

ARNORTH Monthly

March 2011



U.S. Army North ready for Vibrant Response 11.1 training exercise, Pg. 3

Army North's CSTA evaluates 81st CST's civil support skills, Pg. 8-9

Army North Soldiers climb, crawl, swing to glory, Pg. 14-15

- Pg. 5** DoD Support to Civil Authorities discussed at USNORTHCOM commanders conference
- Pg. 6-7** Army North CG stresses importance of Scouting during community breakfast
- Pg. 10** Heart of Texas Chorus serenades Soldiers at Warrior and Family Support Center
- Pg. 11** Four honored during Purple Heart ceremony
- Pg. 12** Region II embraces 'Train as you support'
- Pg. 13** JTF-N CG promoted to Brig. Gen.
- Pg. 16-17** Army North to bring new life to Quadrangle grounds
- Pg. 18-19** News Briefs

Front Cover: SAN ANTONIO — Observer controllers from the Civil Support Training Activity, U.S. Army North, point out different points of entry at the Nelson W. Wolff Municipal Stadium Feb. 14, during an exercise for the 81st Civil Support Team, North Dakota National Guard, at the stadium. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Manuel Torres-Cortes, Army North PAO)

Back Cover: CAMP BULLIS, Texas – Master Sgt. Juan Moore, command surgeon noncommissioned officer in charge, U.S. Army North, slides down the Inverted Rope Descent at the Camp Bullis Confidence Obstacle Course Feb. 22. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Keith Anderson, Army North PAO)

Commanding General: Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III
Command Sgt. Maj.: Command Sgt. Maj. David Wood

U.S. ARMY NORTH PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Chief Public Affairs Officer: Col. Wayne Shanks
Public Affairs Sergeant Major: Sgt. Maj. Eric Lobsinger
Public Affairs Operations: Sgt. 1st Class Manuel Torres
Editor: Staff Sgt. Keith Anderson



The ARNORTH Monthly is an authorized publication for members of the U.S. Army. Contents of the ARNORTH Monthly are not necessarily views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of the Army or U.S. Army North. The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement by the Department of the Army, U.S. Army North or the ARNORTH Monthly, of the products and services advertised.

All editorial content of the ARNORTH Monthly is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the U.S. Army North Public Affairs Office.

Do you have a story to share? The ARNORTH Monthly welcomes columns, commentaries, articles, letters and photos from readers.

Submissions should be sent to the Editor at keith.m.anderson@conus.army.mil or the Public Affairs Sergeant Major at eric.d.lobsinger@conus.army.mil and include author's name, rank, unit and contact information. The ARNORTH Monthly reserves the right to edit submissions selected for the paper.

For further information on deadlines, questions, comments or a request to be on our distribution list, email the Editor or call commercial number (210) 221-9035 or DSN 471-9035.

U.S. Army North ready for Vibrant Response 11.1 training exercise

By Don Manuszewski
Army North PAO

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas – Members of U. S. Army North will travel to central and southern Indiana to conduct and participate in U. S. Northern Command's Vibrant Response 11.1 exercise March 11-19.

The exercise revolves around a scenario in which an improvised radiological dispersing device, or "dirty bomb," spreads radioactive material in and around a major metropolitan area in the United States.

"All-in-all, we try to create an environment and mission sets for the training participants that is as close to the real thing as possible," said Paul Condon, joint exercise planner, Army North.

The field training exercise will see more than 3,400 participants from the units that compose CCMRF 11.1 train with each other as well as their local, state and federal partners as they respond to the catastrophic incident.

For Condon and the other members of the USARNORTH Team, the exercise is a pre-scripted series of events that is orchestrated like a finely tuned opera.

"It's like a multi-act play," said Condon. "Every night we have to reset the state of play to get ready for the next day's training. The days are long but ultimately worth the effort when you see the young men and women demonstrate and hone their skills."

Those skills include medical care, decontamination, search and rescue as well as air evacuation and logistical support to the primary agencies providing assistance.

"I've charged my planners with stretching the responding units to the max – and then some," said Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III, commanding general, Army North and Fort Sam Houston. "I consider Army North as

'America's Insurance Policy,' and we need to make sure that policy is ready and able to support our nation."

Along with Condon, there have been hundreds of people involved in the planning process since around April 2010.

People from U. S. Northern Command, Air Force North and the Indiana National Guard, as well as people from other federal agencies, such as the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and contractors, like General Dynamics Information Technology.

"We have the lead," said Condon, "but there is an overall planning effort to pull something like this exercise off."

The Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, high-yield Explosive Consequence Management Response Force, or CCMRF 11.1, led by U. S. Air Force Maj. Gen. Jonathan Treacy and his team from Joint Task Force – Civil Support, is testing their command and control operations during the annual training event.

Broken into three subordinate task forces: Task Force Operations; TF Aviation and TF Medical, the CCMRF 11.1 will perform a myriad of tasks associated with the Defense Department response to this type of disaster. Included in those efforts are the ability to medically evacuate injured and displaced persons as well as decontaminating those who have been affected by the notional radiological device.

Additionally, units will work at realistic training sites managed and maintained by the Indiana National Guard.

"We use the superb facilities and expertise of the Indiana guard at both Camp Atterbury and (Muscatatuck Urban Training Center)," said Condon. "We invite and leverage participation of our local, state and national partners to replicate all the multiple layers of response to a national emergency."



BUTLERVILLE, Ind. — Members of the Federal Emergency Management Agency Task Force, from Dayton, Ohio, search for simulated survivors and victims in the collapsed garage in July 2010 at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center during Vibrant Response 10.2. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Brad Staggs, MUTC PAO)



Photo by Staff Sgt. Keith Anderson, Army North PAO

International exchange

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — Brig. Gen. Michael Stone, assistant adjutant general – Army, Michigan National Guard, speaks with senior military leaders from U.S. Army North, U.S. Northern Command, the National Guard and Canadian Armed Forces March 1 about mutual issues during the Regional Joint Task Force Commander's Conference in the Quadrangle.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Keith Anderson, Army North PAO

Big Sarge

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — Newly-promoted Staff Sgt. Nick Davis, Headquarters Support Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, U.S. Army North, addresses well-wishers at his promotion March 3 in the Quadrangle grounds. Davis, a native of Detroit, and Staff Sgt. Alfonso Rodriguez (right), also HSC, of Brownsville, Texas, were both promoted during the ceremony.

ARNORTH welcomes

Casey Gates, G2
Mark Kelly, CSTA
Christopher Scogin, G2
Rebecca Sousa, G1

ARNORTH says goodbye

Col. John Fruge, G3/5/7
Mark Cravens, G5
Mark Gearhart, G6



March is National Women's History Month

Learn about
the important
contributions made
by female service
members.

Visit the United
States Army Women's
Museum at
www.awm.lee.army.mil

DoD Support of Civil Authorities discussed at USNORTHCOM commanders conference

Story and photo by
Tech. Sgt. Christian Michael
JTF-CS PAO

FORT MONROE, Va. — Commanders and senior enlisted leaders from across U.S. Northern Command gathered here Jan. 26 to discuss Northern Command's Defense Support of Civil Authorities' mission – DSCA, as it's called by U.S. military planners.

The conference provided a forum for commanders to talk openly, face-to-face, about the Fort Monroe-based Joint Task Force – Civil Support's Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and high-yield Explosive consequence management mission.

JTF-CS, a subordinate command to USNORTHCOM, is the military unit designated to provide consequence management and oversight of Department of Defense Title 10 forces responding to a CBRNE incident.

The commander of U.S. Army North serves as the Joint Force Land Component commander and has operational control of JTF-CS.

The task force and its subordinate units are part of the unified federal response to a CBRNE event, responding only when state authorities request such help from the federal government.

"There were some great discussion points on the issues affecting us now, and more so as we move into the Defense



FORT MONROE, Va. — Ralph Laurie, Defense Logistics Agency liaison officer to U.S. Northern Command, observes a briefing that was part of Joint Task Force – Civil Support's annual Commander's Conference Jan. 25 at Fort Monroe, Va.

CBRNE Response Force next year," said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Craig Wilson, chief, interagency operations for JTF-CS. "Sixty percent of the briefings and discussion were related to how to develop the DCRF and (contingency plans) that will lay down the operations the DCRF will operate next year."

The conference was attended by task force commanders, command sergeants major and staff members, planners and leaders from other military and federal agencies connected to the defense support of civil authorities mission.

"It gives us face-to-face coordination," said Army Col. Bruce McVeigh, commander, 1st Medical Brigade. The brigade serves as one of three subordinate task forces – Task Force Medical.

"We know problems are being worked and how and what issues everyone is facing," said McVeigh.

The event also allowed attendees to talk to each other with JTF-CS leadership to get the best idea of how the task force and its subordinate units work together, despite being geographically separated.

While civil support personnel plan and train for command and control of DSCA forces year round, subordinate task forces are only operationally attached to JTF-CS during several training exercises.

Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth Bell of the 1-224th Security and Support Battalion, Maryland Army National Guard, got to see how his unit, recently assigned to the mission, fits into the larger picture.

Further, the conference allowed him to learn from other senior leaders instead of merely reading an operations plan on paper.

This is an important difference in communicating and synchronizing a common understanding of DSCA operations, he said.

"You see the big picture and foundation, equipment, people needed and timelines," Bell said.

Bell and other senior leaders not only learned how their individual units work together with other task forces, but also how important the mission is to communities that could be affected by a CBRNE incident.

"We're not getting graded by a service; we're getting graded by the American people," Bell said.

Army North CG stresses importance of Scouting during community breakfast



Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III, commanding general, U.S. Army North and Fort Sam Houston, discusses the importance of Scouting and community service at the 2011 Friends of Scouting Bexar County Community Breakfast Feb. 16 at Pearl Stables.

**Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Keith Anderson**
Army North PAO

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III, commanding general, U.S. Army North and Fort Sam Houston, spoke of the importance of Scouting – both for the young men involved as well as the community as a whole – as he served as the guest speaker of the 2011 Friends of Scouting Bexar County community breakfast Feb. 16 at the Pearl Stables.

The breakfast is an annual event for the Alamo Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America, an

organization that serves more than 27,000 young people throughout 13 counties in the San Antonio area.

Scouting teaches young men values that will shape them and guide them throughout their lives, declared the commanding general, himself a former scout.

“It teaches common values that transcend race, religion and national origin,” Swan said. “Duty; Honor; Country: the values parallel our Army values of Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless service, Honor, Integrity and Personal courage.”

Swan said he was proud to be attending the event for another reason.

“I’m gratified to have my own son, Ryan, here with me today,” Swan said. “Ryan achieved the Eagle Scout in December.”

Ryan said he was proud to have achieved Eagle in 2010, Scouting’s centennial, and he said there are many reasons to be a Scout.

“I would definitely recommend joining the Scouts,” Ryan said. “You get to meet new people, make friends, work on skills and learn new things. You learn to be prepared, to be ready for anything.”

Rafael Mota, an undergrad at the University of Texas at San Antonio who earned his Eagle Scout Award in 2008, gave the Eagle

Scout testimonial during the event. He spoke of learning the importance of community service, leadership, character and achievement, and about spending time with his father, Scoutmaster Robert Mota.

“I’ve learned a lot about living in the outdoors, but the most important part of the experience has been bonding with my dad during those times away from the real world,” said Mota, who has three brothers who also achieved Eagle Scout. “That’s made a big difference in my life.”



Rafael Mota, an Eagle Scout from Troop 288, leads business and community leaders, which included Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III (right), commanding general, U.S. Army North and Fort Sam Houston, in the Pledge of Allegiance at the 2011 Friends of Scouting Bexar County Community Breakfast Feb. 16 at Pearl Stables. The breakfast is an annual event for the Alamo Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.



You, Inc.

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — Patrick Reynolds, chief financial officer, U.S. Army North, provided the day’s keynote presentation “You, Inc.,” at the Alamo City Chapter of the American Society of Military Comptrollers’ annual two-day Professional Development Symposium Feb. 15 at the Region 20 Education Service Center. Symposium leaders recognized three Army North personnel, including Brad Ramey, who earned a distinguished award for resource management, Nancy Kittinger, who earned a meritorious award for accounting and finance, and Mike Snell, who earned a meritorious award for analysis and evaluation.

Army North's CSTA evaluates 81st CST's civil support skills

**Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Manuel Torres,
Army North PAO**

SAN ANTONIO, Texas — In the early morning hours, notional San Antonio residents gathered at a local job fair in hopes of finding better opportunities for their families; instead, some of them ended up facing challenges much worse than that of a bad economy.

Such was the scene Feb. 14 at San Antonio's Nelson W. Wolff

Municipal Stadium as members of U.S. Army North's Civil Support Training Activity conducted an exercise to test the skills of Soldiers from the 81st Civil Support Team, based out of Bismarck, N.D., who were called upon to demonstrate their proficiency in responding to an incident involving chemical agents.

"Our goal is to push the team – challenge them to test out their standing operating procedures," said Jeffrey Taylor, CSTA, Army North. "It also tests their ability to communicate with the local authorities and their partners to enhance their effectiveness and their relationships for when an event actually occurs." In the exercise scenario, 20 individuals started getting sick shortly after

arriving at a job fair, which was conducted in the stadium's press boxes. The symptoms they suffered ranged from tightness in their chests, to nausea and muscle weakness.

Some of the victims were transported to Brooke Army Medical Center for treatment while others, with less serious symptoms, were taken to Wilford Hall Medical Center for observation.

"We must meet certain objectives to ensure this training is successful," said Maj. Mark Quire, deputy commander, 81st CST. "We must maintain life, safety and security; recon the stadium and secure the perimeter; sample and analyze the products; and split the samples for state and federal agencies."

The objectives ensured that chemical contaminants were handled with the upmost care and in accordance with Occupational Safety and Health Administration rules and guidelines, explained Quire.

"It's important to ensure that we learn our job and what is required of it," said Sgt. 1st Class Alex Jahner, 81st CST, while he was putting on his hazmat suit. "I'm fairly new, so I've been learning on the new equipment, new vehicles and procedures. This helps me be better at what I need to do for the team."

A member of the 81st Civil Support Team looks around to search for a notional chemical dispersal device during an exercise Feb. 14 at San Antonio's Nelson W. Wolff Municipal Stadium.

The training was made possible by the efforts of the CSTA. The training team travels throughout the United States to facilitate, observe and evaluate chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear response training. This helps to ensure the teams are ready for any event that may come up in the future.

The 81st CST has been called up for assistance in many events since its inception, said Air Force Lt. Col. Larry Shirely, commander, 81st CST, who said he has seen how the training has improved his personnel's skills and knowledge during his time as the commander.

"We are here to conduct training with the Army North team to teach and challenge us," said Shirely. "We have grown throughout the last six years from a novice unit to a veteran unit due to the training opportunity Army North provides."

Army North CSTA coordinates times and venues for CSTs to train. A challenge for the team is to ensure the training is as

realistic as possible.

It is a challenge the team relishes.

"This is a great place to have this type of training," said Lt. Col. Clyde Lynn, who serves with the CSTA as the deputy director for Civil Support

Region – West. "This training provides real life coordination with local first responders, the fire marshal, police agencies and local community. This way, they begin to establish a good relationship with those they will be working with if anything were to happen in the future."

The scenario wasn't only to prepare the NG team for its upcoming evaluation in May but also serves to help prepare for them for the day each first responder hopes never comes – when there is a real-world need for their expertise.



Vincent Sharp, exercise specialist, Civil Support Training Activity, U.S. Army North, points out different points of entry of the Nelson W. Wolff Municipal Stadium Feb. 14, during an exercise at the stadium.

The 81st takes advantage of exercises such as these to prepare for its real-world missions. The team has supported missions at North Dakota missile sites, has obtained environmental contamination readings after hurricanes, and has provided radiation detection and monitoring for a Republican national convention.

"State and local first responders count on us to help them whenever they need," said Shirely. "We must be able to provide that support, and we must do it with the upmost



Ron Guajardo, observer controller, Civil Support Training Activity, U.S. Army North, monitors recon team members from the 81st Civil Support Team as they search for a notional chemical dispersal device during an exercise Feb. 14 at San Antonio's Nelson W. Wolff Municipal Stadium.

Heart of Texas Chorus serenades Soldiers at Warrior and Family Support Center

**Story and photo by
Lt. Col. Randy Martin
Army North PAO**

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — A quartet from the Heart of Texas Chorus paid a visit to the Warrior and Family Support Center Feb. 12 and entertained visitors.

It was a pre-Valentine's Day gift of love songs for heroes and their Families on a day specially chosen because so many would be in attendance at the delicious breakfast.

"We wanted to say thank you for their service and sacrifice," said John Towry, a Heart of Texas Chorus member and retired chief warrant officer."

Approximately one-half of the chorus members are veterans, said Towry, in explaining the special sense of patriotism in the organization. Towry works full time for the Installation Management Command.

The Heart of Texas Chorus is the performing chorus of the Central Texas Corridor Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. According to its Web site (www.hotchorus.org), it is the largest all-male singing organization in the world.

"I can't believe that anyone can harmonize like they do," said Donna Hughes, the wife of Master Sgt. Glenn Hughes, who was one of the wounded warriors

in attendance. Like the other visitors to the WFSC, the Hughes Family said they appreciated the dapper-dressed singers performing in four-part harmony as much as their meal of freshly cooked eggs, sausage, and bacon, assorted drinks and bread.

"I thought it was beautiful," she said.

The group greeted the assembled Families and expressed encouragement to everyone as they visited each room in the center.

"The people that come and watch us have such a good time because we are having a good time," said Andy Solari, also an Army veteran and chorus member.

Next on their schedule Saturday was a visit to the Fischer House, and Monday also promised to be very busy for the Chorus as online and telephone requests poured in for singing Valentines messages.

Besides competitive appearances, the group sings regularly in San Marcos and the surrounding area.

"After 9/11, we began participating in 'United We Sing,'" said Jan Scofield, a member of the quartet. 'United We Sing' is held in September to commemorate the bravery and sacrifice displayed by America's finest.

"It's nice for them to take time out of their schedule to sing for us," said Master Sgt. Hughes, as he and his wife left the center.

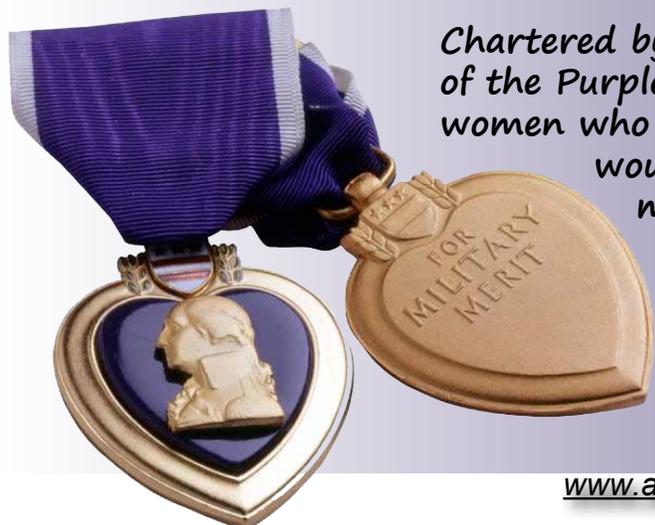


FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — Jan Scofield, Andy Solari, John Towry and Ray Elbel, of the Heart of Texas Chorus, sing pre-Valentine's Day, classic love songs for couples and attending Families at the Warrior and Family Support Center Feb. 12 during breakfast. The Heart of Texas is the performing chorus of the Central Texas Corridor Chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society. According to its Web site, it is the largest all-male singing organization in the world.

Four Soldiers honored during Purple Heart ceremony



FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III, commanding general, U.S. Army North and Fort Sam Houston, thanks Pvt. Sergio Gonzalez, 1st Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division; 1st Lt. Matthew Anderson, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div.; Spc. Michael Verardo, 4th BCT, 82nd Airborne Division; and Pfc. Charles Lingerfelt, 1st BCT, 4th Inf. Div., for their service after presenting Purple Hearts to them during a ceremony Feb. 10 at the Warrior and Family Support Center. The four were wounded while deployed to Afghanistan.



Chartered by Congress in 1958, The Military Order of the Purple Heart is composed of military men and women who received the Purple Heart Medal for wounds suffered in combat. Although our membership is restricted to the combat wounded, we support all veterans and their families with a myriad of nationwide programs by Chapters and National Service Officers.

Information from www.purpleheart.org

Region II embraces ‘Train as you support’

Story and photos by Don Manuszewski
Army North PAO

WEST TRENTON, N.J. – There is an old saying in the Department of Defense that goes: “Train as you fight.”

For the service members and Civilians of U.S. Army North serving in a Defense Support of Civil Authority role, the phrase would perhaps more appropriately be: “Train as you support.”

Training as you support is exactly what the members of the Defense Coordinating Element aligned in Federal Emergency Management Agency Region II did during a rigorous exercise scenario during the DCE’s command evaluation Feb. 8-12 in West Trenton, N.J.

“This was great,” said Col. Robert Freehill, who serves as the defense coordinating officer for Army North’s DCE Region II. “We got after business, synchronizing our efforts during a catastrophic event in the garden state with the agencies we’ll be supporting most – FEMA and the Department of Justice – as those agencies support (N.J.) Gov. (Chris) Christie through his executive agency for emergency management, the New Jersey State Police.”

The exercise was designed to stretch the limits of Freehill’s team, which includes active, National Guard and Reserve Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen.

The scenario revolved around what the region’s personnel affectionately call “The Exit 14 Scenario,” in which multiple radiological dispersant devices are detonated in New Jersey, near Exit 14, off of the New

Jersey Turnpike.

“We work with our FEMA partners all the time,” said Lt. Col. Tony Campbell, DCE operations officer. “In fact, we work on our battle rhythm with them two times a week.”

Exercise observers said the rapport built by working so closely together during steady state operations really showed through during the EXEVAL as the teams worked through the mission assignment coordination process with relative ease.

Of note during the exercise was the validation of the region’s distributed operations concept, where the main force of the DCE would stay in FEMA’s main coordination and synchronization center in New York while a contingent would move forward with the FEMA Region II Incident Management Assistance Team to establish an Initial Operations Facility prior to setting up the Joint Field Office.

“Distributed Ops was a huge success,” said Freehill. “Was it perfect? No; we have some lessons to take home, but it did validate for me and, more importantly, the IMAT, that this is the way we’ll conduct business in Region II.”

One of the keys to DSCA is being aware that the Defense Department is in a supporting role.

“Everything we do is in support of our local, state and federal partners,” said Lt. Col. Mary Sawyer, the deputy chief regional emergency preparedness liaison officer.

Freehill said that he wished he could have gotten more partners involved in the exercise, but those who participated cemented the already strong relationships.

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — Maj. Jim Orosz (seated), mission assignment coordinator, Region II Defense Coordinating Element, U.S. Army North; U. S. Army Col. Douglas Mills (upper left), New York state emergency preparedness liaison officer; U. S. Marine Corps Col. John Yurcak, Marine EPLO; and U.S. Air Force Col. Chris Krieg, Air Force Regional EPLO, Region II Defense Coordinating Element, confer with exercise officials simulating U.S. Northern Command, during a daily mission assignment “scrub,” a meeting that tracks the status of living saving and life-sustaining missions underway. The meeting ensured all levels responsible for MA actions synchronized efforts during the DCE Region II command evaluation Feb. 8-12 in West Trenton, N.J.



JTF-N CG promoted to Brig. Gen.



Photo by Edd Natividad, JTF-N

Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III (left), commanding general, U.S. Army North and Fort Sam Houston, and newly promoted Brig. Gen. Michael Bills, commanding general, Joint Task Force – North, salute during the rendering of honors at Bills' promotion ceremony Feb. 11.

By Armando Carrasco

JTF-N PAO

FORT BLISS, Texas — Col. Michael Bills, the commander of Joint Task Force – North, was promoted to the rank of brigadier general during a ceremony Feb. 11 at the newly re-designated Fort Bliss and Old Ironsides Museums.

Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III, commanding general, U.S. Army North and Fort Sam Houston, hosted the ceremony; JTF-N is an element of U.S. Northern Command and is under the operational control of Army North.

“Today we have the unique opportunity to recognize an individual – a husband, a son, a father, a friend and a distinguished Soldier – who truly epitomizes the phrase: ‘the best and brightest,’” said Swan, during his welcome

remarks.

“Brig. Gen. Mike Bills is the kind of leader who will take Joint Task Force – North, our Army and our Armed Forces into the future.”

Bills said the promotion caused him to reflect on his career.

“This promotion has taken me back over 27 years, like no other event,” said Bills, who assumed command of the joint service task force June 9, 2010.

“Today has allowed me to reconnect with so many friends and mentors, those who have touched our lives in so many ways.”

Bills thanked the key leaders who mentored and challenged him throughout his career, and one other group that has made him successful.

“I also know that I would not be standing here if not for the Noncommissioned Officer Corps

– the backbone of our Army,” Bills said.

Bills will continue to lead the Fort Bliss-based Department of Defense organization tasked to support the nation’s federal law enforcement agencies in the identification and interdiction of suspected transnational threats.

He also thanked his command’s outside partners, who he said risk their lives every day for the mission.

“I would be remiss if I did not thank our law enforcement partners, who are represented by Customs and Border Protection, Drug Enforcement Agency, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, FBI and other law enforcement agencies who, are protecting our borders against transnational criminal organizations,” Bills said.

Army North Soldiers clim

Photos by Staff Sgt. Keith Anderson
Army North PAO



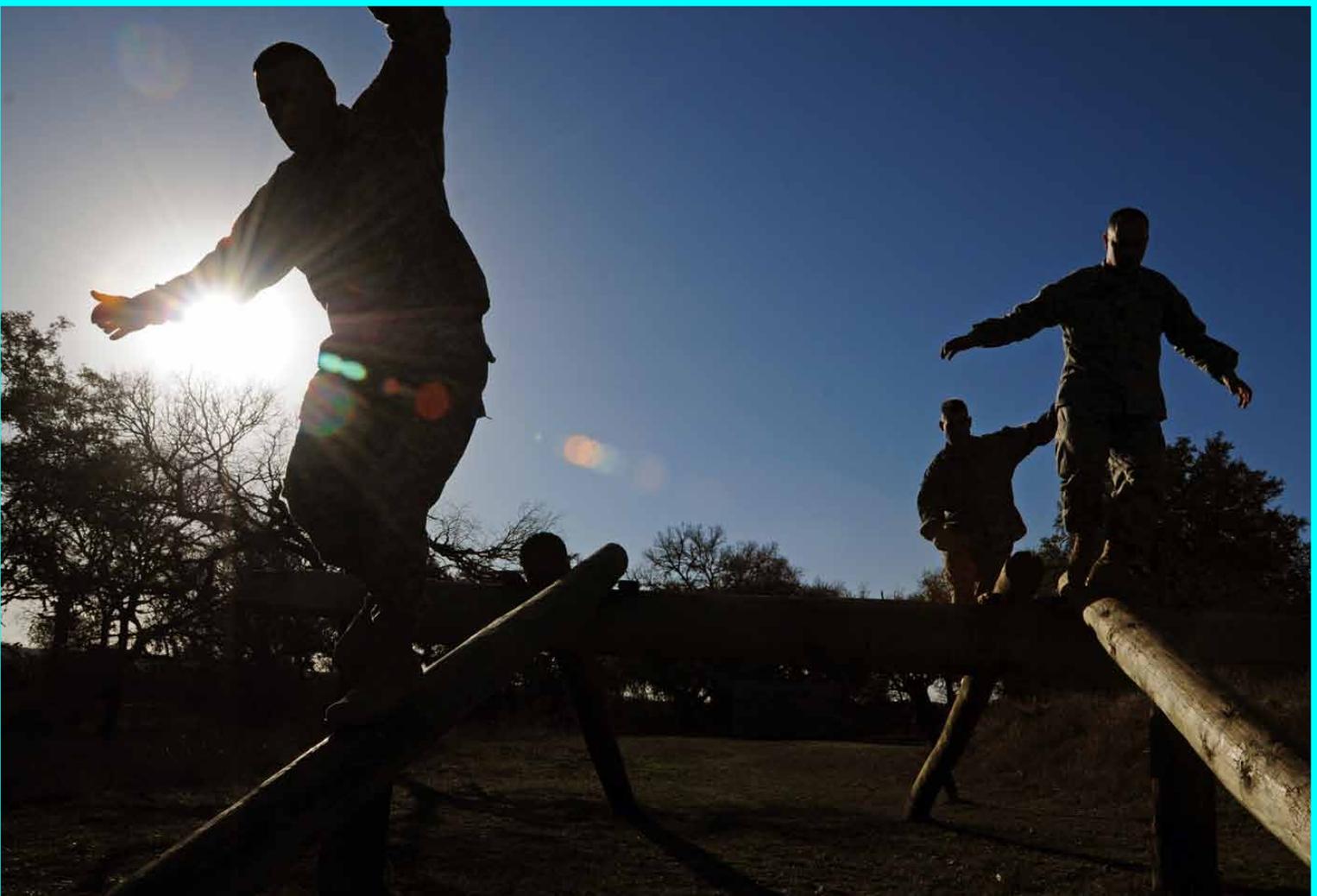
Soldiers from Operations Company, and Intelligence and Support Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, U.S. Army North, participate in an obstacle course, weapons familiarization and Mission-Oriented Protective Postures event at the Camp Bullis Confidence Obstacle Course Feb. 22.

Top photo: Sgt. Lauren Aldaco and Master Sgt. Juan Moore navigate the Weaver. **Above:** Capt. Michelle Martinez, Ops Co. commander, dons a protective mask after firing an M9 and an M16. **Left:** Sgt. Aldaco attempts to cross the Tarzan obstacle.

b, crawl, swing to glory



Soldiers from Headquarters Support Company overcome challenges at the Camp Bullis Confidence Obstacle Course Feb. 25. **Above:** Maj. Rene Rodriguez, HSC commander, low-crawls. **Right:** Spc. Dominique Ervin crosses the Island Hopper. **Below:** HSC Soldiers cross the Easy Balancer.



Army North to bring new life to Quadrangle grounds

By Staff Sgt. Keith Anderson
Army North PAO

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — Military leaders at Fort Sam Houston are revitalizing U.S. Army North's historic Quadrangle grounds in an ambitious project to make one of the oldest and most storied Army facilities in Texas a cultural draw for locals and tourists to San Antonio.

Planned improvements include the planting of inner and outer rings of animal-friendly trees, adding picnic tables and benches, and installing a new duck pond; discussions are also underway exploring the possibility of adding a small museum-style room with historic photos, implements and children's activities.

"You can have a nice place to come visit and see the deer,

peacocks and ducks, or you can relax and do nothing and just enjoy the grounds," said Lt. Col. Melissa Fahrni, deputy chief of staff, Army North, in talking about the planned improvements to the grounds.

Leaders at Army North, the current tenant headquarters command that resides in the 135-year-old former Army supply depot, are working with officials from the San Antonio Botanical Garden, the San Antonio Zoo and Aquarium, and other local organizations to create an environmentally conscious and animal-friendly experience for local community members and tourists to visit and discover some of the post's unique history – or to just relax and soak in the beauty of the surrounding area. The grounds are also available for school fieldtrips and can be reserved for private functions.

Some of the considerations for the trees in the grounds include ensuring the deer have canopy and cover, that the peacocks have sturdy roosts, and that there is nothing harmful to animals or visitors.

Some of the older Oak trees have already been removed and replaced with Mountain Laurels, but the major plantings of Live Oak, Spanish Oak, Red Oak, Magnolia, Mountain Laurel and Mission Anagua are slated for early April in celebration of Earth Day, April 22, and Arbor Day, April 29.

The Society for the Preservation of Historic Fort Sam Houston, Inc., is accepting monetary donations. All donations are tax-deductible and all participants will be recognized, with ID tags on trees, or with plaques in the scenic seating rings, or through other



News

SMA Chandler 'right person at the right time'

By Charlie Reed
Stars & Stripes

YOKOTA AIR BASE, Japan — It was 2005, and Sgt. Major Raymond F. Chandler III had just returned from a year in Iraq – his first combat experience – with the 1st Squad, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division. After more than 20 years in uniform, he said he felt accomplished, but tired.

He was ready for retirement and civilian life.

Chandler and his wife, Jeanne, wanted to start a business, a professional hair dressing school.

“It seemed like a good idea,” he said.

But between the Army asking him to remain on active duty and a flailing U.S. economy that made a start-up business too risky, Chandler stayed a soldier.

On March 1, he became Sergeant Major of the Army, the Army chief of staff’s personal advisor on all enlisted matters.

Education and quality-of-life concerns will be among his top priorities, he said, as the Army renews focus on those issues after nearly 10 years of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“We’ve had to put a lot of that stuff on the back burner to support the nation at war,” he said.

By October, the Army should be able to give all active-duty Soldiers at least two years at home between year-long deployments.

“We’re not where we want to be now, but we should be soon,” he said.

Meeting that goal is critical for advancing the education and family-centric initiatives he will soon be tasked with at the Pentagon, he said.

Soldiers need more dwell time to recuperate from combat, Chandler stressed, adding that the Army needs the break to build resiliency among its troops and their Families who have seen increased hardships in recent years — from post-traumatic stress disorder to marital problems.

Some blame those hardships for the alarming spike in suicides among Soldiers, which Chandler believes can be reduced “by Soldiers looking out for Soldiers” not only on the battlefield but back in garrison.

FEMA promotes fire safety awareness for families

Courtesy of FEMA Web site

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. — With home fires on the rise in winter months, and a new study showing that young children are at an especially high risk of getting seriously injured or dying in residential fires, today the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the National Commission on Children and Disasters are announcing a new public awareness campaign to help keep children and families safer from the threat of home fires.

As part of this effort, FEMA’s U.S. Fire Administration is releasing a new report on the risks fires pose to children.

The report, which is based on the latest available data released by the National Center for Health Statistics, found that young children face the greatest – and a growing – risk of death or serious injury in home

fires.

As such, 52 percent of all child fire deaths in 2007 involved children under the age of four.

This was a slight increase from the most recent study previously conducted in 2004. Click here for a copy of the report.

“When you take some time this week to practice and learn about proper fire safety for families, especially children, you are taking the initial steps toward protecting your household from the risks and dangers associated with fires,” said FEMA Region III Regional Administrator Ms. MaryAnn Tierney. “Practicing proper fire safety will help you to empower yourself as well as your family to become household emergency managers.”

Gates to cadets ... change Army culture

By Jim Garamone
American Forces Press Service

WEST POINT, N.Y. — Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates told cadets here that they must continue changing the culture of the Army to ensure the service can handle the challenges facing America.

This was the last opportunity for the secretary to speak to the Corps of Cadets. He has announced he will step down as secretary later this year. Gates spoke about the future of conflict and the implications for the Army. He talked about institutionalizing the diverse capabilities the service will need. Finally, he threw out some ideas for how the service can recruit and retain the leaders needed in the 21st century.

“When you receive your commission and walk off these parade fields for the last time, you will join an Army that, more than any other part

of America's military, is an institution transformed by war," Gates told the cadets gathered in Eisenhower Hall.

He said the changes have been wrenching, but the service used the experiences to learn and adapt.

Army wants to develop Soldier as decisive weapon

By Kris Osborn
Army News Service

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The Army needs to continue investing in and developing new technologies which help make Soldiers themselves a decisive weapon in combat, service leaders told hundreds of industry and military attendees here Feb. 23 at the Association of the United States Army Winter Symposium.

"I really think we want to give Soldiers a decisive edge in combat. I want to focus on the dismounted Soldier. Once we get out of our (Ground Combat Vehicle), once we get out of our Abrams, once we drop out of our Black Hawk — the question is what makes us different from the guy on the other side, hiding behind a rock?" said Malcolm "Ross" O'Neill, assistant secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology.

Citing several of the technological military advances the U.S. Air Force and Navy have enjoyed in recent decades, O'Neill said the dismounted U.S. Army Soldier should have a commensurate technological "boost" or over-match capability when pitted against adversaries.

Investment in science and technology — harnessing the best available emerging technologies proven to help Soldiers' in combat — is

central to this effort.

"We have to be continually responding to the shortfalls and the gaps in our ability to provide for the Soldier in Afghanistan and Iraq," O'Neill said. "Maintaining the decisive edge is very important. We've been able to do it in many areas."

"We have the best combat attack helicopters in the world" he explained. "We've got excellent rotary-wing aircraft and we have excellent armored vehicles — and we are working on the Soldier."

Some of the recent efforts to improve Soldier technologies include — fielding prototypes of the new air-burst XM 25 grenade launcher, which can detonate above or near an enemy position.

Deploying the XM 2010 sniper rifle with an increased range, fielding uniforms with fire-resistant materials, experimenting with lighter-weight body armor, developing the new Enhanced Combat Helmet and launching a competition to build a new M4 Carbine while simultaneously improving the existing M4, are all in the works, Brig. Gen. Peter Fuller, Program Executive Officer Soldier, told the audience.

Last WWI veteran passes away

By Elizabeth Collins
and Todd Lopez,
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — America's last known World War I veteran, Cpl. Frank Buckles, died Feb. 27 at the age of 110.

Buckles died of natural causes at his home in Charles Town, W. Va., according to a family spokesman who added funeral arrangements would be announced later this week.

Buckles enlisted at the age of 16

by reportedly convincing an Army captain that he was older.

He was the last living American doughboy to have served in France during World War I and the last of 4.7 million U.S. troops who signed up to fight the Kaiser 94 years ago.

Buckles later spent three years as a Japanese prisoner of war during World War II after being captured in the Pacific while serving as a U.S. contractor.

President Obama released a statement today that recognized Buckles as "the oldest known World War I-era veteran in the world."

"Michelle and I were inspired by the service and life story of former Army Corporal Frank W. Buckles," Obama said, adding praise not only for his war service, but also for Buckles' continued service as honorary chairman of the World War I Memorial Foundation.

Two years ago, Buckles testified at a Senate hearing urging the establishment of a national World War I memorial on the mall.

"I think it's an excellent idea," said Buckles about the possibility of a national memorial to remember the Great War.

"There should be no question about it," he said Dec. 3, 2009, in front of a session of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, subcommittee on national parks.

Three years ago, Buckles was at the Pentagon March 6, 2008, to help Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and then Secretary of the Army Pete Geren unveil a new portrait exhibit that featured nine World War I veterans.

Photographer David DeJonge had set out in 2006 to help America remember the war by documenting remaining World War I veterans.

By the time he could finance the

