



# INDEPENDENCE *Gazette*

Volume 1, Issue 3

Jan. 17, 2009

FORT DIX  
Fort Indiantown Gap  
Edition

## Non-lethal options abound for 56th Stryker Brigade

By Sgt. DOUGLAS ROLES

Soldiers of the 56<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team will have available some of the latest non-lethal capabilities to man checkpoints and conduct detainee operations during their upcoming deployment to Iraq.

Roughly \$1 million of new equipment, fielded to the Pennsylvania Army National Guard brigade Jan. 5-9 during training at Fort Dix, will not only be of use in Iraq but will return with the brigade. The brigade is the first Guard unit to be fielded the entire Brigade Non-lethal Capabilities Set, officials said.

The 56<sup>th</sup> SBCT soldiers participated in four days of training in

the use of the set, developed largely by the combat developers of the Army non-lethal team. The set is comprised of four mission-specific modules, for checkpoint, convoy, crowd control/detainee operations and dismounted patrolling missions.

Soldiers learned about nets that can stop oncoming vehicles and snake-like cameras that “look” into hard-to-see places, sending video to a display screen mounted on the user’s wrist.

“This is a train-the-trainer course,” said Cpt. Curtis Drake, the 56<sup>th</sup>’s brigade engineer who served as range and facility officer for the training.

“It’s definitely real self ex-

planatory training. It’s new equipment we’ve never worked with before,” Drake said. “Now these soldiers will take this knowledge back to their units.”

Drake said he is especially impressed with a portable net and spike system designed to wrap around the axle of a speeding vehicle, stopping it before it can speed through a checkpoint. The checkpoint

(Continued on page 2)



Staff Sgt. Javier Garcia, HHT, 2-104<sup>th</sup> Cav., of Mount Pocono, Pa. (left, center), falls forward after being shot with an electric Taser<sup>®</sup> gun by non-lethal subject matter expert Troy McVay (rear). Javier is flanked by safeties Staff Sgt. Evan Lally (left) HHT 2-104<sup>th</sup> Cav. of Boston and Sgt. Craig Strohl, Co. A, 2-112<sup>th</sup>, of Summit Hill, Pa. Above, Staff Sgt. Robert Radswillas, 1-111<sup>th</sup> HHC Recon Platoon, a Douglasville, Pa. resident, prepares to fire non-lethal rounds from his M203 grenade launcher Wednesday, Jan. 7.

Photos by Sgt. Douglas Roles

# Non-lethal

(Continued from page 1)

equipment system allows for the normal flow of traffic.

Non-lethal systems included in the set range from simple, commercially available items such as bean bag rounds and pepper spray to a high-tech speech translator. Non-lethal systems have been credited with reducing the use of lethal force and reducing collateral damage.

Eric Niver, a trainer from the Army Non-Lethal Scaleable Effects Center, based at the Military Police School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. said the Army began fielding the equipment packages this summer under a plan that allows units to put the equipment on their property books, as opposed to having use of the equipment only while in theater.

Niver said having ownership of the equipment will allow the Pennsylvania Guard unit to train on it during weekend drills or annual training periods in the future. The Effects Center develops training programs on the use of non-lethal systems.

"There are a lot of working parts," Niver said of the training specialists, many of them retired from military service, who work with firms contracted to conduct the

on-site training .

Soldiers practiced firing the electric Taser<sup>®</sup> gun. Volunteer students were shot by an instructor with the so-called "stun gun" as part of an exercise designed to demonstrate that those hit by the device are briefly incapacitated but quickly recover.

"This interferes with neuromuscular impulses," said Tom Martens, a technical trainer. "It's more disorienting than anything. It allows soldiers to safely subdue an individual and take that person into custody."

Martens said recovery time is typically less than a minute.

Jeff Teats, a training specialist with MNET (Munitions and New Equipment Training), Picatinny Arsenal, N.J., said up to 50 percent of students typically volunteer to be "Tased."

The Pennsylvania Guard soldiers brought their civilian experience to the training.

"They did very well. Obviously we have a lot of experience here, a lot of senior NCOs and a lot of law enforcement guys on the civilian side, so they're familiar with shotguns and other weapon systems," said David Fadl, a non-lethal instructor.

The set also includes acoustic hailing devices, portable light sets and riot control equipment. Soldiers practiced on the firing range with non-lethal rounds fired from shotguns and grenade launchers.

"There are two types of round. One's a point round, meaning it's a non-lethal round for an individual, the other is a crowd dispersal round," Fadl said. "The crowd dispersal round is almost like bird-shot (small metal shot), but using rubber balls."

Staff Sgt. Javier Garcia, Headquarters Troop, 2-104<sup>th</sup> Cav., of Mount Pocono, Pa., said going into the training he knew what a Taser is but was not familiar with other non-lethal systems.

"There are a lot of instances in which we could use this equipment over there," he said.

"It's one more method we could use before having to use lethal force."

"It's definitely going to save lives. We definitely need this kind of equipment on our bases," he said. This gives you another opportunity; it's the second to the last, lethal resort."

Soldiers completing the training are provided with a memo denoting their completion of the course.

The 56 SBCT is slated to deploy to Iraq in February. About 4,000 soldiers are mobilized for the deployment.



Photo by Sgt. Douglas Roles

Non-lethal subject matter expert Troy McVay explains the capabilities of a Phrase-ator to soldiers of the 56<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team. The device translates selected English words and phrases into six different languages.

## Find 56th Stryker Brigade news online

- Go to [www.dvidshub.net](http://www.dvidshub.net)
- Double click on: "News from the Field"
- Scroll down to 56 SBCT
- Save as a favorite

Have a story idea?

Contact Master Sgt. Sean Whelan:  
[sean.t.whelan@us.army.mil](mailto:sean.t.whelan@us.army.mil)

*'Got a letter in the mail ...'*

## IRR soldiers augment 56th SBCT's ranks

By Cpt. CORY ANGELL

Christopher Ramseyer awoke one Saturday morning and went to his front porch to retrieve the newspaper, much like any other Saturday, when he saw a manila folder from the Dept. of the Army.

"I figured it was just another mailing from the Individual Ready Reserve," said Ramseyer, 35, Albany, Minn. "I had been out of the Minnesota National Guard for over six years and here I had mobilization orders for Iraq."

Ramseyer said he had served with the National Guard for 12 years prior to getting out and establishing a career as an insurance adjuster with Progressive.

He was an enlisted soldier turned officer through St. Cloud State University ROTC and now he was being called back to duty, said Ramseyer.

"I'm not going to lie to you," he said. "I wasn't happy."

Ramseyer would then travel to Fort Benning, Ga., Fort Knox, Ky., and on to Camp Shelby, Miss., where he would become a member of the 56<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade Combat Team.

Ramseyer is not alone.

"About 211 of our Soldiers are from the IRR," said Warrant Officer Brett Karkheck, a human resources specialist with the 56<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade. "We also have six active duty soldiers who have joined our ranks and 33 soldiers from National Guard units across the nation."

The 56th SBCT is deploying to Iraq in late January and February. There are about 4,000 soldiers in the brigade.

"We are fortunate to have these IRR soldiers in our ranks," said Col. Marc Ferraro, the 56th Stryker Brigade commander. "Their experience adds to our capabilities and their devotion to duty is an inspiration to us all."

Some of the IRR Soldiers were far removed from military service while others continued to work with the military as civilians.

"I joined when I was 26 because I wanted to do my part," said Sgt. Jeremy Thompson, 31, Tampa, Fla., serving with Troop



Submitted photo

Cpt. Steve Mihalacki (left) and Cpt. Chris Jones stand in front of a training FOB (forward operating base) at Fort Polk, La., holding the flag of Jones' alma mater. Mihalacki and Jones are two of over 200 soldiers who joined the 56th SBCT after being called to duty from the Individual Ready Reserve.

A, 2<sup>nd</sup> of the 104<sup>th</sup> Cavalry. "When I got out I got a job as a civilian instructor at the Army intelligence school in Arizona."

Thompson said that this will be his second time to Iraq and the mobilization has updated his security clearance and added to his resume for when he gets out.

Even though he had been off active duty for only 13 months it still was a hard change.

"It was a shock to go from a Dept. of the Army civilian, who is treated more like an officer, to then suddenly having to shave my beard and put back on my E-5 [sergeant rank]," said Thompson.

After being activated, Cpt. Chris Jones, 37, Sonoma, Calif., has been trying to run his business, [www.foggy-paws.com](http://www.foggy-paws.com), over the phone but views the mobilization as a chance to finish his military career and be a part of something bigger.

"Let's face it, we could all do something

easier," said Jones. "When you're on the range at 5:30 in the morning in the pouring rain you say to yourself, 'What are we doing!' For me this is our generation's war and this is my chance to play a part."

Jones, an MBA graduate from the University of San Francisco, is successful in his business but thinks he may hang around the military since he is not far from a reserve retirement.

"I like the Soldiers of the brigade," said Jones. "We could all make more money doing something else but there is a pride you get from military service you can't find anywhere else."

Jones added that because he is single and doesn't have any kids that things are easier for him than some of the others.

"I miss my family, I miss the life that I had," said Ramseyer. "At the same time I still have that sense of duty and I was called on, so I'm here to fulfill that duty."

# Family care plan goes to the dogs

By Cpt. CORY ANGELL

Paw Prints Dog Sanctuary keeps the home fires burning with a small wood furnace outside its dog kennel where the dogs of 16 military members, many from the 56<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade, have a happy temporary home.

The kennel, located in Shermans Dale, Pa., cares for many older and special needs dogs as well as the dogs of service-members at no cost.

“Most of the soldiers are single and don’t have anyone to take care of their dogs while they are away,” said Kevin McCartin, 61, and prior service Marine with Paw Prints. “The dogs are their family.”

The kennel, built like a miniature horse barn, comes complete with heated floors, couches for each pampered pooch and a play room for visits.

“With no one to look out for their dogs they would face an additional burden of sacrificing

their companionship because of a deployment,” said McCartin. “We want to support them as best we can.”

“The only option I had was the SPCA,” said Spc. Brian Schaffer, 36, York, Pa. and a member of Co. B 1/111<sup>th</sup> Infantry. “Because of them my dog is safe and loved and not in a cage.”

“I got a flyer at our soldier readiness processing so I knew about the place,” said Capt. Paul Robertson, 33, Oak Ridge, Tenn., and a member of Headquarters, 56<sup>th</sup> Stryker Brigade. “I looked all around Tennessee and couldn’t find anything like Paw Prints.”

“It’s a great service and one-of-a-kind,” said Robertson. “If I didn’t have this option I would have had to spend thousands of dollars and ask family members to put up fences in order to care for my dog.”

Schaffer and Robertson are thankful for the care Paw Prints provides while they are away on deployment. That care includes; veterinarian care by the Animal Hospital of Rye, who donates time to the organization; two dog rooms, not cages; and just the ability for the dogs to play together.

“I like the fact that my dog get’s to in-

**1st Lt. Nathan Rogowski is reunited with his dog, Joey, during a visit to Paw Prints Dog Sanctuary. Photo by Laurie Lyon of Paw Prints**



**Cpt. Paul Robertson (left), with his beagle, Merry, and Spc. Brian Schaffer, with his dog Checkers, are interviewed by Jill Rappaport from The Today Show about Paw Prints. Photo by Laurie Lyon of Paw Prints**

teract with other dogs,” said Robertson. “He is very social and needs that interaction. I don’t think he would get that anywhere else.”

Although the care is free of charge some soldiers donate money, toys and food and recognize those who have volunteered their time to help lighten the burden of their deployment overseas.

“They have done a great deal for us,” said Robertson. “I think that everyone has their contribution to their country and this is theirs.”

While the soldiers remain grateful for having their pets cared for, those who do so remain honored to take up the task.

“We do this because they deserve it, both dog and soldier,” said Laurie Lyon, 54, Mechanicsburg, Pa. and co-director of Paw Prints. “We

should not be sending these brave men and women off to fight for our freedom and ask them to give up their dog to a shelter.”

Lyon said that their dog “huggers and walkers” feel the same and make Paw Prints a great place for the dogs to be.

McCartin said that many dogs they have worked with have sad stories and everyone in the organization appreciates having dogs with happy homes stay for a while.

“The soldiers are the epitome of responsible pet owners and care a great deal for the dogs,” said McCartin. “We are happy to provide a home for their loved one.”

Those who wish find out more about Paw Prints Dog Sanctuary can go online to: [www.pawprintsdogsanctuary.org](http://www.pawprintsdogsanctuary.org).



## Commander's Corner

# 'It's just time to do it'

As we close out our post-mobilization training period, I want each and every one of you to know how proud I am to serve and lead the finest group of soldiers in the United States Army.

You should all be proud of your accomplishments. Most of you have been with the brigade since September when we were mobilized. Some of you have been here since October 2004 when the 56<sup>th</sup> Brigade began transformation. It has been a long road and you have all worked very hard.

As we forge forward, let's not forget those others who have sacrificed as well. Our families and our employers

have supported us in numerous ways. Without their love and support there is no way we would have been able to accomplish the monumental task that we just did.

This Brigade has overcome every challenge that it has encountered. It has not only exceeded the standard, but you have all set a new standard, a new standard of excellence for all to follow, regardless of component.

The other day I overheard a young soldier say, "It's just time to do it. I'm ready to go."

He is absolutely correct; it is time to do it. I think all of us feel the

same way. We will face many challenges and will operate in an environment that is dynamic and changing. You will be a very important part of the history of not only the National Guard, but the Army as a whole.

You are the best equipped and trained soldiers in the United States Army. I am confident that you will successfully undertake any task you are charged with. I remind you all that you are not among the best because of your equipment: You are among the best because of who you are. You are citizen soldiers of the Pennsylvania Army National Guard, 56<sup>th</sup>



Stryker Brigade Combat Team. You are what make this brigade great and I am proud to serve with you all.

Best of luck and Godspeed.

See you all on the high ground

**"Strength Through Honor"**

Marc Ferraro

COL, IN

Commanding

**"Independence 6"**

## Making news and history

Many Soldiers will have cameras this deployment and are encouraged to submit their images to the 56 SBCT Public Affairs Office and to the brigade historian, Cpt. Derek Hammond. Doing so can help tell the brigade's story and archive your experiences for future researchers.

Some soldiers will keep a diary of their deployment and the historian would like to archive that as well. Anyone wishing to try his or her hand at journalism is also welcome to make submissions to the PAO.

Please send story ideas/submissions to



Photo by Cpt. Cory Angell

**Independence Gazette** is a publication of the 56th Stryker Brigade Public Affairs Office.

Col. Marc Ferraro

56th SBCT Commander

Cpt. Cory Angell

56th SBCT public affairs officer

Master Sgt. Sean Whelan

56th SBCT public affairs NCO

Sgt. Doug Roles

56th SBCT public affairs NCO

The history of the 56 SBCT's deployment will be told in part by the many photos sure to be taken by soldiers carrying their own digital cameras to Kuwait and Iraq.

Sgt. Douglas Roles at [douglas.roles@us.army.mil](mailto:douglas.roles@us.army.mil) and anything for the brigade historian to Hammond at [derek.lamar.hammond@us.army.mil](mailto:derek.lamar.hammond@us.army.mil) for archive.

"Many soldiers and airmen have their own wild and wonderful stories from their deployments," said Sgt. Maj. Walter S. Zapotoczny Jr., the command historian for the 28th Infantry Division, Pennsylvania National Guard.

"Often, those stories are never told," he said.

"Since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, the operational tempo and frequency of deployments have increased to a level not seen in Pennsylvania since World War II. This, coupled with the loss of the military history detachments has caused a huge loss of historical information throughout the Pennsylvania National Guard.