hostile combat environment.

In a chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear environment, each Airman's life will depend it.

And despite the heavy snowstorm, more than 340 Airmen completed the training.

"For me as an instructor, the more practice we get in with this skill set, the better prepared we are for a real world experience, as well as our overall readiness," said Marotta.

Test of the best

By Spc. Devon Bistarkey, 444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Aircraft diagnostics and repair - no problem; analyzing intelligence communications - no sweat; but ask a Soldier to stand in front of group of superiors and answer rapid-fire questions, it can rattle any troop's nerves.

For those selected to participate in the New Jersey Army National Guard's 57th Troop Command Soldier of the Year Board at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst April 18, 2015, the ability to keep those nerves at bay was key.

"I am confident in my job – but this was out of my comfort zone," said Sgt. Gary Collins, a mechanic with the 1-150th Assault Helicopter Battalion who competed against other noncommissioned officers for the title of NCO of the Year for the first time.

The high-stress process evaluates each Soldier's knowledge of weapons, military history and Army regulations. After being selected by their respective units Soldiers dedicated long hours studying in preparation for the board. Printed front and back the study guide comprises 92 pages of information. The test is not supposed to be easy.

While Soldiers studied and memorized military concepts, they were also preparing themselves to be better leaders.

"This experience will allow them to turn around and help Soldiers below them," said Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Rigby, 57th Troop Command, who sat on this year's board. With the chance to get inside the mind of the man who creates the panel's questions; the answer is simple in what they are looking for when choosing the Soldier and NCO of the Year – well rounded.

The title of Soldier of the Year embodies what it means to be a young Soldier. They must be confident, knowledgeable and professional, says Ribgy.

In the end, the panel chose Sgt. Roger Roberts of the 253rd Transportation Company as NCO of the Year and Spc. Amanda Dilworth of the 119th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion.

While only one Soldier can take home the title Ribgy is extremely proud and impressed with all who competed in this test for the best.



Sgt. Roger Roberts, 253rd Transportation Company, 57th Troop Command reports to the Soldier of the Year Board at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 18, 2015. Roberts was later chosen as the 57th Troop Command NCO of the Year. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Devlin Drew/Released)

The title of Soldier of the Year embodies what it means to be a young Soldier. They must be confident, knowledgeable and professional.

*Command Sgt. Maj.
Michael Rigby
57th Troop Command*

108th dominates competition

Story by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen and photos by Tech. Sgt. Carl Clegg, 108th Wing Public Affairs

The 108th Wing has swept the New Jersey Air National Guard's Airman of the Year competition.

Security Force's Master Sgt. Olivia M. McMahon and Global Mobility Squadron's Senior Airman Thomas A. Shea respectively claimed the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer and Airman of the Year slots in this year's contest.

"McMahon and Shea are great examples of the dynamic, quality people that serve in the 108th," said Wing Commander Col. Robert A. Meyer Jr.

Both McMahon and Shea are traditional Guardsmen.

As the state's winners, McMahon and Shea will go on to compete at the national level against the best of the other states and territories. Should they win, they will then compete directly against their active duty and reserve counterparts.

Both Airmen have strong deployment backgrounds.

McMahon served as a security forces advisor at the Kandahar Air Wing in Afghanistan. While there, she directed the personal security for the group and wing commanders, as well as the NATO and Afghan Air Force leaders at the base. In addition, McMahon led 28 outside-the-wire-missions, leaving the safer confines of the base and going into enemy-held territory. She also synchronized the Fly Away Security Teams outside the wire missions. FAST teams are required to fly on specific missions when a location requires an extra measure of security to ensure the aircraft and crew are protected from hostile fire or on-board security breaches.

According to her commander, Lt. Col. Brian Grier, McMahon is a "hard charging senior NCO" who "epitomizes the Air Force core values".

"She is driven to excellence," said Chief Master Sgt. Lance C. Endee, 108th Security Forces Manager. "She is constantly moving forward."

Shea deployed as an aerial port team chief to one of the busiest Department of Defense ports – Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan. As a port chief, he was responsible for ensuring that supplies arrived when needed. This was especially critical in the case where supplies needed to be airlifted to remote and in some cases, isolated for-



ward operating bases. During his tour in Afghanistan, he deployed to the United States Marine Corps forward operating base, Camp Dwyer, located in the Helmand River Valley.

His commander, Lt. Col. Richard E. Friendlich, describes Shea as "mission oriented" and "the first to volunteer to deploy".

Both Airmen had significant personal accomplishments.

Shea graduated from Rutgers University with bachelor's degree in psychology with a 3.49 GPA. Using those skills, he develops individualized learning plans for children.

McMahon was chosen by the National Guard Bureau as the top senior NCO in Security Forces for the entire Air National Guard.

Both McMahon and Shea are heavily involved in their communities. McMahon is a Long Island police officer and participates in the Murph Challenge – named after Long Island resident and Medal of Honor recipient Lt. Michael Patrick Murphy – that supports the LT Michael P. Murphy Memorial Scholarship Foundation.

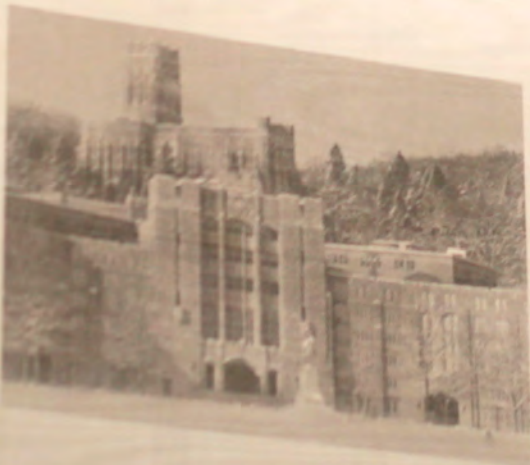
Shea provides mentorship and support to troubled youth for the Papa Ganache Project. In 2014, he helped more than 250 young people. He is a participant in the Colon Cancer Alliance Undy Run, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society-New Jersey Metro Walk, Toys for Tots and the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation.

New Jersey is definitely well represented in this year's competition.

From the Guard to West Point

Story by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley, 444th
Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, New
Jersey Air National Guard



UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY
WEST POINT.

CERTIFICATE OF APPOINTMENT

*On behalf of the President of the United States of America and
the United States Military Academy Admissions Committee, I take
great pleasure in presenting this certificate of appointment to*

*Nathaniel Jeffrey Okyerebour
for the Class of 2019*



Robert L. Caslen, Jr.
Robert L. Caslen, Jr.
Lieutenant General, U.S. Army
Superintendent

Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour, center, and fellow Soldiers prepare to tow a vehicle at the Morristown Armory in Morristown, N.J., March 27, 2015.



Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour learned early that following a dream requires sacrifice.

When the New Jersey Army National Guard Soldier was three, his mother sent him to Ghana to live with her family while she followed her dream of becoming a nurse. She brought him back to New Jersey after she'd completed bachelors and masters degrees and landed a job as an intensive-care nurse at a prestigious Manhattan hospital.

The example led Okyere-Bour to set lofty goals as he grew up in a small Jersey City apartment. He achieved the first by gaining admittance to Jersey City's McNair Academic High School. As graduation from the elite magnet school approached, the target shifted to top colleges, including Duke University and the University of Chicago. He got in. But the money wasn't there.

So Okyere-Bour enlisted in the New Jersey Army National Guard in 2013 with the aim of using a tuition waiver to attend Rutgers University. But something happened at basic training at Fort Jackson,

The battalion commander spoke to us. He talked about how he went to West Point and what it meant to him. I thought, 'That's what I want.'

**Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour
F Company
250th Brigade Support
Battalion**

S.C., Okyere-Bour got a new goal.

"The battalion commander spoke to us. He talked about how he went to West Point and what it meant to him," Okyere-Bour recalled recently. "I thought, 'That's what I want.'"

On June 29, Okyere-Bour will join the U.S. Military Academy Class of 2019. He will be among 25 Army National Guard Soldiers accepted directly to West Point this year. Eleven others will attend West Point's preparatory academy.

In the end, Okyere-Bour's New Jersey National Guard leaders helped pave the road from Fort Jackson to West Point.

When Okyere-Bour joined F Company of the 250th Brigade Support Battalion as a wheeled vehicle mechanic two years ago, the unit's leaders say he caught their attention with stellar performance – and his insistence that he had what it took to get into West Point.

They ultimately agreed. All of the officers and non-commissioned officers in Okyere-Bour's chain of command wrote letters of recommendation.

"How could we not? He's one of

On June 29, Okyere-Bour will join the U.S. Military Academy Class of 2019. He will be among 25 Army National Guard Soldiers accepted directly to West Point this year.



Elizabeth Okyere-Bour shows off cell phone photos of her son, Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour, in their Jersey City, N.J. home, March 17, 2015.

But it became clear when and she told a co-worker at Mount Sinai Hospital about the acceptance letter.

“He was like ‘What?’ The next thing I knew there was a crowd of intensive-care nurses jumping up and down,” Kathleen Okyere-Bour said. “Then I understood what my son had done. It was a very big deal.”

Okyere-Bour says he hasn’t decided what he’ll study at West Point. He’s not sure what branch he’ll request either, although he said the officers in the field artillery unit his company supports have assured him there’s only one branch to pick, and its acronym is ‘FA.’

In the meantime, Okyere-Bour will finish out his first year at Rutgers. Although the credits will not transfer to West Point, he said the classes will prepare him for the academic rigors that await.

“I’m just excited to get there and start,” Okyere-Bour said. “And I know that if it took that much work just to get in, what’s coming isn’t going to be easy.”

Okyere said he’s ready.

“I realized I love the Army when I was at basic training,” Okyere-Bour said. “I want to do everything I can for the Army and I think the best thing I can do is become a leader. I believe I can make it.”

He’ll have a lot of Soldiers in New Jersey pulling for him.

When Mahon, the platoon sergeant, announced at a recent drill that Okyere-Bour had made it into West Point, the formation applauded for more than a minute.

“Private Okyere worked very hard to achieve something most people just can’t do,” Mahon told them. “We should be proud of him – and remind ourselves that only through hard work do we achieve what we want.”

those Soldiers who does everything right the first time and does it when you ask and never, ever asks ‘Why?,’” said Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Mahon, his platoon sergeant. “We knew it would be a hell of an achievement if he did it, and we were pulling for him. Who knows, he may be a general someday.”

Sgt. James Diana, his squad leader, said the unit made accommodations to allow Okyere-Bour to make up drill time that he missed during the arduous application process.

“We knew that if he got in, it would reflect well on all of us, our unit and the Guard,” Diana said. “West Point isn’t going to be easy. But I know he can do it.”

It turned out that the person who taught Okyere-Bour to dream big, his mother, Elizabeth, at first didn’t realize the magnitude of her son’s achievement.

“I grew up in Ghana,” she said with a laugh. “I didn’t know anything about West Point.”

We knew it would be a hell of an achievement if he did it, and we were pulling for him. Who knows, he may be a general someday.

*Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Mahon
Platoon Sergeant
250th Brigade Support Battalion*

At the range

Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
108th Wing Public Affairs



Senior Airman Raymond J. Buc-kno, left, Combat Arms Training and Maintenance, assists Airman 1st Class Bryant A. Toro, both with the 108th Wing, adjust the M68 red dot sight on the M4 Car-bine at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., March 8, 2015.

There was snow on the ground – again. The 108th Wing’s Combat Arms Training and Maintenance instructors took it in stride, the most important thing on that March day was to get the 15 Airmen qualified on the M4 carbine.

The CATM instructors are responsible for ensuring that the Wing’s 1,000 plus Airmen are trained on everything from the M16A2 service rifle, the M4 carbine rifle to the 9mm pistol.

This two-day training was divided between a day in the classroom and a day at the range. In the classroom, the Airmen learned about weapon safety, nomenclature – what’s what on the weapon, zeroing the weapon – this applies to the M16A2 and the M4, disassembling and cleaning the weapon, dry firing the weapon in various positions and extreme operating conditions. In addition, a new course of fire has been added to the curriculum.

“Today, they take what they learned yesterday and put it into practical practice,” said Tech. Sgt. Maurice M. Nelson, Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge, 108th Wing Armory.

Making this training requirement somewhat easier the Airmen are divided

into two groups. Airmen in the alpha group – security forces for example – have to train annually. The bravo group, maintenance as an example, are trained every two years. The common training require-

This is a new course of fire. It is based on lessons learned from Operations' Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

TECH. SGT. MAURICE M. NELSON
NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICER IN CHARGE
108TH WING ARMORY

ment for both groups is, if an Airman is deploying, then they need to requalify on the range 90 days before they deploy.

For this training, the Airmen arrived with their body armor and gas masks. In addition, some brought tarps so when they

were in the prone firing position, they were at least somewhat insulated from the snow.

The Airmen received their ammunition, moved up to the firing line and told to load magazines with predetermined amounts of ammunition.

After everyone zeroed their weapons and went through the traditional firing positions, they learned a new course of fire.

It is preparation for close combat and it’s what the Air Force and the rest of the United States military has learned from the last two conflicts.

“It’s short range combat where an Airman can react to insurgents at close quarters,” said Nelson. “It is completely different from marksmanship.”

Instead of firing from the shoulder, Airmen wearing body armor place the M4 carbine stock closer toward the center of their chest. Because the M4 has a collapsing stock, Airmen with shorter arms found it easier to fire than the longer M16A2 rifle.

“This is a new course of fire,” said Nelson. “It is based on lessons learned from Operations’ Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.”

And that learning is something no one will take in stride.

1-114th competes for GAFPB

By Spc. Michael Comoroto, 1-114th Infantry

On the morning of February 15, 139 deployed New Jersey Army National Guard Soldiers climbed out of their racks and pulled on their boots with one goal in mind: to earn the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge.

During a three-day period at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar, the Soldiers of the 1st Battalion of the 114th Infantry competed in a series of rigorous events designed to test their military acumen.

The GAFPB is awarded to German soldiers if they have met all the proficiency requirements needed to be a soldier, and the decoration is one of many foreign awards approved for wear on the United States Army dress uniform. Earning the badge is not easy, however. Out of the 139 that competed, 53 Soldiers earned badges. And of the 53, only 14 Soldiers earned a gold badge, the highest honor. The badge also comes in silver and bronze versions depending on how well the Soldier performs during the test.

"It is an honor to be awarded the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge," said Staff Sgt. David Allonardo, a recipient of a gold badge. "It not only looks great on your uniform, but it also shows that you are proficient in everything."

During the first day of training, Soldiers completed a 100-meter swim in Military Uniform. To pass the event, Soldiers had to complete the swim in less than four minutes and then remove their uniform without touching the side of the pool.

When the clock started, Staff Sgt. Brandon Montgomery dove into the pool. He sprang off of the side and then thrashed his limbs, water splashing all about him. With more than a minute to spare, Montgomery climbed out of the pool and rubbed himself dry with a towel.

"I've been swimming every morning for almost a month to prepare myself for today," said Montgomery, his teeth chattering between breaths.

Following the swim, Soldiers completed a fitness test, which consisted of three events: an 11x10-meter sprint test, a



It is an honor to be awarded the German Armed Forces Proficiency Badge. It not only looks great on your uniform, but it also shows that you are proficient in everything.

Staff Sgt. David Allonardo
Recipient, Gold German
Armed Forces Proficiency
Badge

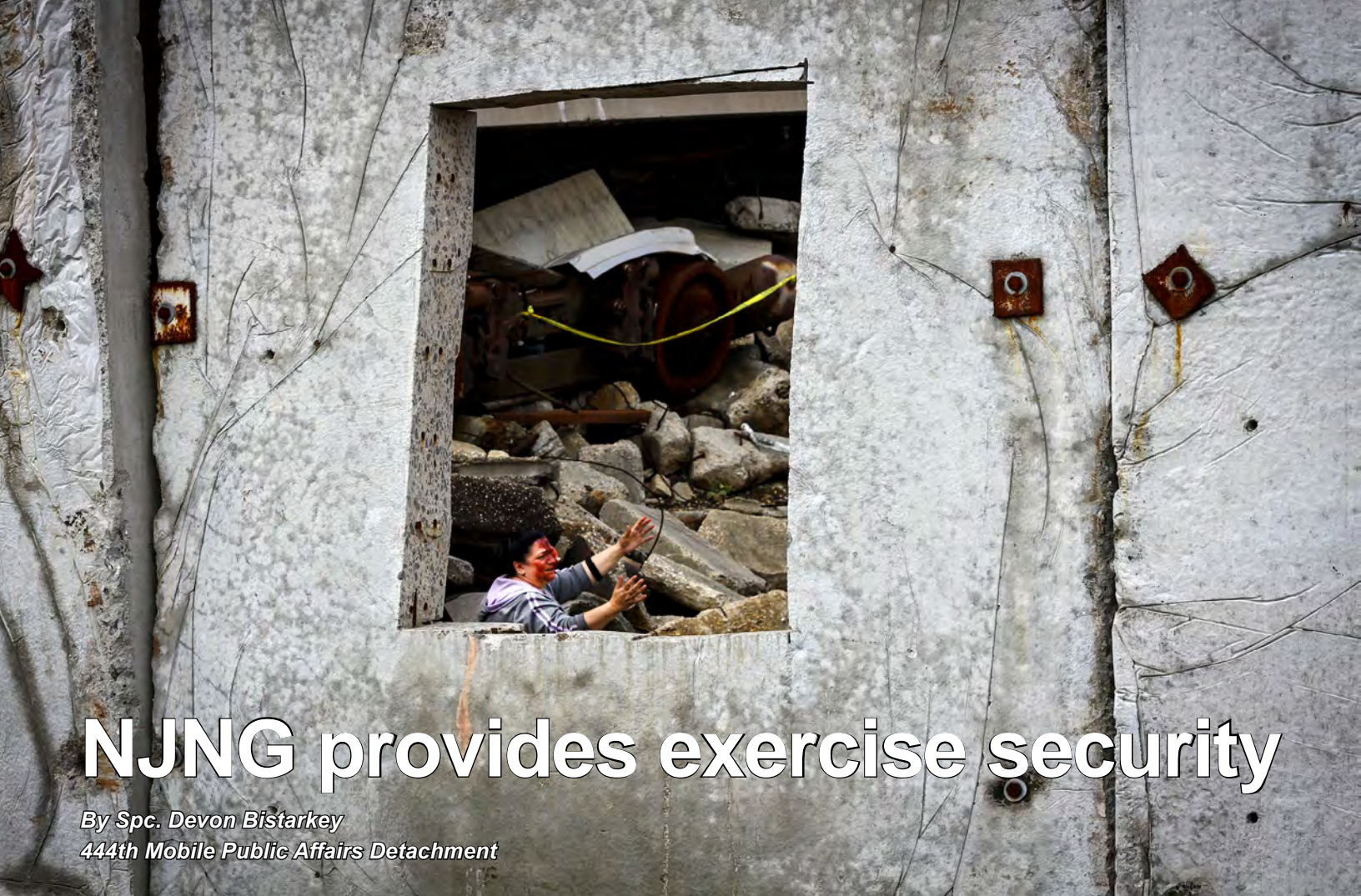
flexed arm hang and a 1,000 meter run. If they passed the fitness portion of the qualification, Soldiers moved to the pistol marksmanship event. During this event, Soldiers fired six shots at one target placed at 25 meters. To achieve a gold ranking, the Soldier had to land all six rounds inside the silhouette.

The final day of training concluded with a ruck-march. Competing for a gold ranking, Sgt. Matthew Graham had 120 minutes to finish the 12 kilometers. After Graham hefted his ruck onto his back, he hunched forward and yanked on the straps, careful to distribute the 33 pounds evenly across his shoulders. Once the clock started, he took-off down the road, pumping his arms for momentum.

"It was rough," said Graham, after taking a well-deserved slug of water from his canteen. "Ruck Marches are never fun. You just have to stay motivated."

Keeping a steady pace throughout the entire event, Graham crossed the finish line with minutes to spare. A look of relief washed over his face when he finally let his rucksack slip off of his shoulders.

**Of the 139
Soldiers that
competed:
53 earned
badges.
Of those 53,
14 earned the
highest award:
The Gold
German Armed
Forces
Proficiency
Badge.**



NJNG provides exercise security

By Spc. Devon Bistarkey
444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

As infantrymen we're used to engaging; but today we're here to help civilians on the home front.

Spc. Joesph Margeotes
2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry

The crowd of wounded men and women ambled toward the perimeter of a decontamination center.

Their wails of pain sounded real - their wounds tangible, as they move toward an initial chemical response zone as part of the Homeland Emergency Response Force training exercise on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst April 17, 2015.

In hazardous material suits, Soldiers from New Jersey Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 113th Infantry, maintained entry and exits points of a containment area used to organize and treat the disaster victims.

"As infantrymen we're used to engaging; but today we're here to help civilians on the home front," said Spc. Joesph Margeotes. The

week-long multiphase incident-scenario-training involved federal, state and local organizations including New Jersey and New York National Guard units, New Jersey State Police and New Jersey Urban Search and Rescue. First responders worked together in reaction to a collapsed



A civilian actor dressed in moulage to simulate an injury stands by to be placed at an accident site during a full scale exercise at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 17, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released)

From April 14-19, 2015, nearly 600 New Jersey and New York Army and Air National Guardsmen participated in the joint-training event with New Jersey Office of Emergency Management and New Jersey State Police Task Force 1. The National Guard Homeland Response Force is one of ten established by the Department of Defense.



Soldiers with the 2-113th Infantry Battalion, New Jersey Army National Guard, interact with role players at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 17, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)

It's not an easy job. Site security in the midst of chaos and confusion helps to keep rescue efforts organized and focused.

Lt. Col. Benjamin Richardson
New York National Guard

building involving 600 people and 180 injured.

Role players in full makeup emerged from an engineered pile of rebar and rubble appearing disoriented and injured – and that's where the 2-113th Soldiers took control of the worst case scenario.

"It's not an easy job," said Lt. Col. Benjamin Richardson of the New York National Guard. "Site security in the midst of chaos and confusion helps to keep rescue efforts organized and focused."

In securing the basic footprint area of operation, the Soldiers marked off and contained safe zones for the injured as well as controlled hot and cold chemical response entry and exit points. Responsiveness is key for these Soldiers who coordinate with civilian authorities, maintain all traffic and handle disruptive and curious civilians all part of the life-like training exercise.

Margeotes said training for true disasters requires realistic training.

"This training prepares us for any situation."



Top left: A National Guard Soldier assists a simulated burn victim during the full scale exercise involving more than 600 Army and Air National Guardsmen from New York, New Jersey, and West Virginia at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., April 17, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released) Bottom left: Sgts. William J. Camp Jr., left, and Nick Lam, both with the 21st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team, New Jersey National Guard, look for evidence at a weapons of mass destruction factory, April 16, 2015. The 21st WMD CST and New York's 2nd WMD CST handled the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear exercise portion. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)





Engineers train at FIG

By Sgt. Bill Addison
444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

More than 150 Soldiers of the New Jersey Army National Guard's newly formed 104th Brigade Engineer Battalion descended upon Pennsylvania for Annual Training June 5 – 19 at Fort Indiantown Gap.

The two weeks gave the Soldiers the opportunity to transition from the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Brigade Special Troops Battalion shedding the infantry and military police companies while acquiring a second combat engineer company along with a signal company.

And while the 104th can trace its lineage back to World War I, the brigade engineer battalion structure is new to the Army, according to Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Leonard.

"This battalion has been at the cutting edge of everything," said Leonard. "We talk about a team ef-

This battalion has been at the cutting edge of everything. We talk about a team effort, this is a good team here.

Command Sgt. Maj.
Mark Leonard
104th Brigade Engineer
Battalion

Alpha Company Soldiers with the 104th Brigade Engineer Battalion, train on light weight handheld mine detectors during an annual training exercise at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., June 12, 2015. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Donnelly/Released)

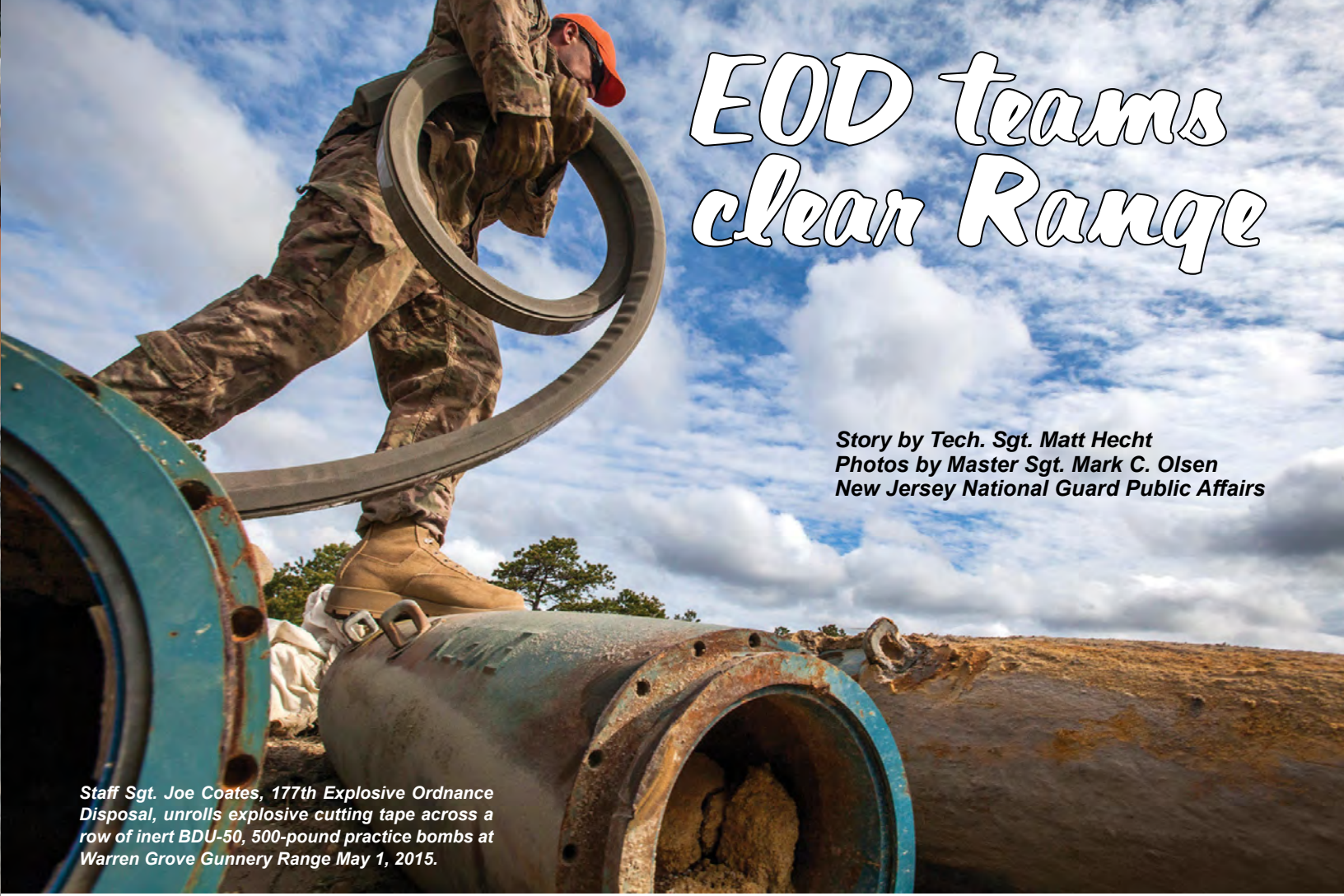
fort, this is a good team here."

Leonard said the battalion's training at Fort Indiantown Gap has been phenomenal, adding that each of the six companies has been able to focus on their various occupational specialties.

"The engineers are out blowing things up, the military intelligence people are doing their portion. The cooks are keeping everyone well fed and the mechanics keeping everything running."

EOD teams clear Range

Story by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht
Photos by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs



Staff Sgt. Joe Coates, 177th Explosive Ordnance Disposal, unrolls explosive cutting tape across a row of inert BDU-50, 500-pound practice bombs at Warren Grove Gunnery Range May 1, 2015.

Explosive ordnance disposal Airmen from the 177th Civil Engineering Squadron were joined by fellow EOD Airmen from the Air Force Reserve to perform the annual range clearance at Warren Grove Gunnery Range in Ocean County, N.J.

Beginning on April 28, the range went quiet, letting Airmen retrieve all the ordnance that was dropped at the Range during the past year.

EOD and range personnel used military vehicles, construc-



Tech. Sgt. John F. Hurley Jr., center, 177th Explosive Ordnance Disposal, wraps explosive cutting tape around an inert BDU-50, during a joint render safe operation with EOD Airmen from the 177th and the 514th Air Mobility Wing EOD, Air Force Reserve.

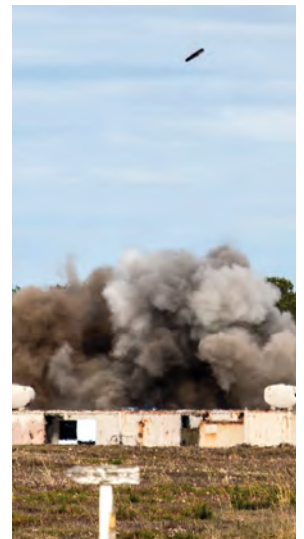
tion equipment and all-terrain vehicles to clear the target areas for training purposes.

“We come up to the range to clear it of all hazards,” said Master Sgt. David Niedzwiadek, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the New Jersey Air National Guard’s 177th Explosive Ordnance Disposal team. “It is good training and also a real world operation, the way we make these large bombs safe. The annual clearance ensures the bombing range can be used safely by military personnel.”

On May 1, the Airmen rendered safe – a controlled detonation operation – by performing a series of three detonations using shape charges on 30 inert BDU-50s, 500-pound practice bombs and two cartridges from BDU-33s, 25-pound practice bombs, for future recycling.

The detonations were part of a joint venture between the 177th and the Air Force Reserve’s 514th Explosive Ordnance Disposal shop.

“We actually work with the 177th EOD guys often,” said Master Sgt. Dustin Heines, from the 514th Air Mobility Wing. “EOD is one and the same, it doesn’t matter if you are Guard, Reserve or Active Duty, we’re all here to help each other.”



The grit of Green Phase



Story by Spc. Devon Bistarkey
Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Joe Donnelly
444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

The journey toward becoming a Soldier is a rite of passage; a journey filled with many milestones.

The “Green Phase” Soldiers from the New Jersey National Guard’s Recruit Sustainment Program completed their field training exercise at Joint Base McGuire-Lakehurst-Dix, May 16, 2015.

The lesson they learned was that there are no short cuts.

Photos above and below: New Jersey Recruit Sustainment Program Soldiers from the National Guard training Center, Sea Girt, N.J., go up against the opposition force from the 114th Infantry at Joint Base McGuire-Dix Lakehurst, during their last phase of training May 16, 2015. The training provides the Soldiers the opportunity to improve their tactical skills before going to their Advance Individual Training.



We are much better prepared. We’ve found that planning and communication is key.

Pvt. Ryan Onosko
Green Phase Student
Platoon Guide

The New Jersey Army National Guard is the only element in the Army that assigns Soldiers to a “Green Phase” after they complete Basic Combat Training and are waiting to attend their Advanced Individual Training.

“No one does what we do,” said Staff Sgt. Sean Burrough, RSP recruiter.

The Green Phase Soldiers say the training builds upon what they learned at Basic Training and keeps those skills sharp for going on to more advanced training.

“We are much better prepared,” said Pvt. Ryan Onosko, Green Phase Student Platoon Guide. “We’ve found that planning and communication is key.”

The weekend field training exercise started with a UH-60 Blackhawk ride from Sea Girt, N.J., to Fort Dix. After landing, the Soldiers marched five miles to their objective before receiving their mission.

That’s where things got tough.

Their mission was to secure a village with known enemy forces. The opposing force they met were the skilled infantrymen from the 1-114th Infantry Battalion, who volunteered to help in the exercise. Focusing on conducting complicated linear ambush scenarios the Green Phase Soldiers encountered smoke grenades, flash-bang pyrotechnics and simulator rifle rounds.

“We’re not trying to hurt them, we’re trying to teach them,” said Sgt. Bernard Madgey, opposition force squad leader, 1-114th Infantry Battalion. “There is a lesson in everything.”

During the last nine months, the Soldiers, with the guidance of expert cadre, have trained for this event putting to test all their basic Soldier skills from land navigation to reacting to contact.

“We are all Soldiers; we have to have these common skills,” Onosko said.



FLURI ONE STEP CLOSER TO GOAL

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs

West Point has been a goal of Pfc. Nico Fluri, a Cavalry Scout from the 50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, since he was 12 years old.

“I have always had a strong love of country and a calling to serve; this innate desire has inspired me to become an Army Officer said Fluri. “I was in the sixth grade when I first learned of the United States Military Academy.”

He recently found out he had been accepted into the United States Military Academy Prep School at West Point.

“I feel both honored and humbled to be accepted into the United States Military Academy Prep School and I am excited to start my journey in becoming an Army Officer.”

The path to West Point has not been an easy one. Fluri set himself up from a young age to be on the

I feel both honored and humbled to be accepted into the United States Military Academy Prep School and I am excited to start my journey in becoming an Army Officer.

Pfc. Nico Fluri
50th Infantry Brigade Combat Team

right path.

“As I entered middle and high school, all my decisions in the areas of academics, athletics and leadership emphasized the skills I would need to achieve my goal,” said Fluri.

Fluri credits the New Jersey Army National Guard with giving him the skills he needs to follow his dream.

“My time in the National Guard has been instrumental in preparing and training me for both the military and the leadership facets of achieving my goal,” said Fluri. “My experiences of being a private in the Army National Guard have given me the opportunity to have a solid foundation with which I can build upon at West Point.”

Fluri, class of 2020, will join fellow New Jersey Army National Guard soldier Pfc. Nathaniel Okyere-Bour, class of 2019, at West Point this summer.

108TH DEPLOYS

Story by Tech Sgt. Armando Vasquez

Photo by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen

108th Wing Public Affairs



Approximately 50 Airmen from the 108th Wing departed aboard several KC-135 Stratotankers June 2, 2015.

In total, more than 140 Airmen mostly from Burlington, Mercer, Ocean, and Union counties, as well Bucks county Pennsylvania and Brooklyn, N.Y., will rotate in and out of the CENTCOM area of operations during the next couple of months, ensuring mission readiness and a successful completion of their tour in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Freedom's Sentinel.

The deployment, which is the largest aircraft tasking for the Wing since 9/11, will consist of aircrews, maintenance and logistics support personnel who will provide support with mid-air refueling missions, aircraft maintenance, and logistics operations. "This is what it's all about," said Col. Robert A. Meyer Jr., 108th Wing commander. "All of your hard work, training, long hours in your shops, and weekends away from your family is what has prepared you for this mission."

For Senior Airman David Abreu, who has a goal of becoming a fireman in his hometown, the opportunity to deploy will help his goal. "There are a couple of emotions going through me," said Abreu, a Union county resident. "I'm excited, scared, but I'm also ready to fulfill my obligation and earn my veteran's status, which will help me with my goal of becoming a fireman."

For Staff Sgt. Michael Escott this deployment is another mission to add to his already distinguished military career. The Ocean county resident deployed to Dubai and Kuwait as a Sailor with the Navy. After more than eight years in the Navy Reserves, his unit was moved to another area too far to commute, allowing Escott to bring his skills to the 108th Wing over a year ago. His experience as a policeman in Northern New Jersey and in the Navy ensures that his fellow Airmen are in good company. "I'm not sure what I'll be tasked with over there," said Escott, a materiel management specialist with the 108th Logistic Readiness

Squadron. "But all I want to do is complete the mission and return home safely to my wife and children."

The New Jersey National Guard has mobilized nearly 16,000 Airmen and Soldiers in support of overseas contingency operations since 9/11. With military specialties such as aircrews, maintenance, personnel, security forces and others, the New Jersey based 108th Wing has contributed to this effort by covering more than 5,000 positions in support of these operations.

"These Airmen never cease to amaze me," said Meyer. "When the call to duty is made, it doesn't matter how tough the mission is, these Airmen will answer the call. They know they will leave jobs and families behind. But they live by the Air Force core values of 'Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence In All We Do,' and these values will drive these Airmen to complete their mission and make our state proud."

An Airman's first deployment

Story and photo by
Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
108th Wing Public Affairs



There's a first time for everything.

In a person's life there will be the first time you ride a bicycle or the first time you drive a car without your parent riding shotgun, and of course, your first kiss.

The military is no different: Except the most significant first is your first deployment.

"I'm looking forward to it," said Senior Airman David G. Abreu. "I'm a little anxious, excited, nervous; it's a mix of emotions."

When news of the 108th Wing's deployment first came out, everyone in the shop wanted to go. Abreu had just finished his associates' degree in criminal justice and was planning on getting his bachelors in criminal justice at Kean University.

For the 108th Wing hydraulic mechanic, deploying to the United States Central Command area of operations (CENTCOM AOR) in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Freedom's Sentinel, gives him the opportunity to put his skills to the test in a combat environment.

"I was told 'just be ready to do the job and do it right,'" said Abreu.

For his role in the operation, Abreu

***I was told
'just be
ready to do
the job and
do it right'***

***Senior Airman
David G. Abreu
Hydraulic Mechanic
108th Wing***



will be responsible for everything on the KC-135R Stratotanker that deals with hydraulic and pneumatic systems, especially the boom. The KC-135R, which can carry up to 200,000 pounds of fuel, uses the boom to transfer fuel to American and coalition aircrafts. The mid-air refueling gives fighters and bombers longer reach on combat missions.

"The boom is exclusively the hydraulic shop's responsibility," said Abreu. "It's what makes this aircraft special."

Operation Freedom's Sentinel is the new United States military mission in support of operations in Afghanistan and is the United States' part of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission. This particular deployment will also include support of Operation Enduring Freedom, the all-encompassing war on terrorism operation in the CENTCOM AOR.

Abreu will not be alone for his first deployment. More than 140 Airmen will be deploying in and out of the AOR in support of Freedom's Sentinel during the summer.

And because this is a new operation, this will be their first time in support of this new mission as well.

CST EVALUATED AT CHERRY HILL

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht, New Jersey National Guard Public Affairs

The New Jersey National Guard's 21st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team kicked off a no-notice evaluation exercise at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. June 3, 2015.

The team was alerted to a scenario that centered around a possible weapons of mass destruction event at the National Guard Armory at Cherry Hill, N.J.

The 21st WMD CST is one of ten weapons of mass destruction Civil Support Teams that were established to deploy rapidly to assist a local incident commander in determining the nature and extent of an incident, to provide expert advice on weapons of mass destruction response, and to support the arrival of follow-on state and federal military units.

The no-notice training is part of strict validation process, with their certification exercise coming early next year. U.S. Army civilians from U.S. Army North were on hand to evaluate and educate the team.



Sgt. Nick Lam from the 21st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team scans a building for radioactive material during a weapons of mass destruction response exercise at the National Guard Armory in Cherry Hill, N.J., June 3, 2015.

It's a fully encapsulated suit, so it gets pretty hot. With body heat plus near 100 percent humidity, it can get so wet in the suit it looks like it's raining.

Sgt. Christopher Maude
21st Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Team



Staff Sgt. Jeff Whalen pulls a wagon filled with detection gear during a weapons of mass destruction response exercise.

“The evaluators are playing the role of the Cherry Hill Fire Department,” said U.S. Army North member Ricky Martin. “The civil support team will be in a support role assisting the local authorities in detecting any hazardous materials. We’ll be looking at that whole process.”

After setting up the tactical operations center, the team had a safety/mission brief, and suited up to enter the hot zone scanning for hazards.

“It’s a fully encapsulated suit, so it gets pretty hot,” said Sgt. Christopher Maude, a Soldier with the team. “With body heat plus near 100 percent humidity, it can get so wet in the suit it looks like it’s raining.”

Despite the hardships of being in the suit for extended periods of time, Maude finds the experience of being part of the 21st to be rewarding.

“It makes me feel really proud to know that myself and my team members, should the time come, we can go and help the civilian responders or whoever else needs us, to make sure our communities are safe,” said Maude.

“It is a proud and humbling experience.”



M9 course
Senior Airman Chris Whitehurst from the New Jersey Air National Guard's 227th Air Support Operations Squadron fires his Beretta M9 pistol during the qualification course at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., June 10, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released)

NJNG Family Assistance Centers

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Master Sgt. Kirk Sherry, left, assists Staff Sgt. Ilya Barankevich, both with the 177th Civil Engineer Squadron, as he drills in a screw on a new foundation that will be used for a gazebo at Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg, Fla., May 26, 2015.

177th CE heads south

Story and photo by Airman 1st Class Amber Powell, 177th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

A group of 48 Airmen from the New Jersey Air National Guard's 177th Civil Engineer Squadron traveled to Florida for training at Coast Guard Air Station Clearwater and Sector St. Petersburg from May 17-30.

The Airmen performed multiple types of projects ranging from pouring concrete and laying tile to rebuilding a foundation and moving a heating, ventilating and air conditioning unit.

"When guard members can come with the experience and skills that they have, and we just furnish the materials, it improves the material condition of the base in ways that we just wouldn't be able to do over the course of the year," said Chief Warrant Officer Jason Briggs, Facility Engineer, Sector St. Petersburg.

"I can't say enough good things about the people who have come down and the work that has been done. They've been a really hard working group of people," said Briggs. "These last couple of weeks have been my first experience working with the Guard when they been deployed and recognizing the level of skill and training that all the members have, far exceeded what my expectations were and really helped us accomplish what we hoped to achieve."

Deployments for training take place every year as a means to provide training opportunities that may not normally be available at home station.

"It's real world training for our Air Force specialty code and also offers the opportunity for cross training," said Mas-

ter Sgt. William Ericksen, first sergeant of the 177th Civil Engineer Squadron. "Instead of putting up a tent at our base and tearing it down, we're able to go to another base and use our skills, leaving something permanent. It's a win-win situation."

The Airmen are sent to different job sites based on the type of training they need.

"In order to meet the training requirements of Air Force Instruction 10-210, Airmen in upgrade training get the chance to have certain requirements signed off," said 1st Lt. Andrew Matejek, project officer for the DFT. "The big thing is to maintain proficiency and skill level in everyone's particular AFSC, while providing new Airmen with on-the-job training."

SUMMER TRAINING



UAV training

Spc. Stephanie Zeman, Detachment 1, 104th Brigade Engineer Battalion, checks the oil levels on a RQ-7 Shadow Tactical Unmanned Aircraft System during a joint exercise on Warren Grove Gunnery Range, N.J., June 16, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released)



Parachute training

Tactical Air Control Party Airmen from the New Jersey Air National Guard's 227th Air Support Operations Squadron and U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers from the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne) parachute from a CH-47 Chinook helicopter from the Maryland Army National Guard at Scorpion Drop Zone on Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., June 12, 2015. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Matt Hecht/Released)

WELCOME HOME 2-113TH



Above: Buses carrying A Company, 2-113th Infantry Soldiers, pass under an American flag on their way to the National Guard Armory in Jersey City, N.J., June 25, 2015, for a welcome home ceremony. Left: Alpha Company Soldiers arrive at the Jersey City Armory. The approximately 170 Citizen-Soldiers returned home from a nearly year-long deployment where they conducted a security force mission in Southwest Asia in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Inherent Resolve. Right: Citizen-Soldier Spc. Joseph Bishop hugs his son. (U.S. Air National Guard photos by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)



The Citizen-Soldiers returned from a nearly year-long deployment where they conducted a security force mission in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Inherent Resolve.



Above: Sgt. Jocsan Mairena holds his son during the welcome home ceremony. Below: Brig. Gen. Michael L. Cunniff, left, The Adjutant General of New Jersey, awards Spc. Pedro Zamora the New Jersey Distinguished Service Medal. (U.S. Air National Guard photos by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen/Released)



GOAL MET: 358 days to return to 'normal'



Story by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley
444th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Photos by Master Sgt. Mark C. Olsen
108th Wing Public Affairs

Senior Airman Ashley V. Chytraus was on her way to the 108th Wing on her motorcycle when she was struck by a car June 21, 2014. On her medevac flight to the hospital she died.

With chest heaving, arms pumping and pink running shoes a blur on the pavement, Senior Airman Ashley Chytraus crossed the finish line at her annual Physical Fitness Test on June 14.

Although the 25-year-old crew chief with the New Jersey Air National Guard's 108th Wing scored an "excellent," she admitted being disappointed that her run time and pushups were a bit off her usual standards.

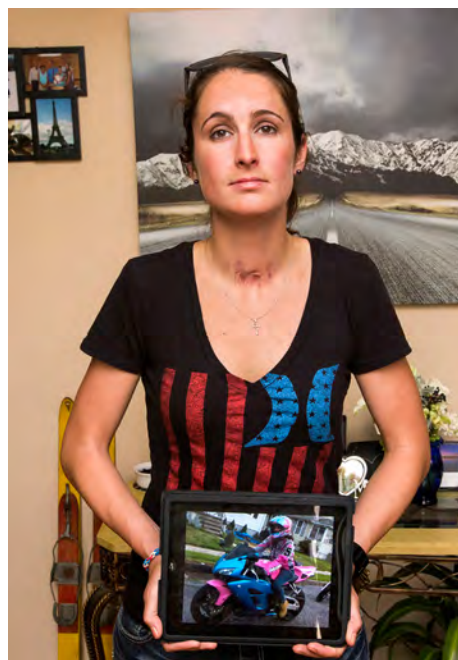
But she was willing to forgive herself.

Only 358 days earlier, Chytraus was on a medevac helicopter being carried away from the scene of a horrific motorcycle crash. She died and was revived on the helicopter and then spent the next month in a medically-induced coma.

She'd been on her way to drill on her pink and blue Honda CBR-1000 when the driver of a silver Cadillac made an illegal turn and crossed into her path. The collision broke two vertebrae in Chytraus's neck, crushed her hand, mangled the quadriceps tendon in her leg and forced two splintered ribs into her liver.

It was the worst liver laceration the hospital had ever seen, she was later told.

"All I remember is turning the cor-



Chytraus holds a tablet with an image of her Honda CBR-1000 motorcycle at her home June 10, 2015.

ner down the street and waking up a month later," Chytraus said. "I'd been sleeping for so long that the wounds and the surgeries just turned to scars."

Although Chytraus said she was comforted when she woke up because she was surrounded by her parents, siblings and the man she eventually married, she couldn't shake the thought that her Air Force career was over.

She'd enlisted at 19 while attending Burlington Community College, which is along the flight path of Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst. The young woman who was uncertain about her future found the answer by simply looking up.

"Planes were flying overhead and I was like 'What am I doing?'," she said. "I knew that's what I wanted."

She became a crew chief and mechanic with the 108th Wing, which flies the KC-135R Stratotanker. It was a natural fit. A self-proclaimed "gear monkey," Chytraus grew up around her father's automotive repair shop, fixing cars, trucks and motorcycles.

Chytraus had come to love the con-

"I died and came back. What could be greater than that?"

Senior Airman Ashley V. Chytraus, crew chief, 108th Wing



Senior Airman Andrew C. King, left, counts Chytraus's pushups during the United States Air Force Fitness Test at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., June 14, 2015. Both King and Chytraus serve in the 108th Wing.

trolled chaos of the flight line, turning wrenches, dragging fuel hoses and making last-minute checks on aircraft before sending them into the sky.

From her hospital bed, with a tracheotomy tube in her throat, the flight line seemed very far away.

But Chytraus made it clear to her doctors that if there was a way back, she was going to find it.

"Something that people realize when they get to know me is my attitude and my drive. I want to go forward in my life," she said. "There are challenges you come to in life and sometimes the guy upstairs says I'm going to give you this challenge and see how well you do."

Chytraus began her journey back to the flight line by relearning to walk. The combination of the damaged tendon in her leg and the loss of 30 pounds of muscle required a gradual progression from a walker, to crutches, and finally, a cane before Chytraus could walk on her own.

Immediately after the crash, the doctors were most concerned about the two broken vertebrae in Chytraus's neck.

"Most people who break those end up paralyzed or die from asphyxiation," Chytraus said. "For some reason, I wasn't paralyzed and the bones healed on their

own. It's something I can't explain."

But as her rehabilitation progressed, the biggest threat to a full recovery emerged from an injury that at first appeared miniscule compared to the rest of the trauma Chytraus suffered – a hairline fracture near her elbow. As it healed, her arm locked at a 90-degree angle and remained that way for nearly six months.

"It was the biggest scare," Chytraus said. "Being in the military, you can't not have an arm. I thought I might be medically discharged. It was stressful."

A surgery to unlock the elbow was successful. But Chytraus was still too weak to return to her job.

Her rehabilitation efforts intensified. Her therapist, an Army Reservist, developed a routine that incorporated all of the motions required of Chytraus's normal duties; turning wrenches, screw-

drivers and changing aircraft tires.

She returned to her job as a full-time technician with the 108th in May. She took the physical fitness test a month later.

Chytraus says both came to pass because she had good luck -- and never wavered from her objective.

"Goals. I wanted to get back to work and be able to do my job," she said. "Goals. I wanted to take my test without any waivers and at least come close to my score last year."

She's uncertain which goal is next. She's considering finishing her undergraduate degree and becoming an officer.

Chytraus is sure at least of this.

"I died and came back," she said. "What could be greater than that?"

Chytraus got engaged three weeks after she was discharged from the hospital and married two weeks later to the boyfriend who had been at her bedside every day of her coma. That relationship, and the thought of the strain her crash and recovery put on her family, provides the answer to the question she gets asked all the time:

"Do I want to get back on?" Chytraus said. "The answer is yes. Of course. It doesn't scare me. I'm still alive. But there's other people in my life now that, after all this ... it's worth staying around and not risking it."



Chytraus verifies that a KC-135R Stratotanker's rudders and flaps are operable for a training flight at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., June 11, 2015.

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Good-bye kiss

Pfc. Emmory Bowens kisses Jasmine Bowens as their daughter, Kimora, 5, looks on, at the National Guard Armory, Cherry Hill, N.J., April 18, 2015. Bowens is among the 50 Soldiers from the New Jersey Army National Guard's 328th Military Police Company deploying in support of Joint Task Force Guantanamo. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Wayne Woolley/Released)

