

National Guard units get mobilization orders

By Sgt. 1st Class Rob Keller,
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen announced June 20 that North Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Company A, 164th Engineer Combat Battalion (ECB), Minot, and the 1-112th Command Aviation Battalion (CAB), Bismarck, have received their mobilization orders.

Soldiers from the 1-112th CAB entered federal active duty service on July 11, 2005. Soldiers from Company A, 164th ECB will enter federal active duty service on Aug. 5, 2005.

Typically, when the Pentagon calls up National Guard members, it first issues an "alert for mobilization," notifying the Guardsmen of a potential mobilization. That is followed by a "mobilization order," giving the soldiers a date to report for active duty. Company A, 164th ECB was alerted on April 18 of this year while the 1-112th CAB was alerted on April 22.

Co. A, 164th Engineer Battalion

Approximately 122 Soldiers make up Company A, 164th ECB. Selected members and volunteers from other units in the North Dakota Army National Guard were added to Company A to bring it to full-mobilized strength.

Under current rotation policies, the units and Soldiers would serve one year in Iraq "boots on the ground" and could be on active duty for 18 months to two years. The unit will train at Ft. Riley, Kan., before deploying into Iraq.

Maj. Jason Steckler, Bismarck, is the commander of the unit. "North Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers who have gone before us have proven to the world and our state that we have a professional organization and accomplish our mission," said Steckler. "Company A will carry on that proud tradition in Iraq."

Company A, 164th is headquartered at the Minot Armed Forces Reserve Center and has a small detachment from Hazen. The unit has both a wartime and peacetime mission. During peacetime, the company is engaged in limited-scope horizontal and vertical construction projects in support of local communities and humanitarian support to countries abroad.

During wartime, the unit trains to increase combat effectiveness by accomplishing mobility, counter mobility, survivability and engineer tasks. They can also perform combat missions in the role of infantry. Job skills comprising the unit include combat engineers, construction equipment operators, and mechanics.

The company lineage and honors date back to March 9, 1883 when Company A, 164th Engineer Combat Battalion was first organized as Company A, 1st Infantry Regiment, Dakota Militia, Bismarck, and participated in the Philippine Insurrection as Co A, 1st Dakota Volunteer Infantry from Feb. to July, 1899.

1-112th Aviation Battalion

Approximately 23 North Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 1-112th Command Aviation Battalion (CAB), Bismarck, recently received their mobilization order for an overseas deployment.

The unit and Soldiers could be on active duty for up to one year and will be assigned to a North Atlantic Trade Organization (NATO) Enduring Mission to Bosnia/Herzegovina.

The 23 Soldier aviation airlift task force, based at the Aviation Readiness Center at the Bismarck Airport, will conduct air movement operations utilizing the UH-60 "Black Hawk." These operations include the movement of personnel, supplies and equipment. The unit will take four of their five Black Hawks with the pilots, crew chiefs and flight operations personnel.

Maj. Dave Hall is the commander of the Task Force.

"Our Task Force is well prepared to support this NATO mission and we are proud to represent the North Dakota Army National Guard on this deployment," said Hall. "Our phenomenal safety record exists only because of the professional soldiers that support and operate these aircraft and we will execute our missions with the same professionalism in theater as we have in North Dakota."

The pilots, maintenance, and operations personnel of the 1-112th Aviation Battalion took part in setting a new flight safety record nationwide. The North Dakota Army National Guard Aviation Section has flown more than 100,000 accident free hours without the loss of an aircraft or crewmember over a 46-year period going back to 1958.

The only North Dakota Army National Guard unit currently mobilized and deployed overseas is Battery F, 188th Air Defense Artillery, Grand Forks (100 soldiers) stationed at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Warrior, near Kirkuk, Iraq.



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer Theresia Hersch, 164th Engineer Battalion

(Top) Spc. Anthony Deegan, 164th Engineer Combat Battalion (Corps Mechanized) from Carrington, moves through a rehearsal of a MOUT (Military Operations Urban Terrain) site while on annual training at Camp Grafton. (Left) Spc. Travis Morrell, A Battery 1st Battalion 188th Air Defense Artillery, operates the gunner's station of an Avenger. (Below) A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from the 1-112th Command Aviation Battalion carries a Humvee in a slingload operation.



Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Haugen, Joint Force Headquarters



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Mike Jennens, Civil Support Team

1-188th ADA Battalion receives notice of possible mobilization

North Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the 1-188th Air Defense Artillery (ADA) Battalion, Grand Forks, received an "alert for possible mobilization" for an overseas deployment in support of Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom or Iraqi Freedom. The exact location is classified at this time.

When the Department of Defense calls up National Guard units, it first issues an "alert for possible mobilization," notifying the Guardsmen of a potential call-up. That is followed by a "mobilization order," giving the Soldiers a date to report for active duty and their mobilization station.

"The 1-188th is not currently ordered to mobilize," said Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen, Adjutant General for the North Dakota National Guard. "However, the 1-188th is currently planning and making preparations in the event they are called. We continue to train as we normally do and are prepared for any mission that we are directed to perform. The key to our success is that we have to be flexible in the current military environment."

This early alert notification provides Soldiers time to plan for their deployment, providing as much predictability as possible for service members, their families, communities and employers. If mobilized, the unit and Soldiers could be deployed overseas for up to 12 months in theater or "one year boots on the ground." The total length of mobilization is dependent on training requirements and the requirements of the theater commander.

The 1-188th ADA, based at the Grand Forks Armed Forces Reserve Center, with a battery in Bismarck, provides forward air defense and early warning of air attack to prevent loss of friendly assets from attack and/or surveillance by low level hostile aircraft.

Soldier Talk



What was your favorite part about annual training this year?



Spc. Kayla Gustafson
Headquarters and Headquarters
Company (HHC), 1st Battalion
112th Aviation



Sgt. Gregory Burgard
Headquarters and Headquarters
Company (HHC), 1st Battalion
112th Aviation



Spc. Stephanie Reich
Headquarters and Headquarters
Company (HHC), 1st Battalion
112th Aviation



Sgt. 1st Class Robert Coad
Company D 1st Battalion
112th Aviation



Capt. William Watson
Headquarters and Headquarters
Company (HHC), 1st Battalion
112th Aviation

"My favorite activity at annual training was shooting the M-16s during engagement skills training."

"The best parts were the rappel tower, leadership training and the gas chamber."

"My favorite part was watching Capt. Watson be 'killed' behind a skinny tree at MOUT training."

"My favorite part about annual training was weapons qualification because I got to run all the ranges."

"The best part was participating in Soldier training like MOUT and rappelling."

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New TRICARE options for returning deployed Soldiers

By Sgt. Justin Vinje,
1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Guard members returning from active-duty military service have some new options to explore in the area of health care coverage for themselves and their families.

The National Defense Authorization Act, signed into law on Oct. 28, 2004, gave permanence to some beneficial programs created for military personnel and their families in the last few years, according to TRICARE's Web site dedicated to Reserve personnel.

One of these programs is TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS), a health plan providing Soldiers and their families with broader coverage at a lesser cost than Aetna PPO 20 or BluePreferred PPO, based on costs for a family of four in Washington, D.C.

Benefits covered by TRS include routine doctors' office visits, hospitalizations, emergency care (including ambulance services), family care (preventive screenings and immunizations), maternity services, mental health services, annual eye exams, laboratory and radiology services, medical equipment and supplies, and prescription drug coverage.

Costs for TRS include monthly premiums and annual deductibles. Coverage for a single Soldier is \$75 per month, while family coverage, including the Soldier, is \$233 per month. The annual deductible is \$50 per individual or \$100 per family for Soldiers grades E-4 and below, and the deductible increases to \$150 per individual or \$300 per family for Soldiers grades E-5 and above.

TRS shares the cost of medical bills after the annual deductible dollar amount has been met. For medical services within the TRICARE network, TRS pays 85 percent of the cost. For medical services outside the network, TRS pays 80 percent.



There is also a Catastrophic Cap placed on Soldiers' out-of-pocket medical expenses. Each fiscal year, from Oct. 1 to Sept. 30, the most that a Soldier or family will have to pay is \$1,000, including cost shares and the annual deductibles. The monthly premium payments for TRS are not included in this total.

To qualify for enrollment in TRS, Soldiers have been called to Title 10 active duty for more than 30 consecutive days on or after Sept. 11, 2001. The Soldiers must then have served at least 90 consecutive days or more on those orders, unless cut short by illnesses or injuries that occurred while on active duty. Finally, Soldiers must be under contract to serve in the Guard or Reserve for at least one year from the date beginning TRS coverage and continue serving in the Guard or Reserve to maintain eligibility for this program.

A three-step process governs the enrollment itself: Enter, Execute, and Enroll:

ENTER: First, soldiers must "Enter the Agreement" through the Guard-Reserve Portal website <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/Guard-ReservePortal>. Soldiers are to log in to this website and click on the "Accept" button. Soldiers released from Active Duty on or before April 26, 2005, have until Oct. 28, 2005, to accept this program. Applications for this historical group will not be accepted after this date. Soldiers released from active duty on or after April 27, 2005, must accept or decline this program within a 120 day window before their release from active duty.

EXECUTE: Second, soldiers must print off the Agreement Form, DD 2895 from the Guard-Reserve Portal, sign it and mail or fax it to the State Tricare Reserve Select Verifying Officer (TRSVO) Staff Sgt. Cody C. Lindstrom at 701-333-3082. Soldiers will be notified by Lindstrom when the agreement has been verified and executed. Normally this will occur within 24 hours of receipt.

ENROLL: Third, after the soldiers' Agreement Form DD 2895 has been verified by the State TRSVO, soldiers can print off the pre-filled enrollment form from the Guard-Reserve Portal and send it to the TRICARE Regional Contractor with their first month's premium. Payment via credit card, money order or checks will be accepted.

Soldiers will receive an informational packet from TRICARE and a TRS card. Eligible family members will receive their cards at a later date.

Different periods of time spent on active duty will qualify Soldiers for different time amounts of coverage under TRS. A period of 90-179 consecutive days on active duty will qualify a Soldier for one year of coverage. A tour of 180-269 days is worth two years. Duty lasting 270-359 days nets three years. Three hundred sixty days is worth four years of TRS coverage.

Finally, TRS is also available to National Guard and Reserve members and their families who live overseas, and the requirements for qualification and enrollment are much the same.

For more information, contact (your unit administration) or:

Staff Sgt. Cody C. Lindstrom
J-1 Personnel Services State TRSVO
Phone: 701-333-3072
Fax: 701-333-3082

Or go to TRICARE's Web site dedicated to Reserve Personnel: <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/reserve/>.

Camp Grafton facilities bring training to modern mode

Story and photos by Capt. Dan Gaffney,
1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Located in the northeastern part of the state, Camp Gilbert C. Grafton Training Center is the premier training facility for the North Dakota National Guard, and one of the best year-round training sites in the Midwest. Thousands of Soldiers, airmen, and civilian law enforcement agents trained at Camp Grafton during 2003, and with new facilities and expanded training sites that number is sure to grow each year. More than just barracks and woods, Camp Grafton has the accommodations and cutting-edge facilities needed to train today's military for tomorrow's battle.

A place to call 'home'

Camp Grafton started out as the Fort Totten Wood Reservation, a place to get wood fuel and building supplies to support the main fort. Today it has more than 360 buildings capable of supporting thousands of soldiers.

What started out as the heavily wooded (but otherwise unoccupied) Fort Totten Wood Reservation is now North Dakota's premier training complex of more than 300 buildings capable of housing, feeding, training and almost 3,000 Soldiers at the same time, any time of the year.

Camp Grafton has a wide variety of buildings, from the museum-quality Edwards House to simple tin huts, from plain barracks to a high-tech virtual battlefield. Several North Dakota Army National Guard units also call Camp Grafton "home."

Whether Soldiers are training for a weekend or deployed to Camp Grafton for a year, they all need some basics: a place to sleep and a place to eat. Soldiers have a wide variety of quarters at Camp Grafton, and up to 800 of them can stay in the familiar open-bay barracks where a trip to the latrine requires little more than shower shoes and a towel. Those barracks were built in the mid 1980s alongside a new dining hall capable of serving 600 Soldiers and administrative offices.

Looking at old pictures, you can see that most Soldiers slept in tents at Camp Grafton; those tents were replaced by metal hutments in the late 1960's. Each hut sleeps 11 Soldiers,



Soldiers at Camp Grafton are now using squad hutments, which are replacing the tin huts one row at a time. For Soldiers staying a longer time period, Camp Grafton has a number of trailer houses. There are 13 regular trailers and 17 double-wide trailers.



and while a trip to the latrine may require going outside, the bathhouses are at the end of the row.

Some Soldiers are now sleeping in new squad hutments that are replacing the tin huts one row at a time. Slightly smaller than the old ones, the new huts sleep half-a-dozen Soldiers. Built with more modern methods, some of the new huts are also serving another purpose: training. Engineer students at the 164th Regional Training Institute have been honing their construction and carpentry skills by building some of the huts. Latrines are still a short walk away.

In addition to huts and barracks that Soldiers stay in for free, Camp Grafton also has a wide variety of chargeable quarters that offer a few more amenities and privacy, along with more space for Soldiers spending more time at camp. Two buildings of BOQs (bachelor of-

ficer quarters – which are not limited to officers) can sleep 80 Soldiers. Each room has two beds, a desk, TV, small refrigerator, and shares a bathroom with another room. For Soldiers that will be here for a longer time period, Camp Grafton has a number of trailer houses. Located along the shore of Devils Lake, there are 13 regular trailer houses and 17 double-wide trailers. All trailers have a living room, dining room, full bathroom, kitchen and three bedrooms; single trailers sleep three and double-wides sleep six.

Exact numbers on how many Soldiers sleep in huts or barracks every year are not kept, but a look at the chargeable quarters gives an idea of how busy Camp Grafton is. Maj. Mark Tibor, Camp Logistics Officer, said "I've been working out here for four years, and every year it gets busier." During the 2004 fiscal year,

chargeable quarters were occupied for 20,000 man-nights.

Facilities

Camp Gilbert C. Grafton's state-of-the-art facilities include:

Armories for the 3662nd Maintenance Company (a.k.a. the "Deuce"), the 136th Quartermaster Battalion, and the 164th Regimental Training Institute.

The Major General C. Emerson Murry Regional Live Fire and Maneuver Center, a group of live-fire ranges located at Camp Grafton South. The complex includes a demolition range for engineers, an M-203 Grenade Launcher (typically mounted on the underside of the M-16) range, a multipurpose range capable of handling the M-60 machine gun, the M-249 Squad Automatic Weapon, and the "Ma Deuce" – the crew-served M-2 .50 Caliber Machine Gun (plastic training bullets only). A pistol range, a combat zero range and an M-16 qualification range are also at the complex, as well as an inert MICLIC (Mine Clearing Line Charge) range.

An indoor M-9 (9mm) pistol range.

The Engagement Skills Trainer, an indoor "virtual" range that can handle a squad of Soldiers at a time.

An AAFES PX where Soldiers can buy uniforms, boots, patriotic clothing, electronics (the store has a small selection of radios, TVs, DVDs and CDs), food (including a few selections normally found in a Class VI store), gifts, toys, hygiene supplies, office supplies, jewelry and watches and more. The PX also sells fishing licenses and fishing supplies, including poles, lines, lures and coolers. As with any AAFES store, Soldiers can order anything in the AAFES online or paper catalogs that they cannot find on camp.

The Edwards House, a museum quality lodge used for meetings and conferences.

A post club where Soldiers can enjoy food and beverages (Camp Grafton has a new club built specifically for that purpose).

A new (and expanding) MOUT (Military Operations on Urban Terrain) site that includes several one and two-story buildings and underground tunnels.

Recruiting and retention able to rise above flurry of new challenges

By Sgt 1st Class Marvin Baker,
1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Recruiting and retention have faced a lot of challenges since Sept. 11, 2001 but the staff responsible for signing new people into the North Dakota National continues to excel.

In fact, one Bismarck recruiter who is now a statewide trainer, was recently recognized by National Guard Bureau for enlisting nine Soldiers during the month of April. Sgt. 1st Class Rashad Schaffner agreed that recruiting has become more difficult in the past four years despite generous bonuses and he explained why. "The biggest obstacles are the parents; some have never served before," Schaffner said.

"High school students; they don't mind. But many of the parents say they aren't sending their kid. But some have never served before and they don't know. Until you have worn the uniform, you don't know."

But many of the high school students today are thinking that the U.S. military has been in Iraq three years and has stabilized the situation so why not sign up and take a whopping \$10,000 bonus?

That thinking has actually caused a flurry of activity in Schaffner's Bismarck office. He said a lot of former Guard personnel are returning to ranks to take advantage of the incentive. But that's only part of the

equation.

"We have been really busy with prior Guardsmen wanting to come back," Schaffner said. "Maybe they got out and wanted a break, but they miss the team and miss the camaraderie."

For those who stick around and re-enlist, the bonus is elevated to an unprecedented \$15,000. It's great incentive but at the same time processing North Dakota recruits has become more stringent. Some complain about going through the process, however, if that Soldier winds up in a field environment, it's only to their advantage.

In addition, the whole process of getting a Soldier into the system has been refined and waivers that used to take up to six months, can now be completed in three to four days. That, according to Schaffner, is incentive in itself.

"It's really streamlined," he said. "The old ways have changed."

As a result of his success in April, Schaffner is now a statewide trainer in recruiting and retention. He said he will have up to 29 recruiters under his wing to help them develop a plan and tackle new challenges.

"I'll share the ideas that work here," Schaffner said. "We're putting everything forward to make the North Dakota National Guard the best it can be."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Theresa Volk,
957th Multi-Role Bridge Company

Pvt. Andrew Wallner rappels off the tower as instructor Warrant Officer Russ Zuraff guides him on his way.

Camp Grafton annual t



Photo by Pvt. Nantena Beller, 1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Spc. Stephanie Reich, 1-112th Command Aviation Battalion, participates in leadership skills and repelling with the rest of her unit at Camp Grafton.



Photo by Pvt. Nantena Beller, 1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Spc. Stephanie Reich and Spc Nicole Kunz, 1-112th Command Aviation Battalion, enter the tunnel during MOUT training. The tunnel leads to a room in the house and a shed outside.



Photo by Sgt. Justin Vinje, 1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment



141st Engineer Battalion Soldiers from Valley City are revamping the tin huts at Camp Grafton. They finished about one row of these huts done over a two-week period. (Top) Sgt. Mo Nelson hammers a rafter securely into place. (Left) Soldiers from the 141st shingling the roof of a new hut.



Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Haugen, Joint Force Headquarters

Spc. Margaret Mork, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery 1st Battalion 188th Air Defense Artillery, zips up her Mission Oriented Protected Posture (MOPP) suit during Common Task Testing (CTT).



Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Haugen, Joint Force Headquarters

raining



th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
nnel below the house used in



Photo by Sgt. Justin Vinje,
1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Pvt. Thomas Fandrich, C Company 164th
(Dickinson) pounds a nail into some soffit,
"Making it look nice," he said.



Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Haugen, Joint Force Headquarters
Staff Sgt. Jeff Manley moves into a room as Sgt. Collin Belgarde follows. These
136th Quartermaster Battalion Soldiers were in the building of the MOUT.
training area at Camp Grafton.

Pvt. Tyler Hoffman, 136th
Quartermaster Battalion,
steps around a corner to
rush to a new hiding spot at
the Military Operations in
Urban Terrain (MOUT)
training area on Camp
Gilbert C. Grafton Training
Center during annual
training.



Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Haugen,
Joint Force Headquarters



Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Haugen, Joint Force Headquarters



Joint Force Headquarters

(Top) Spc. Katrina Mickelsen and Sgt.
George Malaterre, 136th Quartermaster
Battalion, move up stairs in the building
at Military Operations in Urban Terrain
(MOUT) training. (Left) Soldiers from
the 136th Quartermaster Battalion take
a real world timeout from training due
to a fire sparked by a flare at Camp
Grafton south.



Photo by Sgt. Justin Vinje,
1-129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Soldiers from the 141st Engineer Battalion secure
the rafters for the roof of a new hut.



Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Haugen,
Joint Force Headquarters

Spc. William Bercier points out a possible danger
area as Staff Sgt. Jeff Manley peaks around a
corner in a Military Operations in Urban Terrain
(MOUT) building at Camp Grafton Training
Center during the 136th Quartermaster Battalion's
annual training.

N.D. Soldiers help Mrs. M realize dream

By Sgt. Amy Dobler,
141st Engineer Combat Battalion

FARGO, N.D. – Although the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion returned from its deployment to Iraq in February, the mission wasn't complete until May 20 for some Soldiers. Late that night, the rest of their family came "home."

It was approaching midnight as a handful of Soldiers from B Company of the 141st Engineer Combat Battalion waited patiently at the Fargo Jet Center with Congressman Earl Pomeroy, representatives from Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota and some area media. A small Beechjet rolled to the front of the hangar. The group had worked tirelessly for months for this moment.

From the plane emerged "Mrs. M," as she had come to be called, along with her seven young children. She was accompanied by Capt. Grant Wilz, B Company's third platoon leader, and Sgt. 1st Class Shayne Beckert, third platoon sergeant, and their wives. The Soldiers had met Mrs. M when she entered the United States in New York – giving her some familiar faces in an unfamiliar situation.

"Hi guys," one of the children said as he got off the plane and saw Spc. Josh Klundt, Spc. Randy Flieth and Sgt. Cale Kiser. Although his greeting rang as if no time had passed at all, much had happened since the "M" family last spoke with the third platoon soldiers.

The Soldiers left Iraq in February, a mere month after the children's father, "Mr. M," was shot more than 30 times by terrorists because he had been providing the 141 soldiers with intelligence information. The family was scared. Mrs. M was pregnant. There was a \$10,000 bounty on the oldest boy, who had witnessed his father's murder. There also was a sincere promise – "We won't forget you," Wilz told Mrs. M. "We'll get you to America."

It would be a difficult promise to keep, but one that Wilz and Beckert would pursue tirelessly. They contacted Congressman Earl Pomeroy on Jan. 18, while the Soldiers were still serving in Iraq, to request his assistance. Over the course of the next week, Pomeroy contacted Defense Deputy Secretary Richard Armitage as well as the Departments of Defense, State and Homeland Security. The Department of Defense agreed to sponsor Significant Public Benefit Parole for the family. The status comes with no

public assistance, but would get the family to America. It would be only the 40th time such a special permission would be granted to an Iraqi.

Soon after receiving SPBP status, Pomeroy pulled in Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota to assist with the many hurdles the family would face once arriving in the United States – housing, health insurance, education and employment.

By April 18, the family had secured passports and was ready to leave Iraq after moving from house to house for weeks in fear for their lives. The next morning, however, Mrs. M gave birth nearly six weeks earlier than expected. The baby would not be able to leave Iraq until a passport, Iraqi identification card and certificate of nationality were obtained.

This paperwork posed additional problems in the already complicated mission of moving the family out of Iraq. The family was told they would need to travel back to their village to have the mayor sign the papers. This would have put their lives in extreme danger. Some phone calls and a clandestine arrangement for money transfer later, and Mrs. M was in line to get the baby's papers.

As she stood in line April 30 with one of her young children, another tragedy struck. A bomb exploded nearby, sending shrapnel into the eye of her young daughter. Ninety-five percent of the vision was lost in her eye, and there were worries about the risk of an infection. These worries prompted requests from Pomeroy's office to attempt to bypass all the paperwork requirements given the emergency of the situation.

By May 5, the family was escorted into the Green Zone and the young girl was treated the next day at an Army hospital there. By May 17, the family was able to fly from Iraq to Amman, Jordan, where they spent the night and completed an embassy interview. By May 20, they were on their way to safety in the United States.

As Wilz and Beckert met with the press at Lutheran Social Services the following morning, they were still amazed and filled with emotion. Beckert said the reality of the situation was starting to sink in. Pomeroy described himself as being emotionally "wrung out." "This isn't the end of the story," he said. "This is the beginning of the story."

Mrs. M referred to the day she entered the United States as her birthday – the beginning of a new life. The family will



Photo by Mark Chamberlain, Lutheran Social Services of North Dakota

Spc. April Rohrer embraces one of Mrs. M's children after the family arrived in North Dakota. April was attached to B Company's third platoon as a medic and cared for the family when the platoon stopped to gather intelligence.

need assistance as they begin their new life. They will need to learn English. The young girl needs surgery to attempt to restore some vision to her eye. The children will begin school, learn about America and cope with their first winter.

For more information and regular updates on Mrs. M and her family or to make a donation, go to www.lssnd.org.

North Dakota's State Partnership Program training with Ghana

By Sgt. 1st Class Rob Keller,
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

A two-day training workshop for over sixty North Dakota National Guard military, state representatives and Ghanaian dignitaries was held in May. The State Partnership Program (SPP) provided participants with a working knowledge of the country of Ghana. It also allowed the participants to network and create synergy in order to explore ideas for future cooperation and exchanges.

Last August, Gov. John Hoeven and North Dakota National Guard Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Michael Haugen announced North Dakota's participation in the National Guard sponsored State Partnership Program with the African country of Ghana. The state of North Dakota through the North Dakota National Guard formally requested to partner with Ghana because of relevant socio-economic, strategic and military training opportunities that mutually benefit Ghana, the United States and North Dakota. "Our National Guard is playing a huge role in the global war on terrorism and our country's military effort to build alliances with other countries," Hoeven said. "North Dakota's

partnership with Ghana will build these alliances and help build stability, democracy and freedom throughout the world." Brig. Gen. Emmanuel Okyere, Ghanaian Defense, Military, Naval and Air Attaché, Embassy of Ghana in Washington D.C., at a press conference with Gov. John Hoeven said, "Ghana has the finest Armed Forces in Africa and has supplied troops for peacekeeping operations for over forty years. We have a lot to offer the North Dakota National Guard as well and we look forward to a long and friendly relationship."

"We are very excited about the North Dakota and Ghana State Partnership Program and the synergy that will happen between our two countries," Okyere added.

Professors David Owusu Ansah of the Department of History, James Madison University and Dr. Patrick Osei, Delaware State University also spoke on different aspects of Ghana. Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, National Guard Bureau Chief, who addressed the attendees, also assured participants of his commitment



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer Kiel Skager, Joint Force Headquarters

Brig. Gen. Emmanuel Okyere addresses Bismarck media during a press conference on the State Partnership Program with the West Africa nation of Ghana. Pictured are Gov. John Hoeven, center, and Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, Washington, D.C.

to the State Partnership Program.

"It is readily apparent with the global war on terrorism that the United States must remain fully engaged in the international community. The National Guard's unique civil-military nature is of great interest to the international com-

munity, and the State Partnership Program is a valuable and flexible tool for supporting our nation's Security Cooperation Guidance," Blum said.

Blum urged all to remain strong proponent for continuing these partnerships and help strengthen those where relationships may have diminished."

Maj. Gen. Haugen explained that "Our citizen Soldiers and Airmen possess a diverse set of skills both military and civilian, hence the wealth of knowledge they carry provides them with the versatility necessary to initiate this venture, adding that the "The National Guard is the model for the role of the military in Ghana's emerging democracy." The relationship between the North Dakota National Guard and Ghana will evolve and expand over time. It usually begins with bilateral "military-to-military" activities, expands to include military support to civil authorities, and ultimately, the partnership evolves to include all aspects of the public and private sector.

The coordinator for the State Partnership Program is Lt. Col. Pete Conlin who has traveled to Ghana several times since last August to begin the initial planning and coordination.

JAG Notes

Legislation Wrap-up

By Lt. Col. David Thiele

The 2005 Legislative Assembly is finally over and numerous bills were passed that positively impact military members and their families. The two major initiatives were the Veterans Bonus Program (SB 2146) and the increase in tuition assistance funding (HB 1017). The Veterans Bonus Program pays to resident veterans (active, reserve and guard) \$100 for every month mobilized in the Theater of Operations and \$50 per month for stateside mobilization. Applications are now being accepted and you can find an application on-line at <http://www.guard.bismarck.nd.us/Veterans%20Benefit.htm>. This legislation is for mobilizations dating back to the beginning of the Somalia conflict (December 1992) and continues through June of 2007. If you have questions regarding the bonus, call (701) 333-3008 but remember, when in doubt apply.

Gov. John Hoeven not only supported the bonus legislation, but also included an additional \$1,000,000 in fund-

News that affects you

viable National Guard now and into the future.

That is why I proposed the \$5,000,000 Veterans Bonus Program that recognizes the personal and financial sacrifice of our resident mobilized veterans and their families by providing additional compensation, along with an additional \$1,000,000 in tuition assistance for our Guard members," Hoeven said at a press conference, "The increase in tuition assistance funding will ensure that our Guard members can, in most cases, receive 100 percent state



tuition at North Dakota schools. It not only helps our recruiting and retention, but will also create a smarter, stronger force ready to respond to any state or federal emergency."

In addition to the tuition increase and veterans bonus program, bills were signed that allow boards and agencies to waive licensure requirements for service members who were mobilized; expands the definition of dependents of Soldier's killed or totally disabled eligible for college tuition waiver; allows any North Dakota Guard members in-state tuition rates; clarifies the exemption for state income tax for mobilized soldiers; provides for e-mail or fax voting for Soldiers overseas; and also a bill that ensures that mobilized state employees get the appropriate retirement credit upon return to employment. There will also be a new Medal of Honor Memorial in Minot as a result of legislation approved.

We also received approval for a change to our constitution that will eliminate age and gender bias. The current North Dakota constitution states that the militia of North Dakota consists of "able bodied males between 18 and 45."

This obviously does not reflect our current structure and the proposed change will eliminate this obsolete language. It will be voted on in the fall of 2006 during the general election.

If you wish to read the bills in their entirety go to <http://www.state.nd.us/lr/assembly/59-2005/subject-index/major-topic.html> and look at the bills under "military" and "National Guard." It was a great session for the military and in particular the National Guard of North Dakota. The support of our legislators and Hoeven was overwhelming and they deserve our thanks.

Having looked at what other states are doing for their veterans, I can honestly state that we lead the way! Please thank your local legislator and let them know their support is appreciated. If anyone has any questions or concerns, I can be reached at (701) 333-2009.

Message from the state command sergeant major

Greetings from the office of the State Command Sergeant Major. As your Command Sergeant Major, I feel it is my job to keep you informed on the changes to the enlisted personnel system.

October 2004 marked a big change in the Non-Commissioned Officer Education system. The new program allows Soldiers to be promoted to E-5 without PLDC, E-6 with only PLDC, E-7 with both phases of BNCOC and E-8 with both phases of ANCO. My advice to you is; no matter what rank you wear on your collar, continue on in your NCO education. Do not sit back and wait for the slot to open and then prepare yourself for it, prepare ahead of time. Attend the courses that you can now, applicable to your current grade. Specialists can still attend PLDC if in the zone of consideration on the current promotion list. Take every advantage you can to become a better Soldier and leader. Our Soldiers deserve nothing but the very best leaders we can put in front of them.

Strength continues to be our number one priority and goal in the Army National Guard. I encourage you to get out and talk to your friends, relatives and school buddies and relay our success as an organization as well as yours as a Soldier. You are the best marketing and recruiting tool that we have. Every one in uniform is a recruiter. We are making gains weekly, but everyone needs to do their part so we as an organization can reach the top.

In the near future, the NDARNG will be briefing the leadership at all levels on our future force structure. I encourage you to ask your leadership what they know and can relay on to you about the future force structure of our organization. Some is a given and some may change, but they need to keep you informed on what they are briefed on by the Joint Forces Staff. You deserve to be kept informed on where your organization is going.

Last, I would ask you to keep the families and Soldiers that are currently mobilized and those that have returned in your thoughts and prayers. Also, please keep the families of those Soldiers that have paid the ultimate sacrifice in this global war on terrorism in your daily thoughts and prayers.

Until next time, be safe, train hard and let's continue to keep the NDARNG on the top.



File photo

State Command Sgt. Maj. Jack Cripe

Chaplain's Corner



Ready even in training

By Chaplain (First Lt.) Justin Schmidt, Battery 1st Battalion 188th Air Defense Artillery

I have just returned from my first phase of CHOBC (Chaplain Officer Basic Course) where I learned the bulk of my training basic military skills. I did all those fun things that all soldiers must learn, with the exception of not touching a weapon. Chaplains are unarmed at all times.

I did get the joy of the NBC (Nuclear Biological Chemical) training with the high point of breathing in CS gas. One part of my training that I found very interesting was the NIC (night infiltration course) event. It was a beautiful night in South Carolina with a big full moon. If you went though this course, you will remember sitting and waiting for the sun to set. While 62 chaplains waited, our instructors told us we were lucky to even be able to complete this part of the course where they shoot live rounds over your head and set off explosives. The course had been shut for over a year.

The instructors informed us that there had been an accident. As the Soldiers waited in the trench for the go ahead, and the gunfire started, a bullet somehow made its way into the trench and killed a Soldier. All NIC courses were shut down until the problem was identified and fixed. Six months of investigations later and no reason was found for that Soldier's death.

I share this event with you because I believe every Soldier in his or her own way makes peace with God before going into combat. Your death is a real possibility and so this makes sense. However, I doubt when you perform "safe" training exercises, your own death is on your mind. I was not expecting to die on the NIC event, and the soldier that so unfortunately did die probably did not have that expectation either.

Life is short, and we do not know when God will call us home. If God called you home today, are you ready? Before combat you might have made your peace. How about in your every day life? I pray that the Soldier who accidentally died on the NIC event had this peace and I hope that each and every one of you who read this has this peace, or finds it.

Wildfire training



Soldiers from the NDARNG work on digging a fire break during wildfire training. About 50 Soldiers participated in the training that was conducted by the N.D. Forest Service to help prepare Soldiers in the event they are needed to help battle a wildfire.

Deployed Soldiers honored for journalism skills

The North Dakota Newspaper Association honored state National Guard soldiers who served as journalists while on duty with their units in Iraq.

About 22 Guard members got a crash course in journalism before they left for Iraq so they could write about their experiences and send stories back home, along with their regular military duties, Sgt. 1st Class Rob Keller said.

Their stories went not only to North Dakotans, but to media outlets around the world, Keller said.

Marvin Baker, a staff writer at the Minot Daily News and director of NDNA, read the names at the NDNA annual banquet May 6 in Minot. Baker helped train several of the 141st Engineer Battalion UPARs during their mobilization training.

Not all the Soldiers attended the banquet, but about 300 in attendance gave the UPARs a standing ovation. Speaking on behalf of the Soldiers were Keller and Deputy Adjutant General of the North Dakota National Guard, Brig. Gen. Gerald Engelman.



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Annual training sights



(Top) Sgt. Mo Nelson and Staff Sgt. Leroy Mittleider drive in nails while working to complete a hutment at Camp Gilbert C. Grafton Training Center. (Right) Spc. Allen Hoaglund, 136th Quartermaster Battalion, scans his sector for enemy targets during the convoy operations training at Camp Gilbert C. Grafton Training Center.

Photos by Sgt. Jonathan Haugen, Joint Force Headquarters