53rd Troop Scoop

Spring 2010

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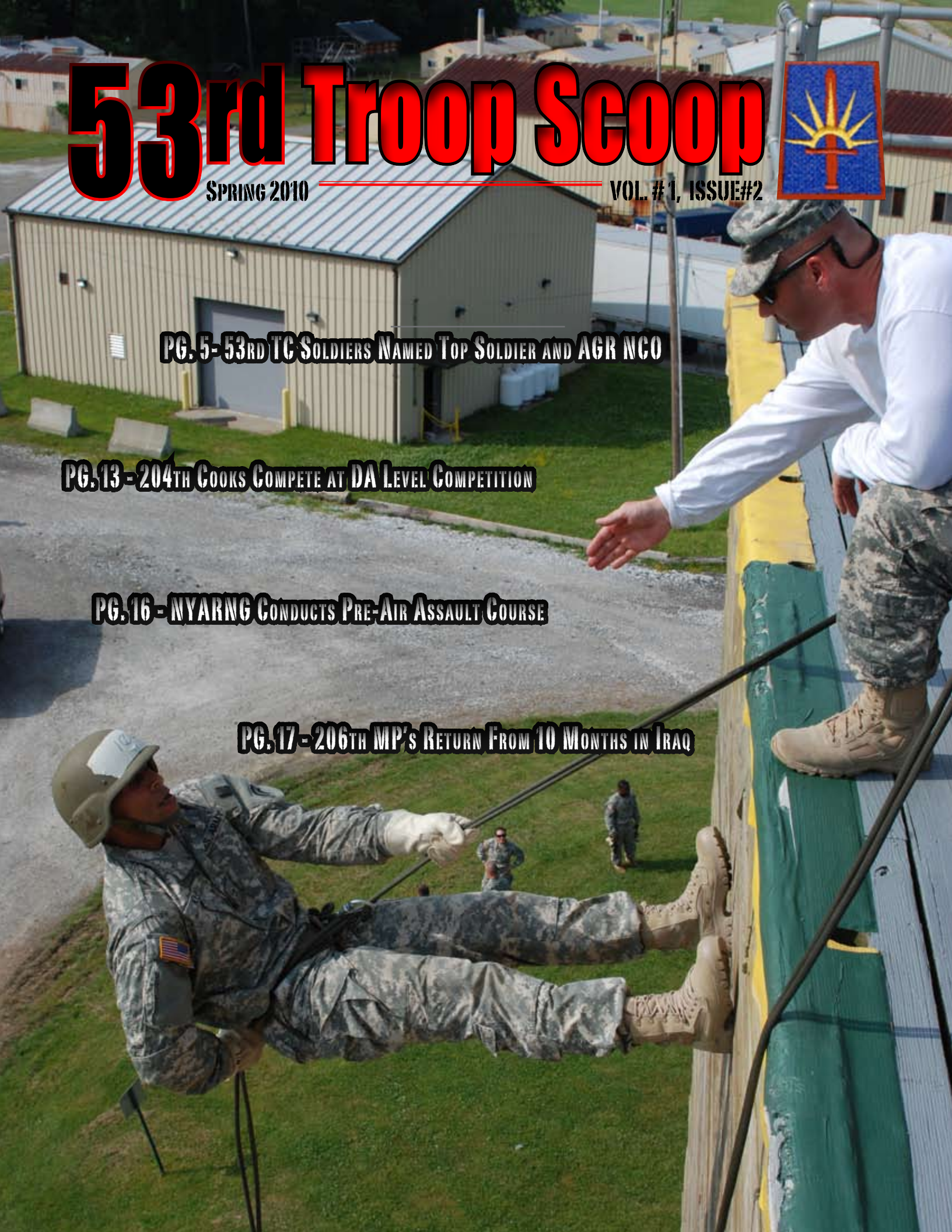

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SPRING 2010 — VOL. # 1, ISSUE#2

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About the 53rd Troop Scoop

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Submissions

Articles and photos are welcome. Please provide articles in Microsoft Word format along with high resolution digital (jpg.) photos by e-mail to thomas.w.wheeler@us.army.mil. Submission deadlines are as follows:

Winter Edition- March 15
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FRONT COVER (LEFT): Maj. Mark P. Michels, 153rd Troop Command, directs a Soldier during the rappelling portion of a Pre-Air Assault Course given at Camp Smith Training Site, Cortland Manor, N.Y., June 2-6, 2010.

BACK COVER: Sgt. John Conley, a technician with the 1108th Explosive Ordnance Detachment, walks out to a suspicious package in a bomb disposal suit to plant a disposal charge during a controlled detonation exercise in Kuwait, April 5, 2010.

Brig. Gen. Mike Swezey
53rd Troop Command
"For The Soldier"

Dear Fellow Troop Command Soldiers,

I hope that this note finds your summer going well. The summer is a busy time for us in the National Guard. I encourage each of you to train hard but also want to stress the importance of your health and safety. The New York Army National Guard needs you - you are what makes us strong. The summer is a time for fun - in the pool, out with friends, grilling, vacationing, and much more. I simply ask you to be cognizant of your actions and always maintain the spirit of what it means to be a Soldier - to be careful in your actions. Do not drive after you have been drinking, please drive safe while on your motorcycle, and be aware of your actions around others. We need you to stay safe.

With that said, I would be remiss if I didn't extend my thanks to you, especially at this time of year - the birth of our country. The Citizen Soldier is constantly called upon to cover a variety of State and federal missions and I know how tough it can be to balance your military career, your civilian career, your family, school, and other activities. Thank you, truly, for your service to our country. We wouldn't be where we are in the United States of America if it weren't for the Citizen Soldier and we appreciate all that you do for us. Have a great summer. I look forward to seeing many of you soon.

Standards.

I routinely say "I didn't join the Army to pick which rule I will follow". My objective is to follow all of the rules; adhere to the standards. This is not always easy, but it is always the right thing to do. Sure I make mistakes, as does every Soldier, and I have been fortunate to have leaders point out my mistakes and guide me in my career. We all need to stop and think about the basic standards. As The Adjutant General has clearly stated, "we are an organization of standards and discipline". This cuts to the heart of the NCO's job. Our role is to enforce standards and discipline. Our first mission is to enforce these standards on ourselves; can you perform the APFT to the standard? Do you meet the basic height and weight standards? Are you choosing to wear something other than the beret as your daily headgear? These are all Army standards, easy to meet, signs of a disciplined (or undisciplined) Soldier, but also easy to ignore. I will tell you as I visit units, and evaluate the metrics published I feel that the majority of our Soldiers adhere to, and enforce the standards. Our mission, as NCOs, is to do everything in our power to help out the small percentage of Soldiers that struggle in this area.

I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome home the 206th MP Company and thank them for a job well done. I also ask that we all think about the Soldiers of the 37th Finance Detachment, 1108th EOD Company, 827th Engineer Company, and the 442nd MP Company and wish them great success while they are deployed.

Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Frank Wicks
53rd Troop Command
"For The Soldier"

Hellfighter Major promoted to NYPD Lieutenant

Story and Photos by Spc. Michael E. Davis Jr., 369th Sustainment Brigade

NEW YORK-- New York Army National Guard Maj. Sergio Hidalgo, a native of the Dominican Republic, received a promotion to the rank of lieutenant in the New York City Police Department (NYPD) March 26 at One Police Plaza.

Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly acknowledged Hidalgo for his outstanding work with the New York City Police Department.

"Major Hidalgo has not only shown his best as a Police Officer, but has also shown great work and dedication as an officer in the New York Army National Guard," said Kelly.

New York Army National Guard Maj. Sergio Hidalgo received a promotion to the rank of lieutenant in the NYPD March 26 at One Police Plaza. Congratulating him are fellow Army Guard officers from left, Majors Daniel Harris, Sergio Hidalgo, Miguel Castillo and James Gonyo from the 369th Sustainment Brigade.

Hidalgo joined the 369th Sustainment Brigade as a young lieutenant in the Quartermaster Branch, starting a career in logistics and working his way up the military chain of command. As a captain, Hidalgo led the Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment and served overseas for Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2004 to 2005. The Army promoted Hidalgo to the field grade rank of major during that combat deployment.

Hidalgo's family is very proud of the work he has done in the Police Department and in the Army National Guard, Quilcie Hidalgo, Sergio's wife, said at the NYPD promotion ceremony.

"I feel that my dad deserves everything that he has," said Armany Hidalgo, 18, Sergio's son. "He works hard and strives to be the best and people should really look up to him in that respect." Armany explained that his father sets a good example for kids like himself and that is why he wants to follow in his (father's) footsteps by joining the military as an officer.

Hidalgo now serves as the Officer in Charge of the Security and Intelligence sections with the Harlem Hellfighters, 369th Sustainment Brigade. He is a graduate of the Command and General Staff College, has served in the New York Army National Guard for twenty-three years and has served in the New York City Police Department for sixteen years.

NEW YORK -- New York Army National Guard Maj. Sergio Hidalgo, a native of the Dominican Republic, received a promotion to the rank of lieutenant in the New York City Police Department (NYPD) March 26 at One Police Plaza.

53rd TC Soldiers named top Soldier and AGR NCO

Story by Eric Durr, Joint Force Headquarters

LATHAM, NY -- A college student with a perfect 300 score on the Army Physical Fitness Test, an Iraq veteran and expert marksman, and an AGR NCO who was born in Ireland , were named the best in the New York Army National Guard by a panel of senior NCOs on Sunday, March 28 following a demanding weekend competition.

Spec. William Hoch, a 26-year old student at Medaille College in Buffalo and a member of the 105th MP Company with a perfect 300 score on the Army Physical Fitness Test was named Soldier of the Year for 2010. Hoch, a Buffalo resident, has worked as a technician for the guard since enlisting in 2008.

Staff Sgt. Joshua Todd, a 28-year old Watertown resident and contractor in civilian life who instructs at Infantry requalification courses run by the 106th Regional Training Institute, was named the top traditional NCO of the Year.

Todd, who earned the Combat Infantry Badge while serving in Iraq with the 2nd Battalion 108th Infantry, holds the coveted German Army Schutzenschnur badge, awarded for proficiency with Bundeswher weapons.

Sgt. Sean Cronin, who was born in Ireland in 1984, and now serves at the Admin NCO for Headquarters Detachment of the 204th Engineer Battalion, was picked as the AGR NCO of the Year.

"These Soldiers and NCOs are among the best and the brightest, " said New York National Guard Command Sgt. Major Robert Van Pelt. "They exemplify the high standards we expect of our National Guard Soldiers and they will do well as a future leader in the New York Army National Guard," he added.

Spc. William Hoch (left),a student at Medaille College in Buffalo and member of the 105th Military Police Company and Sgt. Sean Cronin (right), Administrative NCO for the 204th Engineers, took top honors as Soldier of the Year and AGR NCO of the year respectively. Photos by Master Sgt. Corine Lombardo, 42nd Infantry Division.

The Soldiers were picked from nominees forwarded from all major New York Army National Guard Commands. The final selection by the board of Command Sergeants Major was based on their performance before a board, and their ability to excel at key Warrior Skills.

The Soldiers and NCOs were tested on their ability to search a vehicle, evaluate a casualty, react to an improvised explosive device, employ a Claymore mine, function check an M203 grenade launcher and communicate effectively.

They were quizzed on knowledge on military history, drill and ceremony, land navigation, first aid, NCO history, survival skills, and training. They were also evaluated on their wear of the Army Class A uniform.

Hoch, the Soldier of the Year, who has worked as a technician in the military personnel director at state headquarters, has been awarded the National Defense Service Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, and the Army Physical Fitness Ribbon. His commander praised him for consistently volunteering for duty when needed.

"To tell you the truth I never thought I could do something like this," Hoch said.

Others around him, particularly 2nd Lt. Benjamin Berry, his platoon leader, encouraged him to enter the competition, Hoch said.

"I told him I get very nervous in front of others, " Hoch said. " He convinced me to compete. He had the confidence in me that I was lacking."

The toughest part, was studying for the board, Hoch said. But he felt like he was representing his company and battalion and he wanted to do well.

"My little brothers need someone to look up to and I a, trying my best to be that someone, " he explained.

Todd, the traditional NCO of the Year , joined the Army National

Guard in 2001, and served in Iraq in 2004-2005 with the New York Army National Guard's 2nd Battalion 108th Infantry. While in Iraq he conducted 180 combat patrols and 60 Air Assault Missions; operations in which soldiers are inserted in by helicopter

He has trained in Thailand and Germany and has provided security augmentation to local law enforcement in New York City and has also assisted in securing the Indian Point nuclear power plant complex.

Todd has been awarded the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Army Achievement Medal, the Medal for Merit as well as the Germany military Schutzenschnur badge.

He got into the running for best NCO because he likes a challenge, Todd said. It was tough studying for the board, "because they always seem to ask you the question you don't know well" but he was supported the whole way by his chain of command.

He's looking forward to pit himself against the best National Guard NCOs in the northeast in the regional competition coming up, Todd said.

"It's going to be a challenging experience. There are going to be a lot of great Soldiers there," he said.

Cronin, a 26-year old Johnson City resident who was born in Ireland, joined the AGR program in 2008. He enlisted in the National Guard in 2006. He started out in the AGR program in the battalion S-1 as acting personnel NCO and is now unit administrator.

His awards include the Army Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal. The Global War on Terrorism Service Medal and the Non Commissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon.

For Cronin, studying for the board questions while handling his duties as unit administrator was the biggest challenge facing him in the competition.

"Our OPTEMPO for our battalion has been very tough this year, the full-time manning in my company was tasked to assist the 827th Engineer Company in pre-mobilization," he said.

" There have been some long day's and nights in the office preparing the unit for mobilization, balancing mission accomplishment and getting ready for the state board was a challenge," he explained.

369th Authorizes Patch, Awards Heritage

Story by Spc. Michael E. Davis Jr., 369th Sustainment Brigade

FORT DIX, N.J.-- It was a busy day at Doughboy Field here April 11 for the Soldiers of the 369th Sustainment Brigade. The 369th Sustainment Brigade Commander, Col. Stephanie Dawson, informed all Soldiers in the brigade that they are now authorized to wear their new brigade patch. The shoulder sleeve insignia was previously only authorized for the troops assigned to the headquarters element.

FORT DIX, NJ-- The 369th Sustainment Brigade Color Guard renders honors to Brig. Gen. Steven N. Wickstrom, commander, 42nd Infantry Division and Col. Stephanie Dawson, commander, 369th Sustainment Brigade, during the unit " pass in review" April 11, 2010. Photo by Sgt. Deyanira Rios, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

"Some Soldiers expressed concern about them not having the new patch, and I thought it was more appropriate that everyone wear the patch," Dawson said at the brigade's pass in review ceremony. "I determined that I had the authority to have everyone wear the patch and to symbolize their inclusion as art of the brigade."

Dawson added that the shoulder sleeve insignia celebrates the prior campaigns that the 369th has participated in and recognizes the fact that although the unit is now a logistics unit, its lineage began as the 369th Infantry Regiment, the famous "Harlem Hellfighters" of WWI fame.

After the Soldiers received their new patch, the command awarded Lt. Col. David Gagnon, Battalion Commander, 104th Military Police Company, and his father, retired Lt. Col. Daniel D. Gagnon, the 369th Heritage Award. The award recognizes the important role of families supporting and partici-

pating in the military.

"I thought it was a great idea to recognize multiple generations for serving," David Gagnon said. "Both of my parents are very proud of my service and my achievements. Growing up I was proud of my father's association with the military and probably one of the main reasons I enlisted in 1986."

"We were both surprised when Col. Dawson handed us the Heritage Award recognizing both his and my service," the younger Gagnon said. "He brought the plaque into his office the following day and showed everyone and has put it on display. I think he is honored by the recognition of the family service and very proud." Dawson believes that the Gagnon's are the only family in the brigade who share this particular occurrence. If there are other similar stories Dawson hopes that those family members will come forward to be recognized.

The last order of business for the day was a pass in review of the 369th Soldiers where Soldiers were inspected by the brigade commander and Brig. Gen. Stephen Wickstrom, the Commanding General of the 42nd Infantry Division, the headquarters with training and resource oversight of the 369th Sustainment Brigade for deployments.

"The pass in review is a mechanism for a commander to inspect their troops," Dawson said. "While this is often done by a new commander, in our case this was the first time the entire brigade was training on the same installation, so at my request I used it as an opportunity to inspect them."

Troops Take on Targets at 2010 TAG Matches

CORTLAND MANOR, NY-- 102nd Maintenance Company, Fort Drum, N.Y., takes aim at his target during a timed event at the 2010 Adjutant Generals marksmanship match held April 16-18, 2010, at Camp Smith Training Site.

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Dennis Gravelle, 369th Sustainment Brigade

Cortland Manor, N.Y.-- Approximately 150 members of the New York State Military Forces, as well as representatives from other state National Guard units, attended the 31st Annual TAG (The Adjutant General) Match held at Camp Smith, N.Y. April 16-18, 2010.

The TAG Match allows units and individual Soldiers and Airmen the opportunity to improve their level of marksmanship, engage in healthy competition, and pick top contenders to represent the state in national competitions.

The modern TAG Match allows participants to employ the weapons used on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan.

"I am here at Camp Smith learning something that I can take back to my unit and to build camaraderie with other New York military forces and get everyone together as one team, one fight," stated Master Sgt. Edward J. Stefik, 107th Security Forces, Niagara Falls, N.Y., and first-time participant. "I am having a good time and it's a good experience and maybe I will win."

Marksmanship training and competition has long been a key component of military training. The winners of this TAG Match claim bragging rights until next year's competition and will receive a trophy to bring home to their unit to put on display. Winners also have the opportunity to represent their state at regional and national competitions.

Participants compete in the .22 Caliber Bulls Eye Pistol event, the 29th Annual The Adjutant General's Combat Rifle, Pistol, and Light Machine Gun Championships and learn how to improve their shooting skills and take those lessons learned back to their units.

"One of the biggest lessons I've learned from deploying units is their lack of proficiency with individual weapons," said Maj. Brian P. O'Keefe, Headquarters, Headquarters Detachment, Joint Forces Headquarters, and state marksmanship coordinator. "There is no substitute for actual practice, real trigger time with live ammunition".

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O'Keefe added that they expected about 20 out-of-state participants, mostly from Connecticut and Rhode Island, to attend the TAG Match.

"When you look at mobilizations today, we (New York) often draw from other states to fulfill critical Military Occupational Specialties (MOS) and things we can't fill, just as they do," stated O'Keefe. "These are our brothers in arms, so there's no way to say that people only from New York can shoot. We try to be inclusive, because you never know who that person on our left or right will be when we mobilize."

"This is a great opportunity to be here and compete against other Soldiers," stated Private First Class Tiffini J. Giraldo, 102nd Maintenance Company, Fort Drum, N.Y. "I love to hunt and fish, and I came here to fire, and do as well as I can, but most of all I am having fun and enjoying the competition."

Soldiers, Cadets Learn Leadership Skills

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta, Joint Force Headquarters

ITHACA, NY --- Tempering the leadership mettle of tomorrow's Army officers was the objective of Operation April Venom, held here from April 29 to May 2.

About 140 ROTC cadets took part in the field exercise, which was held at Cornell University's Mount Pleasant training area east of the Cornell campus. The cadets belong to Cornell's ROTC program, which includes students from Cornell, SUNY Cortland, Binghamton University, Elmira College, Ithaca College, and the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT).

The exercise was mainly mental for the cadets as they commanded squads and platoons on tactical lanes designed to test their leadership skills and ready them for Warrior Forge, a five-week evaluation course all cadets must undergo before receiving their commissions.

The training stressed decision-making -- under the stressful conditions they should expect to encounter in a real-world operating environment.

In addition to planning and executing combat missions, the cadets had to react to snipers, mortar fire, casualties, media and civilians on the lanes --- all simulated by other cadets and officers.

Dealing with multiple situations teaches cadets to stay focused and not freeze up, said Cadet David Jakubiec, an RIT senior who more experience I get, the easier it is for me to make decisions."

ITHACA, NY-- ROTC Cadet Jonathan Roman, right, greets role-players who will guide him through a simulated mine field during Operation April Venom, April 29 to May 2. The role-players acted the parts of host-nation citizens to test the cadets' cultural awareness and negotiating abilities. Photo by Staff Sgt. Raymond Drumsta, Joint Force Headquarters.

The training was great, and taught her to continually look to the next step, said Cadet Kathleen Minor, an RIT junior. They also learned how to adapt Army doctrine to the various situations, she added.

"It's one thing to learn Army doctrine and tactical knowledge, it's another to apply it in real life," she said.

The ROTC cadets include New York Army National Guard Soldiers like Cadet Hannah Baer, a Cornell sophomore and Cadet Anthony Pedicone, an RIT senior. Baer serves as a medic with the Auburn-based 102nd Military Police Company, and Pedicone is the commander of the rear detachment of the 105th Military Police Company, based in Buffalo.

He joined the 105th Military Police Company in 2006, and joined

ROTC right after that so he could stay with the unit, Pedicone said. He took command of a platoon within two months, held the position for two and half years and passed Warrior Forge in 2008, he recalled.

Leaders can best deal with the simultaneous situations by focusing on the objective and effectively using subordinates, Pedicone said. He's learned to rely on NCOs, who have knowledge and experience, he added.

"The NCOs are extremely important," he said. "They've been there longer than any fresh cadet. If you earn their respect, they'll work extremely hard for you."

Baer originally joined the Virginia Army National Guard and recently transferred to the New York Army National Guard. She enlisted to pay for college, but came to enjoy learning leadership skills and responsibility, she said.

"I like it a lot more than for just college," Baer said.

As a team leader on the lanes, she felt stress and worried about making the right decisions, Baer said. But that was what the training was all about, she added.

"It helps, because that's what war is like," she said. "I learned that making a decision and going with it is better than hesitating."

Adjutant General Visits 53rd Soldiers Deployed

Story by Eric Durr, Joint Force Headquarters

BASRA, IRAQ -- The commander of the New York National Guard spent spring break in Iraq and Kuwait April 5-9 to visit New York Army National Guard Soldiers from the Capital Region deployed there.

Brig. Gen. Patrick Murphy, the Adjutant General, and Command Sergeant Major Robert Van Pelt, the state's top enlisted Soldier, met with members of the 206th Military Police (MP) Company, deployed here at Contingency Operating Base Basra, Iraq and the 1108th Ordnance Company (Explosive Ordnance Disposal, EOD) which is based in Kuwait.

BASRA, Iraq-- Brig. Gen. Pat Murphy, shakes hands with 206th MP Spc. Tracy Bryant during a visit to the Basra Logistics Support Area April 7. Photo courtesy of the 206th Military Police Company.

"We wanted to go over and visit with New York service members, as well as those that they support and understand better what they are doing," Murphy said.

"If we better understand the environment they are working in and the requirements placed on them, I do believe we can come back and provide appropriate resourcing and guidance to better prepare service members for their upcoming deployments," he explained.

The 206th MP Company, with about 180 Soldiers, is headquartered at the Latham Armory and includes Soldiers from the Utica area New York City as well as the Capital Region.

The 206th has been training Iraqi Police, providing security forces in Basra and assisting in the Provincial Joint Communications Center, the Iraqi version of a 911 call center. The company played a key role in providing security during the elections Iraq conducted in March.

1108th EOD Company is based in Kuwait and is responsible for clearing improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from routes into and out off Iraq. The company of about 15 Soldiers, which is based at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Scotia, deployed to Iraq in January of this year.

Murphy and Van Pelt also visited members of the 37th Finance Detachment deployed in Kuwait to provide financial services based there and Soldiers moving into and out of Iraq. The unit is based in New York City at the Lexington Avenue Armory.

The trip was organized through the Joint Monthly Access for Reserve Components program which allows both Army Reserve and National Guard leaders to go and see their troops deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

206th Shares Knowledge with Iraqi Police

Story and Photos by Spc. Maurice Galloway, 17th Fires Brigade

BASRA, Iraq -- After receiving a week of intense training at the Basra Operations Center from the New York National Guard's 206th Military Police Company, attached to the 17th Fires Brigade, members of the Iraqi Emergency Response Battalion are better-prepared to handle large-scale emergencies.

Soldiers of 2nd Squad, 3rd Platoon, 206th MP Company, attached to the 17th Fires Brigade, conducted a training session designed to increase tactical proficiency in the ERB's felony arrest procedures, search and seize raids and weapons accuracy.

"After discussing different strategies for handling large-scale emergencies with the Iraqis, we found that they had a good grasp of response procedures," said Steve Sperber, a U.S. State Department contractor and international police advisor.

The training consisted of classroom scenarios, practical exercises and a tactical pistol course.

BASRA, Iraq-- Soldiers of the New York National Guards 206th Military Police (MP) Company monitor Iraqi Emergency Response Battalion search and seizure procedures during a training course held at Basra Operations Center in Basra, Iraq March 15, 2010.

"We all had different vantage points of each scenario, which allowed us to thoroughly evaluate their techniques," said Cpl. Brian Walker, 206th MP Company, emergency responder and native of Loveland, Colo.

During the classroom sessions, Sperber and the platoon leaders met with the ERB personnel to evaluate the scenarios and map out the courses of action using a terrain model.

Capt. Kevin Manion, 206th MP Company commander, planned and designed the course using the knowledge from his team's more than 75 years of combined civilian police experience.

The New York National Guard unit is made of members of city and state police and sheriff departments from across the state.

"The Iraqis are being trained through the eyes of police officers, so they're gaining years of experience and knowledge that only come from first-hand experience," said Manion.

Two 206th MP Company Soldiers, Staff Sgt. Kent Theobald, a New York State Police investigator, and Staff Sgt. Matthew Clark were in charge training the Iraqis.

"Our goal is to instill the same sense of pride and professionalism in our Iraqi partners as we have in ourselves," Theobald said. "They picked up the training quickly, but what was most impressive was their eagerness to learn."

BASRA, Iraq-- Soldiers assigned to the 206th Military Police (MP) Company prepare to move out for the day.

204th Cooks Compete in DA Level Competition

Story and Photos by Pfc. Mary Hogle, 138th PAD

WINDSOR, NY -- Rain slowed, but didn't stop, the food service team from the New York Army National Guard's 204th Engineer Battalion as they geared up to feed lunch to Soldiers conducting Annual Training at a stone quarry here.

The food service specialists from the 204th Forward Support Company (FSC) from Binghamton, N.Y. had been preparing for this meal over the past two months and the rainy weather wasn't going to stop them from serving a prize winning lunch.

The 11 members of the mess section are in the running to win the Philip A. Connelly Award of Excellence in Army Food Service. The award is designed to encourage professionalism in Army food service teams and recognize excellent performance.

WINDSOR, NY-- Cooks assigned to the 204th Forward Support Company serve chow to fellow Soldiers as part of the 2010 Philip A. Connelly Award of Excellence in Army Food Service, held at the Windsor Quarry June 13.

WINDSOR, NY-- Spc. John Stanley from Elmira Heights, prepares lunch as the food service section from the 204th Forward Support Company competes in the 2010 Philip A. Connelly Award of Excellence in Army Food Service.

"I've never seen Soldiers so proud of their jobs," Staff Sgt. Susanna Stacey, the senior foods operations noncommissioned officer with the 204th FSC said. "What they do they do for themselves, but they do it for the troops primarily."

The benefits of winning the competition would include cash prizes of up to thirty thousand dollars, and scholarships for selected participants to attend a culinary arts school.

"If we win that will be great," said Pfc. Chad Grover, a food service specialist with the 204th FSC. "The most important thing for us is to put on a good meal for the Soldiers," he said.

Though the 204th FSC recently received new equipment, they had to borrow from other National Guard units in order to participate. Winning one of the cash prizes would better equip the unit to provide support for Soldiers across the state.

"They are getting a name within the state," Stacey said. "We have Soldiers that go down to support Camp Smith. I have two that are here right now supporting the quarry."

"As opposed to catering, they would much rather have their cooking. They have just come to know that they are going to put on a better show, and it's going to be much more nutritious," she said.

Another reason to enter her Soldiers into the competition was the training that they would receive, Stacey said.

Rain and mud were two obstacles throughout the day that the

competitors had to overcome in order to complete their mission.

"Where I see this environment really coming into play is the next time there is a natural disaster," said Daryl Moss, a chief warrant officer five and one of the competition evaluators from Bowhead Technology Services, Inc.

"How are we going to feed the Soldiers? That tent right there. It becomes a critical thing,' he added.

The ability to maintain professionalism and safety standards were two of the elements the evaluators were looking for from the Soldiers.

"Every training environment we go into, we take something out of it," Stacey said. "We just continually build and continually build. It is today's world so we could end up being on a plane tomorrow."

Because of the weather conditions, the 204th FSC had to spend extra time making sure the site was safe for the soldiers. Dozers and rollers were brought in to level the ground, shallow trenches were dug to drain mud puddles and lightening prevented some of the strategic coverings from being put up.

These delays put the meal behind schedule, but Stacey was sure her team would still do a good job.

"There may be some setbacks, time delays and mud, but other than that, it will be good," Stacey said. "I have total confidence in my team. They are phenomenal cooks and they just shine every time they're up there."

The decision for the regional competition will be announced by the end of August and nationwide results will be released no later than January 15, 2011.

442nd Prepares for Iraqi Police Training Mission

Story by Ryan Martin - Fort Dix Public Affairs Office

FORT DIX, N.J. -- With the mission in Iraq shifting to Operation New Dawn in September, training the Iraq police force becomes paramount to that nation's potential future success. Soldiers from the 442nd Military Police Company will do just that as they continue to prepare at Army Support Activity-Dix for the very mission of training the IPs.

FORT DIX, NJ-- Soldiers of the NYARNG's 442nd Military Police (MP) Company from New York City practice movement drills during Mobilization (MOB) training. Photo by Staff Sgt. Dennis Gravelle, 369th Sustainment Brigade.

For some of these New York Army National Guard Soldiers from Jamaica, N.Y., it will be a reunion of sorts as the unit deployed to Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2003.

"We helped set up many different cities, conducted patrols, and started police academies to help educate the Iraqi Police," said Rockaway, N.Y. resident, Capt. Tara Dawe, 442nd MP Company commander.

More than 90 percent of the unit's Soldiers work in law enforcement in their civilian careers. The powerful veteran leadership in the organization's ranks really adds to the strength of the unit, Dawe said.

"There are a handful who deployed with the unit in 2003, but we also have Soldiers who deployed with other units prior to coming to the 442nd. The experience definitely helps. Even though things change all the time in Iraq, it still helps to have people who know what to expect and know the culture," said Dawe.

This unit helped open the first IP academy in Al Najaf, Iraq. Sgt. 1st Class James Thomas, Bayshore, N.Y. resident and 442nd MP Company operations sergeant, said the academies should be more formal because the IP cadets can work together more cohesively.

"When we were there before it was hard because in many cases we didn't know if the cadets were friends or foes. Many couldn't run or do two push-ups either. They also

only had sandals to train in," said Thomas.

Thomas said since then running shoes are given to all the cadets and the different tribes are separated into more accompanying provinces to make the training run more smoothly.

Thomas and some of his fellow Soldiers in the unit also assisted in the Sept. 11, 2001 clean-up efforts when their unit was one of the first called to duty to conduct body recovery, debris clean-up and perimeter security work in the area around Ground Zero in Manhattan, N.Y.

"We were working that area continuously for six months. It was very sad, but we were glad we could help as citizens and fellow New Yorkers," said Thomas.

During the unit's present day training at ASA-Dix the organization is using role-play actors called civilians on the battlefield.

The COBs play the roles of local townspeople, IPs, and insurgents in various training scenarios to simulate possible situations the Soldiers might encounter downrange.

"The training here has been great. It's very realistic type of training too, which will absolutely help us deal with the conditions we'll see in theater," said Dawe.

The 442nd MP Company will leave for Iraq in mid-to-late June.

101st / 727nd FRGs hold First Benefit Softball Game

Story by Spc. Leigh C. Campbell, 138th PAD

PLEASANT VALLEY, NY — The Family Readiness Groups (FRG) for the 727nd Military Police Company, Law and Order, and Alpha Company, 101st Signal Battalion, New York Army National Guard, held the first "Thank a Soldier" softball game and benefit June 19, 2010 at Cady Field, here.

The event was planned by both FRG's and was designed to develop and support the relationship that exists between the two units and the communities where they reside.

PLEASANT VALLEY, NY -- Soldiers, friends and families of the Alpha Company, 101 Signal Battalion and the 727nd Military Police Company, Law and Order, both from the Poughkeepsie Armory, play softball during the Family Readiness Groups (FRG) First Softball Benefit and Fund-raiser held at Cady Field, Pleasant Valley, NY June 19, 2010. Photo by Colleen Nolte, Treasurer, 727nd Military Police Company Family Readiness Group.

PLEASANT VALLEY, NY -- WWII Veteran Nicolas Becker, a native of Pleasant Valley, NY, throws out the first pitch of the first "Thank a Soldier" softball game and benefit held June 19, 2010, at Cady Field. Photo by Colleen Nolte.

"The community wants to support but doesn't know quite how or the best way, and this event helps make that connection," said Kelly Santana, Family Readiness Group coordinator. "This builds community awareness and lets them know what is going on with their local Soldiers and armories."

Local businesses like Pepsi Co., Herr's Potato Chips, Hannaford's as well as many others also came out to show their support.

"It's great to see the community come out show all this support for us," said Spc. David Arrayo, cable installer and maintenance, A Co., 101st Signal Battalion.

"It is such a morale booster for both units to see all this community support," added Sgt. Darrell Butler, wire and cable section chief, A Co., 101st Signal Battalion.

The funds raised at the benefit will support future functions for both units which are scheduled to deploy in the near future.

NYARNG Conducts Pre-Air Assault Course

Story by Staff Sgt. Thomas W. Wheeler, 138th PAD

CORTLAND MANOR, N.Y. -- More than 30 Soldiers from all over the New York Army National Guard stepped forward and excepted the Air Assault challenge during a Pre-Air Assault Course conducted by Maj. Mark P. Michels of the 153rd Troop Command, June 2-6, 2010, at Camp Smith Training Site.

With assistance from the Regional Training Institute (RTI) as well as instructors from units throughout the NYARNG, Michels conducted a four day Pre-Air Assault Course that closely resembles it's longer Regular Army version.

"The course is about 80% of all the course material taught at the real AA (Air Assault) school but in only FOUR days," said Maj. Mark P. Michels, the courses lead instructor.

"This course consists of the same three phases as the real Air Assault course," Michels added.

Phase One consists of introduction to combat assaults, medical evacuation procedures and nine lines.

Phase Two includes sling load procedures with practical exercises.

Phase Three, the last phase in the four-day course includes rappelling and knots followed by a six-mile foot march, final exam and graduation.

"The course was indeed challenging, " said Spc. Yijin Huang, a crew chief with the 42nd Infantry Divisions Combat Aviation Brigade.

Soldiers attending the Pre-Air Assault Course June 2-6, 2010 at Camp Smith Training Site, Cortland Manor, NY, repel from the repelling tower. Photo by Pfc. Jeremy Bratt, Joint Force Headquarters.

Soldiers attending the Pre-Air Assault Course June 2-6, 2010 at Camp Smith Training Site, Cortland Manor, NY, perform sling load operations as part of the course. Photo by Pfc. Jeremy Bratt, Joint Force Headquarters.

"On top of being physically worn-out by the day to day workouts and long days, learning everything that you needed to know that was normally taught in a span of two weeks in just four days was mentally demanding," Huang added.

"Because my class was so successful in the past, I was asked through the chain of command to conduct it for the state at the RTI (Regional Training Institute)," said Michels.

When asked if the course was successful and worth all the hard work you only had to go as far as to speak to one of the students.

"It was absolutely worth attending," said Huang. "The knowledge and experience that I have ob-

tained is one of a kind. The course definitely prepared me for the actual school and the instructors were excellent and well trained," he added.

"I now know which areas I must improve on so I can be more successful at the actual school," added Huang.

"All in all this was an overall success because of the team work by many people to accomplish this difficult mission safely," said Michels.

"I would like to recognize the other instructors that helped this become as successful as it was as well as the staff at the RTI that helped out so much throughout the course," added Michels. "They (RTI) handled the APFT (Army Physical Fitness Test), rope climb, and foot march for the course instructors so we could concentrate on just the instruction part of the course."

Michels hopes the course will continue to pick up momentum down the road.

"I would like to see it (the course) continue to be conducted at least every six months," said Michels. "One of the comments received from the students said that we should hold it at least 2-3 times a year," he added.

"It's what the Army is all about," said Michels. "Preparing our Soldiers for the "what if's" of war is no-longer applicable, its all about training our Soldiers for the when."

206th MPs Return from 10 Months in Iraq

Story by Staff Sgt. Thomas W. Wheeler, 138th PAD

LATHAM, NY -- More than 70 members of the New York Army National Guard's 206th Military Police Company returned to the Capital Region on Friday after ten months in Basra, Iraq.

After a five day out-processing at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst in New Jersey the Soldiers returned to an Armory full of cheers and applause from grateful and relieved family and friends.

While in Iraq, the more than 160 Soldiers of the 206th helped to train Iraqi police officers as well as provided security for Iraqi parliamentary elections held in March of 2010.

Family and friends greet Solders of the 206th Military Police (MP) Company upon return from a ten month deployment to Basra, Iraq. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Steven Petibone.

Brig. Gen. Pat Murphy, the Adjutant General, and Col. James C. Lettko, Chief of Staff, greet Soldiers from the 206th MP Co. upon returning from a ten month deployment to Basra, Iraq. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Steven Petibone.

The company has Soldiers assigned from all areas of New York to include the Capital District, New York City, Poughkeepsie, Kingston, Utica, Auburn, Hornell, Rochester, Binghamton and Buffalo.

The unit will now enroll in the New York National Guard' Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program where they will reintegrate back into their once normal lives.

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