Yudh Abhyas 2014
U.S. and India team up

California Air National Guard F-15s rip across Florida skies in live fire exercise
We are guardians of the homeland, and we take our job seriously. We know that any missed detail, overlooked task or unchecked safety precaution can lead to disaster.

Guarding the homeland also means guarding its resources. We are entrusted with the taxpayers' money and equipment, and in the post-war era we are entering, pressure is continuously mounting to safeguard each dollar and maximize every man-hour—to accomplish the proverbial “do more with less.”

Implementing and maintaining strong internal controls has been a top priority for the California National Guard since I took over as adjutant general 3 ½ years ago. It is a defining aspect of my command because strong oversight is essential to fulfilling the Guard’s commitment to our state and country.

Internal controls are already a part of your daily routine as a Soldier or Airman. They are integrated into every activity through checklists, procedures and processes intended to protect your safety, track equipment and ensure mission success.

Many internal controls simply codify common sense actions. You understand the importance of wearing personal protective equipment in certain situations, for instance; internal controls turn that understanding into a concrete regulation that ensures it does not get overlooked. Organizational clothing and individual equipment (OCIE) and preventative maintenance checks and services (PCMS) checklists are common examples of internal controls that service members use every day.

Every Soldier and Airman in the Cal Guard should be proactively involved in enhancing efficiencies and controls. Troops who challenge the conventional wisdom and offer different viewpoints are valued in this organization, and ideas from all Cal Guard members are given due consideration.

Last year, for example, three technical sergeants in the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing suggested improvements to MQ-1 Predator maintenance procedures, and those improvements were later implemented across the entire Air Force, saving wings across the country substantial time and money. Each of those Airmen received $3,000 from the Air National Guard Suggestion Program, which was set up to encourage Airmen of all ranks to share feedback on Air Force processes.

Internal controls should be top-of-mind for all troops, all the time — it’s not just a checklist to be reviewed at the end of the year. Constant vigilance is the only way to see a problem coming and mitigate potential risk before a negative incident occurs. Leaders at all levels should set the tone by taking an active role in defining and monitoring internal controls to ensure efficient practices are followed and ethical behavior is maintained.

This July, in accordance with this requirement, the California Military Department established an Internal Controls Coordination Council, which tracks all state and federal audits and investigations. The council ensures the department is not wasting resources on duplicate investigations, and it follows up on investigators’ recommendations to ensure corrective actions are implemented.

Selfless service is at the core of all we do. We exist as an organization to save lives and promote progress in California, across the country and around the world. We can only make that claim if we are good stewards who actively pursue efficiency and work vigilantly to ensure ethical behavior. It is my duty to implement strong internal controls, and it is each of yours as well.

Guarding the homeland also means guarding its resources.
The Adjutant General

An Air National Guardsman from the 129th Rescue Wing conducts a pre-flight inspection on an MC-130P Combat Shadow aircraft during Soaring Angel, a collaborative tactical training exercise, at Moffett Federal Airfield, Calif., Oct. 2-5. Look for an article and more photos from the exercise in next month’s Grizzly. Photo by Staff Sgt. Kim E. Ramirez
Soldier sisters bridge cultures
Indian-American Soldiers serve as cultural liaisons and interpreters in India during Yudh Abhyas 2014

Beauty queen flies for the Air Guard
Lt. Col. Patricia Murray found success on pageant runways and airline runways

MPs gear up for Gitmo
The 670th Military Police Company trains for mobilization to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba

Re-enlistments a top priority
The Recruiting and Retention Battalion works hard to get you to re-enlist

Hanging out with the Raiders
Recruiting and Retention Battalion, Bravo Company commander Maj. Mike Franklin takes community influencers for a visit to the Oakland Raiders’ training camp

Tahoe mascal exercise
Cal Guard participates in mass casualty exercise at South Lake Tahoe airport

MI Soldiers hone skills
Military Intelligence Soldiers provide operational intelligence to combatant commands (COCOMs) overseas to maintain critical skills

Out in the tules
Counterdrug Task Force eradicates marijuana plants on the Tule River Indian Reservation

Counterdrug Task Force helps out
The Counterdrug Task Force works with California communities for positive change

From FOB to job
FOB Jobs career fairs help guardsmen go from deployment to employment

Homecoming surprise
Master Sgt. Adrian Rancudo shows up unexpectedly at his children’s high school after completing Gitmo deployment

Operation Strike Zone
95th Civil Support Team participates in a simulated mass casualty exercise in Modesto

Air Guard practices decon
Airmen from the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing and 144th Fighter Wing team up with CALFIRE for hazardous materials decontamination exercise

Are you CERTified?
California Cadet Corps members earn Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) certifications at Camp SLO

Eagles over Florida
F-15 Eagles from Fresno’s 144th Fighter Wing participate in the Weapons System Evaluation Program (WSEP) in Florida

You da boss
A team of 12 Cal Guard Soldiers heads to India for exercise Yudh Abhyas 2014 with the Indian Army

Cultural exchange
U.S. and Indian Soldiers learn about their respective cultures during two-week Yudh Abhyas 2014 exercise

Adding value
Cal Guard brings skill and experience to Indo-U.S. exercise

California National Guard troops mobilized as of October 2014

- U.S. Army: 119
- U.S. Air Force: 163
- GTMO: 194
- Kosovo: 8
- Kuwait: 5
- Afghanistan: 16
- Egypt: 5
- Other: 2
- Bahrain: 87
- Italy: 87
- Kuwait: 87
- Oman: 87
- Saudi Arabia: 87

Cover photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney

California Army National Guard Commander Maj. Gen. Lawrence Haskins addresses U.S. and Indian army troops during the closing ceremony for Yudh Abhyas 2014 on Sept. 30 at Chaubattia Cantonment, India.
Tule River tribal lands reclaimed from drug traffickers

**Counterdrug Task Force, interagency partners restore access to crucial water supply, eradicate marijuana farms**

**By SPC. BRIANNE ROUDEBUSH**

CNG Counterdrug Task Force

A multi-agency team of Soldiers, Airmen and law enforcement personnel hiked up a steep mountainside, climbing over fallen branches and crawling through thickets of manzanita. Dirt clung to their sweat-soaked faces as the sun beat down. Eventually the GPS indicated they had reached their destination: an old campsite used by illicit marijuana growers and littered with stoves, tarps, tents and trash.

The team, assembled in support of Operation Tule on the Tule River Indian Reservation, worked tirelessly for four days Aug. 25-28, eradicating marijuana plants and reclaiming tribal lands. The team removed nearly 14,000 marijuana plants from Tule River land; combined, those plants consumed more than 100,000 gallons of water per day.

Although eradication and reclamation operations have been conducted on the reservation before, the serious depletion of the tribe’s water supply this year due to drought, compounded by thousands of gallons of water being diverted for marijuana farms, called for an operation of a much larger magnitude.

Personnel from 13 agencies including the Tule River Tribal Police, Tule River Natural Resources Department, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force worked together to combat the environmental destruction.

“There is usually water flowing all the way to the reservation entrance, but it’s all dried up,” said Ryan Garfield, vice chairman of the Tule River Tribal Council. “This is the first time in my lifetime that I’ve ever seen that part of the river dry.”

The Tule River is the source of 80 percent of the reservation’s water. Dams, reservoirs and irrigation for marijuana sites have drastically affected the supply. One of the main objectives of Operation Tule was to restore water flow.

“Especially in the current times of drought, the Tule tribe [was] desperately affected,” said Department of Fish and Wildlife Capt. Nate Arnold. “It caused a great need … and the department is dedicated to fighting this issue.”

Ten miles of pipes used to divert water and 12,000 pounds of trash were removed from the sites. The team also found several types of fertilizer and pesticides that contaminate and pollute the environment. Garfield said all that trash would have eventually ended up in the river, and there is no telling what effects could be seen in the wildlife.

The tribe is very concerned about this issue, Arnold said. “They’re not just going to sit by and watch our community and land deteriorate.”

Not only do illicit marijuana gardens harm the environment, they present a safety concern, as some members of the tribe have stumbled upon grow sites, which may be guarded by armed men. The growers also leave out hazardous materials and set traps around the sites.

The tribe recently approved high-country rangers of the Tule River Tribal Police to patrol the Tule mountains on a more regular basis.

“At one point, it was safe to go camping and hiking up there,” said Sgt. Paul Vizcano, interim Tule River chief of police. “We want to get back to that. Hopefully our presence out here this week sent a message: People better think twice because this isn’t something we tolerate.”

Vizcano said the biggest take-away from Operation Tule was the experience gained and the contacts established with different agencies to be able to continue conducting reclamation operations on their own throughout the year.

CNG Capt. Sabino Martinez echoed Vizcano’s sentiments: “The biggest milestone is the partnership and being able to introduce the Tule River Tribe to members of the law enforcement community that they had not previously worked with. A newly formed coalition is the biggest success.”

Each agency brought its own expertise to the table, whether it was in-depth knowledge of the land, understanding how to successfully eradicate and reclaim a site or providing security and law enforcement capabilities to the team.

“I’m overwhelmed by what has already been accomplished,” Garfield said. “Ultimately, the tribe is the winner here, and I’m more than happy with the huge success.”

**Operation Tule**

The CNG joined 12 other agencies to eliminate drug-trafficking operations on the Tule River Indian Reservation, reclaim the land and restore crucial water flow.

- **14,000**: Marijuana plants eradicated
- **12,000**: Pounds of trash removed from forest
- **10**: Miles of plastic irrigation line removed
- **100,000**: Gallons of daily water flow restored to Tule River Indian Reservation
Counterdrug force effects change in CA communities

By SPC. BRIANNE ROUDEBUSH
CNG Counterdrug Task Force

In cities across the state, civil operations specialists with the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force are partnering with civilian-based coalitions to combat a serious issue in their communities: drug and alcohol abuse. The coalitions bring together people from different organizations and backgrounds to come up with effective ways to reduce abuse.

The National Guard Bureau and the Counterdrug Task Force have historically supported initiatives such as Red Ribbon Week, Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) and youth camps that promote healthy lifestyles. In recent years, however, the task force’s focus has shifted toward working with coalitions to positively impact communities as a whole.

“There was not a lot of empirical information supporting a correlation between youth programs and a reduction in drug and alcohol use,” said Tech. Sgt. Isabel Savala, a civil operations specialist for the Counterdrug Task Force. “We switched to more evidence-based strategies that can show a clear change in the communities.”

Civil operations specialists attend coalition meetings, provide letters of support, train coalition members about effective strategies and available resources, and help come up with anti-drug and alcohol campaigns.

Recently, Savala helped plan a parenting workshop and translated the curriculum into Spanish for the Santa Ynez Valley Youth Coalition. She said the task force is now working toward partnering with law enforcement and school officials to host an open forum where parents can address their concerns regarding drugs and alcohol in the community and schools.

Savala said the feedback the task force has received is overwhelmingly positive.

“Interacting with the community and seeing the changes, specifically in these parents who now have a different outlook and approach, is very powerful,” Savala said. “Our hope is that each parent will have the opportunity to implement changes in their own family systems. That’s what the coalition wants to see.”

A little further south, Staff Sgt. Gabriel Sanchez works with coalitions in Los Angeles, Orange and Riverside counties. He has been working with the Saving Lives Coalition in the San Fernando Valley to create signs that inform people that supplying alcohol to minors is illegal. The signs, which include relevant state laws and codes, are translated into eight languages and have been hung in multiple alcohol retail locations. The campaign has gained statewide recognition, and the coalition is currently working with lawmakers to make the signs mandatory.

“Our goal here is to massively affect minors’ access to alcohol throughout the state,” Sanchez said.

Another coalition he works with in Orange County is developing ways to raise awareness of prescription drug abuse among teenagers, as that is a problem their community faces.

“Every coalition is unique because every community is unique and has its own set of drug and alcohol-related issues to address,” Sanchez said.

He explained that the campaigns and strategies used in one community might not have the same impact in another.

The National Guard Counterdrug Task Force aims to help make the coalitions’ efforts successful by providing support, resources and training that they otherwise might not have access to.

“We want to work at the community level rather than pushing policies down from the top,” he said. “We want the coalitions to establish ownership because it becomes a movement within themselves to develop policies and change their communities.”

Sanchez said he finds it rewarding to be able to work in the area where he grew up and see the tangible benefits of his efforts. Savala, a licensed clinical social worker, echoed those sentiments, adding that her background and education has proven beneficial to the teams and communities.

“I have personally seen what alcohol and drugs can do to families,” Savala said. “I know firsthand what the consequences are, and I am really passionate about what I do.”

‘FOB Jobs’ unique among career fairs

By BRANDON HONIG
California Military Department Public Affairs

Military veterans bring marketable skills and professional attributes to any job hunt. They have proven themselves dedicated, responsible, calm under pressure and driven by a mission-oriented, no-fail mindset—characteristics that are beneficial in any career. But some employers don’t seem to get that.

“When you’re on deployment, you’re working 13- or 14-hour shifts six days a week and get no overtime,” said Sgt. Timothy Siddons of the California National Guard’s 270th Military Police Company. “I don’t understand why the workforce doesn’t want more of that attitude and that grind out of you.”

Siddons, who has served 13 years in the CNG and 17 years in the Army overall, said it is shocking how many CNG Soldiers are working 13- or 14-hour shifts six days a week and get no overtime, said Sgt. Timme Siddons, a civil operations specialist for the Counterdrug Task Force. “We switched to more evidence-based strategies that can show a clear change in the communities.”

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A recruiter for the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation explains to a military veteran the job opportunities available at his department Aug. 27 during the first in a unique series of career fairs — FOB Jobs — held by the California National Guard’s Work for Warriors program. Photo by Staff Sgt. Shane Kirk

A series of FOB Jobs events is being planned for sites throughout California in the coming months. The program welcomes all members of the California National Guard and other Defense Department reserve branches, veterans of operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and Gold Star spouses and children.
Soldier returns from GTMO, surprises kids
Master Sgt. Adrian Rancudo unexpectedly appears at his children’s school assembly after deployment

By STAFF SGT. MICHAEL QUIBOLOY
163rd Reconnaissance Wing Public Affairs

A pair of Valley View High School (VVHS) students were in for a special surprise Aug. 28, when their father, Army Master Sgt. Adrian Rancudo, unexpectedly returned home from deployment and appeared at their school assembly. Rancudo had been away for 10 months, deployed to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

His son, A.J., and daughter, Arienne, had no idea he was coming. VVHS Principal Hunter addressed the packed crowd in the auditorium and asked for the siblings to take center stage.

“When my principal called me up, I didn’t know what was happening,” said Arienne, a sophomore at Valley View. “Then when he came out, I was so happy that I couldn’t even move. I was in shock.”

Master Sgt. Rancudo appeared from behind the stage’s curtains and embraced his children in a long hug, marking the end to nearly a year without their father while he was serving his country.

“When my dad came, I was really surprised,” said A.J., a freshman. “I was like, ‘Is this real?’ It was unbelievable. I also appreciate the school for helping to put that moment together.”

Master Sgt. Rancudo had been welcomed home at the airport by his wife, other relatives and several members of his church, Iglesia Ni Cristo, who were also in attendance at the school. The group waited in an audiovisual control booth with a perfect view of the stage while Rancudo went around back for the big surprise.

When he emerged and embraced his kids, it was a moment he would remember forever.

“I was nervous,” Master Sgt. Rancudo said after the reunion. “I haven’t seen them for a while. My mind was blank and I was speechless. That was one of the happiest moments for me.”

95th Civil Support Team performs late-inning save
Cal Guard participates in Operation Strike Zone

By CAPT. WILL MARTIN
CA Military Department Public Affairs

On Sept. 11, the nation remembered its darkest hour. On Sept. 12, the California Guard prepared should evil strike again.

The Guard’s 95th Civil Support Team (CST) joined emergency response agencies from across Stanislaus County for Operation Strike Zone, a chemical-attack, mass-casualty exercise at John Thurman Field, home of the Modesto Nuts minor league baseball team. Usually a site of competition, the ballpark proved a center of quick reaction and cooperation.

“It’s all about developing relationships for when there’s a credible threat,” said Rob Scripp, a FEMA observer of the training event. “It helps us all coordinate for what actually needs to be done.”

The day began with the normally fan-filled stands populated by screaming role players, bloodied and battered by a simulated explosion during the seventh inning of a Nuts game. Disoriented, disgruntled, and in some cases dismembered, the role players added a level of realism and intensity to the exercise that tested emergency responders’ skills and mettle.

“I’ve been doing this since I was 12 and I’m 31 now, and hearing her [a role player] scream, it still makes me anxious - as it should,” said Lynzie Rucuer, moulage artist for Image Perspectives of Carson City, Nevada, who prepared the make-up of about 50 role-player casualties. “We based this business on realism.”

Essential to the realism is a tiered, interagency response to a crisis of this scale. On this day, local fire and law enforcement personnel arrived on site to secure the area and provide emergency care to the wounded. But triaging, transporting and treating the wounded requires not only goodwill and energy, but also a previously shared knowledge between emergency-response personnel.

“This is an opportunity to get everybody linked up and on the same SOP’s [Standard Operating Procedures],” said Master Sgt. Nick Otero, 95th CST Information Systems Analyst and Assistant Exercise Director. “The patients are transported to different hospitals in the area… [which] gives them mass-casualty exercise experience, too.”

Once the area was secured and cleared of the wounded, the Stanislaus County Bomb Squad detonated the role technology can play during an attack. The Bomb Squad deployed a robot loaded with cameras, an X-Ray machine and other bomb- and agent-detection equipment. It returned vital imagery to personnel far removed from the volatile and evidence-sensitive ballpark stands.

Lastly, the 95th CST was deployed, based on the elevation of the incident to a chemical attack. Specializing in weapons of mass destruction, or WMDs, the 95th CST is capable of detecting contaminants, conducting HAZMAT operations and decontamination, and providing guidance in determining the threat.

“When it’s a WMD threat, its mostly outside their capabilities,” said Sgt. 1st Class Justin Flood, 95th CST Exercise Director, of the civilian emergency-response agencies. “This exercise enables us to test interagency cooperation and consequence-management.”

Above all, Flood said, the CST is rooted in the Guard’s calling as citizen-Soldiers and -Airmen responding to their neighbors’ needs.

“We’re in these communities, we work in these communities,” he said. “We’re out here being the eyes and ears of the CST.”
Preparing for when disaster strikes

Airmen train with Cal Fire at March Air Reserve Base to respond to a hazardous chemical release

By STAFF SGT. MICHAEL QUIBOLOY
163rd Reconnaissance Wing Public Affairs

National Guard and active duty Airmen partnered with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection/Riverside County Fire Department Hazardous Material Response Team in September to further the Airmen’s training on responding to a hazardous materials incident.

Fire Capt. Sean Sunahara and fire apparatus engineer Andrew Kibby trained 16 Airmen from the California Air National Guard’s 163rd Reconnaissance Wing and 144th Fighter Wing as well as the active duty 452nd Air Mobility Wing on Sept. 17 and 18 at March Air Reserve Base, Calif.

“You can’t control when an incident occurs,” said emergency management specialist Airman 1st Class Michelle Gomez of the 163rd. “It could be in the dead of summer or on a rainy day. I think that’s why this training is so valuable; in the event something happened, this would be something I’d actually be doing — decontaminating base personnel and ultimately saving lives.”

The first day of instruction trained participants to respond to releases or potential releases of hazardous substances as part of an initial response. Trainees learned how to protect nearby people, property or the environment from the effects of a hazardous materials release by responding in a defensive fashion without actually trying to stop the release, containing it from a safe distance and keeping it from spreading and exposing more people. Day two covered the principles of decontamination and how to set up a decontamination corridor as well as how to don and doff chemical protective clothing.

The training was diverse, combining classroom lectures, group activities, hands-on exercises and a written exam. All trainees were able to obtain California Specialized Training Institute certifications upon completing the course.

Cadets get CERT-ified

By WARRANT OFFICER MICHAEL HANNA
CNG Youth and Community Programs

California Cadet Corps members participated in a 30-hour Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training event Sept. 18-21 at Camp San Luis Obispo, California. The training ties into the California Military Department’s core mission to support local authorities during emergencies.

“Supporting local authorities with emergency response is one of the California Military Department’s core competencies,” said Lt. Col. (CA) Brian Anderson, chief of staff for the California National Guard’s Youth and Community Programs. “Every component within our organization has a significant role in this mission. The Cadet Corps is no exception.”

One team of five cadets was invited from each California school that participates in the Cadet Corps program. Each team completed a Federal Emergency Management Agency-sponsored CERT course that included lectures from experienced and professional responders, hands-on activities and realistic simulations.

Among the topics covered in the training were disaster preparedness, fire suppression, medical operations, light search-and-rescue operations, disaster psychology and team organization. The course culminated in a written final exam as well as an exercise that incorporated four separate simulations one might encounter during a disaster. In addition, cadets learned skills such as diagnosing and treating an airway obstruction, controlling bleeding and shock using simple triage and rapid treatment techniques, head-to-toe assessment, establishing a medical treatment area, performing basic first aid, light search-and-rescue planning, search techniques and rescue techniques.

Cadets who successfully completed the program were awarded the Disaster Preparedness Ribbon, the CERT Ribbon and the CERT cord. The CERT Ribbon is one of three prestigious unit citations cadets can earn along with the Superior Unit Award Ribbon and the Unit Community Service Ribbon.

Members of the California Cadet Corps participated in a 30-hour Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) training event Sept. 18-21 at Camp San Luis Obispo, California. The training ties into the California Military Department’s core mission to support local authorities during emergencies. Photo by Lt. Col. (CA) Brian Anderson
California fighter jets tear up Florida skies during live fire training event

Story and photos by MASTER SGT. DAVID LOEFFLER
144th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

F-22 Raptors, F-18 Hornets, F-16 Fighting Falcons and F-4 Phantoms ripped across the ever-changing northwestern Florida skies as maintenance airmen, weapons loaders and crew chiefs prepared F-15 Eagles from the 144th Fighter Wing out of Fresno, Calif., to participate in the Weapons System Evaluation Program (WSEP) at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, in early September.

WSEP provides a dissimilar aircraft combat training environment where ground crews and pilots are able to prove their ability to perform in a high operations tempo.

Just eleven months after the 144th converted from the F-16 Fighting Falcon to the F-15 Eagle, the wing was prepared to take part in its inaugural weapons testing mission.

“It is a tremendous opportunity for a fighter wing to go to WSEP,” said Lt. Col. Robert Swertfager, 144th Fighter Wing chief of safety. “It builds confidence in your maintainers, pilots and commanders. WSEP proves that your systems and your people are going to get the job done.”

In years past, many of the pilots from the 144th participated at WSEP in the F-16 Fighting Falcon, but now are flying the F-15 Eagle.

“Going to Tyndall and actually firing the weapons from an F-15 was very reassuring to all the fliers,” said Swertfager. “Seeing that the weapon systems are equal to or, in most cases, better than the F-16 was a great experience for us all.”

Thirteen pilots from the 144th rotated through more than 100 sorties as ground crew prepared jets, loaded weapons and ensured successful missions over a two-week period.

“WSEP is an opportunity for us to test not only the weapons reliability system on our jets, it’s also a chance for us to test the training that we give our maintenance troops, weapons loaders and ammo troops during the buildup, implementation and delivery of...”

Continued next page
From previous page

the weapon systems on the F-15,” said Chief Master Sgt. Anne Rice, 144th Fighter Wing Weapons Manager.

“They are evaluated on every single load they do by WSEP personnel, QA (Quality Assurance) personnel and me,” added Rice. “My expectations and standards are extremely high for my airmen. The numbers carried through and they delivered.”

Out of the six live fire days, the weapons personnel uploaded and downloaded over 400 missiles and nearly 20,000 rounds for the F-15 Eagle’s six barreled 20mm Gatling gun.

“Ultimately, it (WSEP) makes us deployment-ready Airmen,” said Senior Airman Andrea Mathis, 144th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief. “We need to make certain that our weapon systems and pilots are good to go and everyone is trained up. That was the whole goal of this deployment.”

The results of the weapons portion of WSEP were 100 percent for the 94 gun shoots and 100 percent for the 23 missile fires.

“That’s just phenomenal. The standard is at 99 percent on the guns and 95 percent on missiles and we far exceeded that,” stated Rice. “We’ve only been flying [F-15 Eagles] for about 11 months prior to WSEP. It pays tribute and definitely speaks to the quality of our maintenance, maintainers, weapons loaders and everybody that makes this jet fly.”

Ground crews and pilots were tested by an unfamiliar environment, capricious weather and the fast pace of deploying jets. Crews worked long hours around the clock and always had to be vigilant for lightning strikes.

“WSEP tests man, machine and missile. It tests the Airman building the missile, the crew loading the missile on the jet and the pilot firing that missile against a drone,” said Lt. Col. Dodd Wamberg, 144th Fighter Wing pilot. “We fired 23 missiles at this evaluation which is more than most pilots get to fire their entire career.”

The success at Tyndall’s Weapons System Evaluation Program was the checkmark that qualified the 144th Fighter Wing to protect the entire West Coast of the U.S. as part of its aerospace control alert mission.
BELOW: A member of the California National Guard Counterdru Task Force supporting Operation Tule on the Tule River Indian Reservation signals on Aug. 26 to an HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter flying in to haul out bags of trash found at an old campsite used by illicit marijuana growers. Photo by Spc. Brianne Roudebush RIGHT: The 2nd Battalion, 9th Gorkha Regiment Pipe Band performs during a social event following the conclusion of Yudh Abhyas 2014 on Sept. 30 at Chaubattia Cantonment, India. Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney


Staff Sgt. Ruben Madrigal of the Fresno-based Aircrew Flight Equipment shop, 144th Fighter Wing, tests essential equipment used by pilots and flight crew at the Weapons System Evaluation Program (WSEP) at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. Photo by Master Sgt. David Loeffler
At a Glance

LEFT: Spc. Alfred Washington, a cavalry scout with 5th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment, and his Indian army counterpart provide security during a patrol through the dense forests of the Himalayas on Ranikhet Cantonment, Uttar Pradesh, India, during exercise Yudh Abhyas on Sept. 28. Photo by Staff Sgt. Mylinda Duroseau

A role player with simulated injuries seeks help following a simulated explosion Sept. 12 during Operation Strike Zone in Modesto, Calif. The Cal Guard's 95th Civil Support Team joined emergency-response agencies from across Stanislaus County for the operation which simulated a chemical-attack at John Thurman Field, home of the Modesto Nuts minor league baseball team. Photo by Capt. Will Martin

LEFT: The Cal Guard team at Yudh Abhyas 2014 poses for a photo on Sept. 17 at Chaubattia Cantonment, India, following the opening ceremony for the annual Indo-U.S. exercise. The Cal Guard team played the role of U.N. Force Headquarters for the exercise. Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Carrie McGrann

A role player with simulated injuries seeks help following a simulated explosion Sept. 12 during Operation Strike Zone in Modesto, Calif. The Cal Guard's 95th Civil Support Team joined emergency-response agencies from across Stanislaus County for the operation which simulated a chemical-attack at John Thurman Field, home of the Modesto Nuts minor league baseball team. Photo by Capt. Will Martin
Yudh Abhyas 2014
Cal Guard Soldiers train in foothills of the Himalayas

The Himalayas could be seen from Ranikhet, India, where 12 Cal Guard Soldiers trained with the Indian Army from Sept. 17-30 for exercise Yudh Abhyas 2014. Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney

By CAPT. JASON SWEENEY
California Military Department Public Affairs

Under a bright blue sky with the snow-capped Himalayas in the distance, the annual Yudh Abhyas exercise kicked off Sept. 17 on a parade field at Chaubattia Cantonment, India.

Soldiers from the Indian and U.S. armies took the field, stood at attention and saluted as the Indian Army band played the national anthems of both nations.

Yudh Abhyas 2014 brought 189 U.S. Army Soldiers to an Indian Army base in the Indian state of Uttarakhand. The journey to the training site entailed a daylong flight from Fairbanks, Alaska, to New Delhi, India, followed by a 12-hour bus ride up mountain roads to Ranikhet Cantonment located above 6,000 feet in the foothills of the Himalayas.

Yudh Abhyas is a bilateral exercise between the U.S. Army Pacific Command and the Indian Army that is now in its 10th year. The purpose of Yudh Abhyas is to build relationships and develop interoperability between the U.S. and Indian armies. This year, the two-week exercise simulated a peacekeeping mission in a fictional East African nation in which U.S. and Indian Soldiers integrated into a single brigade tasked to provide stability and security to the region. U.S. and Indian Soldiers trained on various tasks that they might encounter in a peacekeeping operation, such as crowd control, cordon and search and responding to terrorist threats.

U.S. participants included Headquarters of the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division; 5th Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment; 3rd Battalion, 1st Group, U.S. Army Special Forces; and 12 Soldiers from the California National Guard.

The exercise consisted of four key events: a command post exercise, a field training exercise, a Special Operations Forces field training exercise and several academic exchanges.

California National Guard Soldiers played the role of the United Nations Force Headquarters for the command post portion of the exercise.

The training value of this exercise is that it gives U.S. Army personnel a basic understanding of United Nations peacekeeping operations.” Parker said. “The additional training value is more in the form of relationships built with our Indian Army counterparts. The majority of the U.S. Army personnel in this exercise have an Indian Army counterpart and most of our counterparts have some form of U.N. peacekeeping operation experience in countries such as Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti and Lebanon.”

An Indian Army infantry colonel, who played the role of U.N. Force Headquarters Commander, said the Indian Army has a long history of participating in U.N. peacekeeping operations around the world. He explained that India participates in such missions to show presence on the world stage and help contribute to world peace.

“Working with the California National Guard has been a learning experience,” he said. “The style of functioning is very good, very friendly and very positive.”

Cal Guard Capt. Charles Stone, who played the role of a U.N. Forces Headquarters judge advocate general, said Yudh Abhyas 2014 was a unique and rewarding experience.

“The California National Guard has given me a phenomenal opportunity to experience the country of India, its people and its culture while training and developing interoperability with our Indian Army counterparts,” Stone said.
Cultures combine at Indo-U.S. exercise

By CAPT. JASON SWEENEY
California Military Department Public Affairs

For U.S. Soldiers who traveled to India for exercise Yudh Abhyas 2014, many of the things they saw and experienced might have seemed unusual or exotic. Monkeys were a common sight running over rooftops or swinging from low-hanging branches and telephone lines. Docile cows sauntered into training areas and through the crowded Ranikhet market where Soldiers shopped after the training day was done. Soldiers were briefed to keep an eye out for marauding leopards before running on mountain roads. They got the chance to attend a religious ceremony bursting with color and sound during the Hindu festival of Navratri. And when the clouds cleared as they traveled to and from their training sites, they marveled at the jagged outline of the Himalayas.

“Yudh Abhyas 2014 was not only a successful way to bring both the U.S. and Indian armies together and learn U.N. peacekeeping mission strategies, but also a rare opportunity for Soldiers to experience Indian culture, which exudes with color, food, music and incomparable hospitality,” said Sgt. Jasleen Khaira, an Indian-American California National Guard Soldier who took part in the exercise.

Yudh Abhyas is an annual, bilateral exercise between U.S. Army Pacific Command and the Indian Army. The exercise provides combined training for the two armies that focuses on low-intensity, counter-insurgent operations, such as raids, civic assistance missions and quick reaction team missions. This year, the exercise took place Sept. 17-30 in the Indian state of Uttarakhand at Ranikhet Cantonment in the foothills of the Himalayas. The exercise involved a scenario in which Soldiers from the U.S. and Indian armies integrated into a combined brigade tasked to conduct security and stabilization operations for a U.N. peacekeeping mission in Africa.

Yudh Abhyas 2014 has enhanced our readiness to operate together, our interoperability between our two armies, and our cultural exchanges between our two armies and our nation,” said Retired Cal Guard Soldier Scott Moreland. “Cal Guard and Indian army relationships are a testament to the commitment of both the California National Guard and the Indian Army to peacekeeping missions for more than half a century. India has been a leading contributor to U.N. peacekeeping missions for more than 50 years. Many of the Indian Soldiers at Yudh Abhyas 2014 had direct experience in peacekeeping missions in such places as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti and Lebanon.

India and the United States are the world’s two largest democracies. Both countries are diverse in geography and cultures. And both are former colonies of the British Empire.

As India rises in economic and military power, its cultural, economic and military relationships and interoperability between the two U.S. and Indian armies are expected to increase. This exercise six years ago. In fact, we have as many or more similarities than differences.”

India and the United States will become an enduring force for peace and stability in the 21st century.”

Cal Guard adds value to Yudh Abhyas

By CAPT. JASON SWEENEY
California Military Department Public Affairs

Soldiers from the world’s two largest democracies completed a two-week training exercise on Sept. 30. The exercise, called Yudh Abhyas 2014, successfully integrated Soldiers from the U.S. and Indian armies into a single brigade for a U.N. peacekeeping operation in a fictional African nation in crisis.

At the closing ceremony at Chaubhattia Cantonment in the Indian state of Uttarkhand, California Army National Guard Command Maj. Gen. Lawrence Hawkins addressed a mixed formation of U.S. Army and Indian Army troops.

“Yudh Abhyas 2014 has enhanced our readiness and effectiveness as Soldiers, as well as increased the interoperability between our two armies. This exercise should be seen as the foundation for increased exchanges between our two armies and our nations.”

Exercise Yudh Abhyas started out in 2004 as a small field training exercise between the U.S. Army Pacific Command and the Indian Army. Since then, it has expanded from platoon-level operations to battalion- and brigade-level. The California National Guard has been participating in Yudh Abhyas in 2008 and has been a fixture in the exercise ever since.

While Yudh Abhyas means training for war in Hindi, the exercise has focused on interoperability between the U.S. and Indian armies for peacekeeping missions. India has been a major contributor in U.N. peacekeeping operations for more than half a century, sending its Soldiers around the world to help nations that have experienced crises caused by floods, famines, earthquakes or civil wars.

Over the course of the exercise this year, U.S. Soldiers trained side by side with troops from India’s 99th Mountain Brigade and 9th Gorkha Rifles in the field and in a command post portion of the exercise. For the majority of the Soldiers with the Cal Guard continuum, it was their first time in India, and several had deployed to Kosovo for NATO’s peacekeeping mission there.

Cal Guard Lt. Col. Kenneth Koop was the coordinator who pulled together the Cal Guard team this year. He also played the role of the U.N. Police Commissioner for the exercise.

“Cal Guard brings a lot of different things to the exercise, probably the biggest being flexibility,” he said. “We have the ability to reach down and pull out individual Soldiers for specialized skills and capabilities. This is a U.N. peacekeeping exercise and the U.S. Army’s peacekeeping experience resides in the National Guard right now.”

The Cal Guard has been part of the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo since 1999. The Cal Guard has also sent Soldiers to Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula as part of the Multinational Force and Observers mission. It has participated in several low intensity conflict, counter-insurgency-type missions that are relevant to peacekeeping, such as sending combat adviser teams around the world and taking part in various mentoring programs with Iraqi and Afghan forces, Koop explained.

Lt. Col. Daniel Rydberg, who deployed twice to Kosovo, played the role of a civil affairs officer for Yudh Abhyas 2014. He said not only does the Cal Guard bring its peacekeeping experience in Kosovo to Yudh Abhyas, it also brings the civilian experience of being citizen Soldiers.

“The National Guard has people who bring their civilian skill sets,” he said. “In my case, I work for a city, so I deal with government and neighborhood councils on a daily basis. This something you’re not going to get necessarily on active duty so I think you can bring those civilian skills to the operation.”

Retired Cal Guard Soldier Scott Moreland works for the Center for Civic-Military Relations at the Naval Post Graduate School in Monterey, California, where he serves as deputy program manager for exercises. Moreland said the California National Guard has an important piece of Yudh Abhyas because they have participated in the annual exercise six years ago.

“I would say there are professional, cultural and personal values that are unique to the California Guard package,” Moreland said.

Moreland said the depth of peacekeeping experience that California Guard Soldiers have, especially from the NATO peacekeeping mission in Kosovo, adds to their value.

“Peacekeeping is a rare skill found in the U.S. Army so to have that background really puts the California Guardsmen more on a par with their Indian counterparts and sets them up well to understand the principles and mechanisms under which we do peacekeeping operations.”

Moreland said that the California National Guard’s diversity is also an advantage. “On the multicultural side, almost every year that we’ve had this exercise, the Cal Guard has tapped into its Indian-American Soldier population. The Cal Guard’s Indian-American Soldiers have really served as the cultural bridge between the United States and India. Everything as simple as translation all the way to encouraging a more sort of intimate level of interaction that we might not otherwise be able to achieve because they break that barrier – they create that sort of commonality between the two of us that serves to break the ice.”

Moreland said Yudh Abhyas has been growing in importance in the Asia Pacific region.

“India is emerging as a strong strategic partner,” he said. “The relationship and trust continues to grow and we’re hoping that we can forge a pretty strong partnership in the Asia Pacific where we have common security interests.”

During the closing ceremony for Yudh Abhyas 2014, Indian Army Maj. Gen. Ashwani Kumar addressed the mixed formation of U.S. and Indian Soldiers. “Our friendship, especially in the military context, is steadily rising,” he said. “The interoperability achieved will enable us to operate together, if the need arises. Overall, I can say with conviction, that the exercise has been a grand success.”

Col. Steven Bueethe poses with fans after attending a ceremony marking the first day of Navartri holiday on Sept. 25. The headscarf is traditionally worn by an Indian warrior class. Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney.
Indian-American sisters are a force multiplier at Yudh Abhyas 2014

By CAPT. JASON SWEENEY
California Military Department Public Affairs

When it comes to bridging the cultural divide between Soldiers from the U.S. and Indian armies, the California Army National Guard has a valuable go-between: the Khaira sisters.

Staff Sgt. Balreet Khaira and Sgt. Jasleen Khaira were part of a 12-Soldier Cal Guard contingent at exercise Yudh Abhyas 2014, which took place Sept. 17-30 at Ranikhet Cantonment, India. The Cal Guard team played the role of a United Nations Force Headquarters staff in a scenario which simulated a U.N. peacekeeping operation in Africa.

The Khaira sisters served on the staff for the exercise, but also acted as interpreters and cultural liaisons helping U.S. and Indian Soldiers overcome language barriers and find common ground.

“The sisters have taken part in the three Yudh Abhyas exercises —in Alaska in 2010; in Bathinda, India, in 2012; and in the most recent exercise at Ranikhet in the shadow of the Himalayas in the Indian state of Uttarakhand.

“The Indian Soldiers obviously love it that we’re Indian and in the U.S. Army,” Sgt. Jasleen Khaira said. “I think the biggest thing the Indian Army has learned from us is that we don’t just move to America and lose our roots. America is very diverse and you have all these populations that do keep their culture while still being part of the larger American culture. You can do both. You don’t have to get rid of one to participate in the other.”

Due to their father’s work in port cities, the sisters had an international upbringing spending the first part of their childhood in Africa, Hong Kong, Macao and their native state of Punjab, India, before immigrating to the U.S. when they were 12 and 14, just a week before 9/11. Their family finally settled in Temecula, Calif.

Their family had no military tradition in the United States or India, and the family expectation was for the sisters to grow towards mutual understanding and interoperability.

May 17, 2014, was a commonly heard remark from American Soldiers during the exercise. And Indian soldiers could often be seen crowded around the two sisters asking questions that were answered in fluent Hindi.

Their popularity even caught the attention of the Indian national media, which interviewed them for television and newspaper stories.

“The sisters were exceptional, model NCOs for the California National Guard,” said Col. Steven Bauer, the officer in charge of the Cal Guard contingent. “They exuded a positive image all the way around.”

Staff Sgt. Khativa was the operations NCO for the Cal Guard team. Sgt. Khativa was the personnel NCO and also served as a medic for the 189 U.S. Soldiers who took part. Both performed a variety of other tasks, everything from managing exercise requests for information to helping U.S. Soldiers bargain for the lowest price for Indian jewelry at the Ranikhet market.

The annual Yudh Abhyas exercise is sponsored by the U.S. Army Pacific Command. Each year, it alternates between India and the United States. The exercise has a goal of increasing interoperability between the armies of the world’s two largest democracies. In addition to training out in the field and in the command post, a big part of the exercise each year involves cultural exchanges intended to bridge differences and increase understanding between Soldiers from two very different nations with different cultural backgrounds and military traditions.

“The Khaira sisters have been a living symbol of the strong bonds between India and the United States and a bridge between the U.S. and Indian armies,” said Lt. Col. Kenneth Koop, who was responsible for assembling the Cal Guard team. “They are proud of both their ancestral homeland and their adopted homeland, and have worked tirelessly to help Soldiers from both countries understand each other and grow towards mutual understanding and interoperability.”

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Beauty and the fleet

A former Miss California, Lt. Col. Patricia Murray used beauty pageant scholarships to pursue a career in the cockpit

By CAPT. WILL MARTIN
California Military Department Public Affairs

Among Patricia Murray’s earliest memories is sitting with her grandfather at the end of a runway at LAX, sharing his lunch and glued to the airplanes passing overhead. For the young Murray, the planes possessed a thunderous freedom.

“I was so amazed,” said Murray, now a lieutenant colonel with the California Air National Guard. “There were no stop signs in the sky.”

Murray knew she had to fly. At 16, she begged her parents for flying lessons, and soon after began exploring how to translate her passion into a profession. But before Murray could realize her dream of landing airliners at LAX, she would find herself cruising a very different runway, one on which she landed a detour.

It was in talking about the Air Force Academy with her high school counselor, whom Murray remembers as “a little old school” that she was told “girls like you don’t do that.” Deterred but not defeated, Murray scanned the counselor’s office and stumbled on a teen pageant flyer. As one who easily bounded between the adventurous and the glamorous – “I can easily be in sweats and flip-flops and the next day be in heels” – Murray was intrigued. Mostly on a whim, she decided to give the pageant a shot.

Blessed with a strong smile and a compelling presence, Murray found success on the Los Angeles pageant scene. But it was while she was competing for Miss Teen Los Angeles County that her pageantry hobby took a serious, life-altering turn. It was then she met a judge who also worked with the Miss America Pageant, which she learned gave out about $40 million in scholarships each year. With an eye toward a career in commercial flying, Murray had new motivation.

Inspired more by scholarships than tiaras, Murray went on to win Miss L.A. County and in 1992 claimed the crown as Miss California. Though she fell short in the Miss America title, she earned enough for flight training that ultimately led to an established career with American Airlines.

“So much about it wasn’t real, people valued you for the minute or the hour,” Murray said of the celebrity lifestyle offered by pageantry. “At the end of the day, I knew it’s not what I wanted to do.”

But evening gowns and pilot’s wings wouldn’t be the only apparel Murray would wear. In 1996, she entered the U.S. Armed Forces, embarking on a nearly two-decade-long career with the 146th Airlift Wing at Chaffee Islands Air National Guard Base. Murray’s future suddenly included airspace in some of the most hostile parts of the world.

But just as she found success on pageant and commercial airline runways, Murray excelled as an Air Force C-130 pilot and trainer, culminating in her being named the California Air National Guard’s Field Grade Officer of the Year in 2010. Now with six deployments and five flying medals under her belt, Murray has spent time in Qatar, Afghanistan, and most recently, Kuwait, from which she returned in July.

But if Murray has a life lesson to share from all her experiences and adventures, it was probably learned amid the make-up and elegance of the Miss America Pageant. As the event progressed, she became fixated on one of her competitors, a medical doctor, and found herself intimidated by her beauty and intellect.

“It was a turning point, and though she ultimately lost the contest, she awakened to her own value. “Run your own race and let the world chase you,” Murray said. “You are a rank amateur at being anyone else, but you’re a professional at being you.”

40th ID renews South Korean connection

By STAFF SGT. SALLI CURCHIN
California Military Department Public Affairs

A recent overseas training deployment led 40th Infantry Division troops and several supporting units around the state to South Korea’s Camp Casey, where joint military exercise Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG) occurs annually. The exercise is geared toward maintaining preparedness for a North Korean assault against South Korea.

The 12-day training mission was a computer-assisted simulation event that included about 30,000 U.S. forces and 50,000 South Korean troops.

Korea is not a new location to the 40th ID.

“Participating in UFG-14 holds true significance for the 40th ID due to our lineage to the Korean War and our ongoing support to the Pacific Theater,” said Maj. Mark Corea of the 40th ID. “This exercise has been crucial for establishing relationships with units in Korea while expanding our breadth of knowledge in operating in this dynamic region.”

According to the commander of the 2nd Infantry Division at Camp Casey, Maj. Gen. Thomas Vandal, this year’s UFG drill adopted a “tailored deterrence strategy” for the first time. The strategy was introduced in October 2013, he said, to respond to the potential threat posed by nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in North Korea.

“Together with our [South Korean] partners, we will continue to be a lethal deterrent to aggression and vanguards for security on the Korean Peninsula,” Vandal said. “We will continue to ensure that our readiness and ability to ‘fight tonight’ is never compromised.”

Lt. Col. Terrall “Vance” Thompson, exercise commander for the 40th ID and its chief of assessment, said his Soldiers worked well with the South Korean troops and the other American forces in attendance.

“Working side by side with the 2nd ID, our team integrated well and was able to operate simulation systems with a level of confidence that allowed us to paint an accurate picture of brigade operations for the division commander and his staff,” he said. “Our trip to Korea hasn’t been just about work but has included time to learn more about this friendly and culturally rich country.”

The nature of U.S.-South Korea operational command during wartime may change in coming years as the two sides discuss the transfer of wartime operational control from Washington’s hands into Seoul’s. According to South Korea’s Yonhap News, the outcome of this year’s UFG could potentially be used to assess South Korea’s readiness for full operational control in a conflict with its northern neighbor.

UFG, organized by the Korea-U.S. Combined Forces Command, was formerly called Ulchi Focus Lens, but the name was changed in 2007 to Ulchi Freedom Guardian, according to local reports.

Exercise leaders said another difference between UFL and UFG is that Korean troops are now in charge of the exercise while the U.S. plays a supporting role. An emphasis is made on South Korean forces as land owners, requiring U.S. forces to coordinate a supporting role. The exercise typically begins with a contingency situation, requiring drills on risk management and simulated support, followed by an assessment of the exercise.

In the end, 40th ID troops said they felt welcomed and critical to the exercise’s success.

“Our Soldiers are forever rooted in the rich history of South Korea through the heroic and selfless service of the brave men and women of the 40th that fought and paid the ultimate sacrifice in the defense of South Korea during the Korean War,” said Maj. Phue D. Tran, who was the 40th ID cavalry commander for the exercise and is the 40th ID’s aeromedical evacuation officer.
Col. Kelly Fisher turns over MP brigade to Lt. Col. Peter Cross at change of command ceremony

The 49th Military Police Brigade, including Headquarters and Headquarters Company, the 362nd Armored Regiment and several units that fall under the 49th MP Battalion, relinquished its command after two years under the 49th MP command.

First Lt. Brock Young of the 49th MP Battalion, 362nd Armored Regiment, said he thought the training was informative and will be useful if any of his Soldiers come face to face with a disgruntled detainee.

“Being a military police Soldier is in my blood,” he said. “I have a lot of younger enlisted Soldiers who are looking forward to this mission.”

For both Spc. Karen Fieser and Pfc. Malachi Beasley of the 670th, being a military police Soldier is a transition from a law enforcement career.

Fieser, who works for an armored courier company in her civilian life, expressed excitement for the deployment, saying it will contribute to her skills and prepare her for the unexpected.

“I enjoyed the training,” she said. “I like how it is a little bit mixed up compared to training we have had in the past. We are learning a bunch of different ways to do things, which for me, is more realistic. I think I’ll react better in a real, live situation.”

Beasley, a student at Westmount College majoring in communications, said he wants to get his education before starting a law enforcement career.

“This will be good for me,” he said about the pre-mobilization training. “I want to be able to apply it to my deployment, if it ever came down to that. That is where my mindset is right now; I could be tired, but I have to be focused.”

The MP company also qualified on weapons, including non-lethal weapons, and received other classes on MP tasks. At the end of their month’s preparation, they rounded everything out with a cumulative training exercise at the Forward Operating Base Westbrook prison compound.

“Our goal is to accomplish our mission without accident or incident,” said 1st Lt. James Stanfield, commander of the 670th. “We will treat our customers with dignity and respect.”

“I think the training we received was invaluable due to the fact that we came here as basic military policeman and we needed to learn to be internment and resettlement specialists,” Stanfield added. “I believe the training we have received here will lay the foundation for our success at Gitmo.”

Col. Kelly Fisher, outgoing commander of the 49th Military Police Brigade, joins Brig. Gen. Sylvia R. Crockett, land component commander, California Army National Guard and Lt. Col. Peter B. Cross, the brigade’s incoming commander, during their salute of the colors at the brigade’s change of command ceremony at the 49th MP armory in Fairfield, Calif., on Oct. 4. Cross succeeded Fisher in the brigade’s first and only female commander. Fisher held the post more than two years.

Emergency Management Response Agency’s Region IX Homeland Response Force and consists of nearly 2,200 military police, engineers and support personnel. Cross said he is going to rely heavily on his Soldiers and noncommissioned officers as commander.

“I hope to gain their support by listening to them, garnering their recommendations, listening to the feedback and making adjustments. It’s got to be a dialogue.”

Fisher echoed those thoughts, adding, “If I were to offer [Cross] any advice, it would be: listen, learn and lead,” she said. “If you want to know how to do something faster, better and cheaper, ask the Soldiers in the trenches doing the job. They will tell you what right looks like and they will tell you what they need in order to be effective in their job. It’s very important to listen to those Soldiers.”

Fisher was anointed into the 49th’s leadership Sept. 2012, becoming the first female commander in brigade history. She exited after accepting a National Guard Bureau position extending her nearly 30 years of military service.

Fisher credited every Soldier for professionalism and dedication to duty in her tenure.

“Being commander of the 49th is a tremendous responsibility, but it is the greatest reward that any senior officer can have,” Fisher said.

The brigade is responsible for the Federal and consists of nearly 2,200 military police, engineers and support personnel.
As pool of eligible recruits shrinks, getting current Soldiers to re-enlist has become a top priority.

With 62 to 70 percent of California’s potential enlistment pool of age 17 to 24 year olds ineligible for military service due to issues ranging from obesity to criminal records and insufficient education (as reported in the Sept. 29 issue of the Army Times), the California National Guard is operating in a very challenging recruiting environment.

Recognizing that Soldier retention is essential to achieving its end strength goal, Maj. Gen. Lawrence Haskins, Commander, California Army National Guard, initiated “Operation Kevlar” during the 2014 annual training, tasking the RRB to organize and operate retention centers at Camp Roberts and Fort Irwin and interview all Soldiers attending annual training who were within 365 days of their estimated time of separation (ETS) and had received command concurrence to extend their enlistments. The goal was to retain at least 30 percent of those interviewed.

Organizing that operation fell to 1st Sgt. Kimberly Smith, who will take over as State Retention Manager for the RRB later this year. Under her direction, recruiters worked closely with unit leadership at sites, interviewing all eligible Soldiers and explaining the benefits of extending their military careers. A total of 760 Soldiers were interviewed, with 243 raising their right hand to extend—an overall success rate of 33 percent.

“Operation Kevlar was a good beginning, but the overall responsibility for the strength maintenance mission needs to take place at the unit level where the boots meet the ground,” said Smith. “We are looking at three keys to success in meeting General Haskins’ end strength objectives. The first is for the recruiting force to assess as many quality Soldiers as possible. The second is to do our best to close the backdoor by assisting units in retaining quality Soldiers at the end of their enlistments…and the third key—the one most essential to keeping that backdoor closed—is for unit commanders to aggressively manage their Soldier retention. That necessitates a team effort that starts with the commander and includes the first sergeant, platoon sergeants and every other first line leader, and especially the unit’s career counselor—all working together to design and execute an effective strength maintenance program.”

There are a number of reasons that Soldiers elect not to extend their enlistment, but issues regarding Soldier care—including bonus and pay problems, school opportunities, quality training and promotion opportunities and allowing Soldiers to seek personal growth by recategorizing or transferring—can be directly impacted by unit leadership. Leaders also have a direct influence on reducing the number of Soldiers in their unit who have been flagged for height and weight or Army Physical Fitness Test failures which make them ineligible to reenlist unless the flags are removed prior to their ETS window closing.

To assist command teams, the RRB is developing a First Line Retention Training Program for statewide implementation.

Lt. Col Marlena DeCelle assumed command of the Recruiting and Retention Battalion in July and hit the ground running. She has charged her Recruiting and Retention NCOs and leadership team with the mission of meeting the RRB’s fiscal year 2015 recruiting, retention and attrition management objectives in order to sustain the end strength of the state while growing a ready force.

“The RRB is currently undertaking a realignment of company and team boundaries in order to position recruiters in locations where they can best partner with the units they will support,” said DeCelle.

“My vision is to be the best recruiting and retention battalion in the nation, and I define ‘best’ as: achieving mission success; maintaining a high level of unit pride, morale and teamwork; striving for professional and personal excellence in all we do; and getting back to the basics of leadership through accountability, training and recognition.

“Our recruiters are working hard to find young men and women who are willing to answer the call to duty, but we need the help of unit leadership at all levels to assist us by working to retain their Soldiers in the ranks and by spreading the California Army National Guard message to community leaders, civic groups and educators in the areas where we serve, work, live and raise our families,” she said. “Together, we can do this.”

**RRB enlists the Raider Nation in recruiting effort**

By COL (CA) RICHARD LALOR Recruiting and Retention Battalion

They’re known throughout the ranks of the California Army National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion (RRB) as community centers of influence (COIs). They are educators, school administrators and other leaders whose influence is invaluable when it comes to creating relationships and having a positive influence on potential enlistees.

On Aug. 4, RRB Bravo Company Commanding Officer Mike Franklin, an avid NFL fan, went the extra mile to show his appreciation for these unsung heroes in a unique and memorable way. He treated his network of COIs to an “insiders look” at the Oakland Raiders at their Napa, Calif., training camp.

Earlier, in March of this year, he served as master of ceremonies at a dinner for Guard COIs in the education community hosted by Raiders Assistant Special Teams Coach Chris Boniol at the team’s headquarters and practice facility in Alameda, Calif.

Both events were ones that NFL football fans can only dream about.

The training camp visit featured a VIP look at the Raiders preparing for the 2014 season and included an opportunity for recruiters and their special guests from the Bay Area, Stockton, Sacramento, Fresno and Bakersfield to tour the facility, watch the team practice and meet Raiders coaches and players.

Guests included Capt. Gary Suen of the University of California Davis Army ROTC program. Suen has referred a number of interested candidates to the California Army National Guard, resulting in five enlistments to date.

Initiatives supporting the military are important to the Oakland Raiders and the NFL, and the CAARNG has been a key partner of the team for the past several years. The team’s commitment to both the Guard and the important role that education plays in developing young people was made very clear in Coach Boniol’s remarks during the educator dinner in March.

“I appreciate the military, your service and your sacrifice,” said Boniol. “As educators, I appreciate you and respect you because that’s the life I grew up knowing. I would not be here coaching if it weren’t for teaching. Education makes our country stronger, and if you’re not strong, our country better. Both challenge young people to become more disciplined and hard workers, which therefore makes them better people in the community.”

In addition to Boniol, NFL veteran line- man Mike Brisiel addressed the audience. Raiders wide receiver Rod Streater and punter Marquette King were on hand to greet the recruiters and educators.

“You have to love the people who are putting it on the line every day for America,” said Brisiel. “It’s such a respectable deal and sometimes I think that gets overlooked. I know that the NFL is doing a great job supporting our troops and I think the Raiders couldn’t have asked for a better partner.”

Additional events and programs on tap with the Oakland Raiders throughout the 2014 season, including the Coach of the Week and the Tunnel of Influence initiatives, will help build and solidify these vital bridges with current and potential COIs.

Inviting our high school and community college educator partners to events such as these serve as recognition of their important contribution to our success and are special to me and to our recruiting teams,” said Franklin. “They play such an important role in influencing the decision-making process of the individuals they mentor and we couldn’t achieve our mission without their support.

“Our partnerships with our centers of influence and organizations like the Raiders reinforce the Guard’s commitment toward mentoring our young men and women and helping them to develop into responsible citizens and future leaders who will enjoy a successful and meaningful adulthood,” Franklin said.
Guard trains in Tahoe

Cal Guard aircraft aid mass casualty exercise at South Tahoe airport

By MASTER SGT. PAUL WADE
California Military Department Public Affairs

It started with smoke billowing around a C-130 aircraft as a Black Hawk and Chinook helicopter quickly descended nearby onto the flight line of the South Lake Tahoe airport. Bursting onto the scene at the same time were fire trucks, ambulances and police cars from first responder units in the local area. As the air cleared from the expended smoke canister, city officials and key emergency management leaders had a front row view from the terminal’s observation deck. The mass casualty exercise on Aug. 25, involving hundreds of law enforcement, fire, medical and the California National Guard, was underway.

“Check the casualty card. Hello sir. How are you feeling,” sounded off Master Sgt. David Winger and Tech. Sgt. Rovell Campbell and Angel Delacruz as they moved about the moselave-covered casualties lying scattered around the hulking shadow of the crash-simulated 146th Airlift Wing plane. The trained medical technicians from the wing’s Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, based out of Channel Islands Air National Guard Station in Port Hueneme, assessed and categorized patients along with the help of other medical responders from the region, quickly prioritizing those in need of urgent care from those only in need of a first aid kit.

“We get involved in as many of these types of exercises as we can,” said flight nurse Capt. Andrea Essig. “Preparing for the worst kinds of disasters and being able to respond quickly with critical medical support is our job and we were able to practice our skills here today in a very smooth, well put together scenario. One of the best I’ve been a part of.”

Although the three aircraft and its crews from the California National Guard were one of the smallest elements participating in the exercise, the C-130 was center-stage and the military helicopters from Mather Air Army Aviation Support Facility and Stockton of Bravo Co., 126th Aviation Regiment, put an exclamation point on Lake Tahoe’s need for capable transport to whisk away the highest of priorities.

“Our hospital isn’t a first-rate trauma center,” said South Lake Tahoe Mayor Hal Cole. “So it is extremely beneficial having the Black Hawk and the Chinook as a resource to get patients to nearby hospitals that can provide the necessary treatment. Their response time and transportation abilities make their role invaluable.”

Cole explained that their airport requires a drill every three years to test and retain their crash fire certification. His city manager thought big, contacted the California National Guard and other agencies as far away as Carson City to join in, and really put the tower-less airport through the ringer.

“Just flying out here helps us connect better with other agencies,” said Black Hawk pilot 1st Lt. Anthony Winestead. “We get to test our civilian radios and practice communications and that alone is incredibly invaluable.”

“We actually see lots of air traffic coming through our airport, from those battling wildfires in the area each year to large celebrity functions,” said Cole. “So many elements can be properly trained today and we must be better prepared after this. This exercise has a lot of value to our citizens and we feel more comfortable being in the town with this airport, with these amazing men and women responding and the California National Guard always readily available.”

Maintaining the intel edge

By 223rd Military Intelligence Battalion

Military intelligence is a challenging field that demands Soldiers stay technically savvy on the latest analytical software, well versed on rapidly evolving global threats and even-flexible in the art of critical thinking. If not exercised regularly, critical skills can atrophy.

To ensure Cal Guard military intelligence (MI) Soldiers maintain their critical edge, the Joint Reserve Intelligence Center (JRIC) on Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos resources and organizes citizen-Soldiers during their drill weekends to provide operational intelligence support to combat-ant commands (COCOMs) overseas.

“This program has shown tremendous potential and matches perfectly with the Army’s senior intelligence officer Lt. Gen. Mary Legere’s vision for ‘MI 2020’ and allows our Soldiers to maintain operational relevancy as deployment opportunities dwindle,” said Lt. Col. David Church who serves as the full-time site manager for the JRIC.

“The participating units benefit by improving the capability of their MI Soldiers at no cost. Regular participation is meant to improve mission readiness, and also facilitate the maintenance of network accounts, system familiarity and enable access necessary for impending deployments, allowing immediate contribution to the mission objective. The intention is to drastically reduce the slope of the “in-country learning curve” and frustrations associated with a “cold start.”

The COCOM support program, through the work of the JRIC staff, is developing capabilities or support cells for each of the different MI specialties. Different projects can further the training of all-source analysts, counterintelligence agents, human intelligence collectors, imagery intelligence analyst and signals intelligence Soldiers. In addition to maintaining or enhancing skills, COCOM support participants are required to utilize Foundry training funds to attend mission-relevant training, which is otherwise only available for pre-deployment training.

“It’s a great opportunity to be able to provide support and contribute to a real-world mission. It gives us a sense of purpose and actual need. As guardsmen and women, serving as [traditional] Soldiers, we don’t always get opportunities to perform the duties we were trained to do when not on active duty orders. It is an awesome experience and will benefit our intelligence careers,” said Sgt. Idelia Alvarez, an all-source MI analyst with A company, 223rd MI Battalion.

Through this program Soldiers have the potential to become subject matter experts in a specific problem set or geographic region, which may enhance California’s overall contribution to the State Partnership Program or to international exercises, such as Cobra Gold, Talisman Sabre or Yama Sakura.

The COCOM support mission embraces the “No MI Soldier at Rest” concept, and many non-MI units with small sections of MI Soldiers that lack resources to provide realistic and operational training are encouraged to consider the benefits of getting involved. The PACOM support team recently began building teams in Northern California at Camp Parks as well.

Participation requires a valid security clearance, the establishment of both JRIC and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) computer accounts and other requirements. Units must send a visitor certification or coordinate a permanent certification through the Joint Personnel Adjudication System.

For more information, please contact: 1st Lt. Sabrina Baylor, PACOM All Source Lead, (562) 936-1777 Capt. Ruben Bernal, PACOM OIC, (562) 936-1772
Ground crews perform early morning maintenance on an F-15 Eagle from the Fresno, California-based 144th Fighter Wing during the Weapons System Evaluation Program (WSEP) located at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida. WSEP provides a combat-like environment for pilots and crews to test their abilities. Photo by Master Sgt. David Loeffler

ANG celebrates new Beale facility

The California Air National Guard celebrated construction of a $6.1 million dollar, 10,800 square-foot facility in a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Oct. 4 at Beale Air Force Base, Calif. The new headquarters building will house the 162nd Communication Group in a move that joins California Air National Guard with the active duty and reserve forces stationed on Beale.

“Co-locating with active and reserve components represents the future of the Air Force continuum of service,” said Brig. Gen. Jon Kelk, California Air National Guard commander. “It’s a great fit for us and for the total force.”

Completion of this project also allows the Air Force and Air National Guard to close the North Highlands Air National Guard Station in Sacramento, saving approximately $3.3 million dollars in facilities operations and maintenance costs over the next five years.

“The new building is designed so we can not only improve our current operations,” Kelk added, “but also grow as the Air Force adapts to new missions.”

The 162nd Communications Group consists of the headquarters and nine geographically separated units that span California, with four of those units already co-located at Beale.

“The Air Force has successfully integrated the three elements of the guard, reserve and active forces,” said Rep. John Garamendi, 3rd Congressional District. “Today’s event represents one more step in that direction.”

The 162nd is celebrating its 70th anniversary this year. Its history is marked with contributions to all the modern conflicts our nation has faced while also responding to a wide array of national and state contingencies.

“We are excited about our new home,” said Col. Marilyn Rios, 162nd Combat Communications Group commander. “We are fully committed to reinforcing our partnership with such an exceptional team of professionals here at Beale.”

Cal Guard participates in Dreamforce

Cal Guard aircraft and personnel participated in Salesforce.com’s four-day Dreamforce conference, the world’s largest software conference, on Oct. 15 as part of a push to increase hiring of military veterans.

Two Cal Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopters flew 50 business leaders and VIP’s from San Francisco to Moffett Federal Airfield in MountainView for a demonstration of personnel recovery skills by the 129th Rescue Wing. The business leaders were also briefed on the Cal Guard’s Work for Warriors employment initiative.

“We are proud to work with Salesforce and its partner RockTech on this effort to increase employers’ awareness of the many benefits of hiring military veterans,” said Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the Adjutant General of the CNG.

DID YOU KNOW...

you can be held financially responsible for not maintaining 100 percent accountability of your military equipment or items that you are personally responsible for?

Whether you are at initial entry training, a service school, deployed or at your home station unit, it is essential that you maintain proper accountability of the equipment or items you are responsible for. Even if you have not signed a DA Form 2062 (hand receipt), you may be held responsible for the loss, destruction or damage of property under your command, supervision, direction, custodianship, or personal responsibility. Per Army Regulation 735-5: “Responsibility is the obligation of an individual to ensure government property and funds entrusted to their possession, command or supervision are properly used and cared for, and that proper custody, safekeeping and disposition are provided.”

Army Regulation 710-2 states: “Unit Commander conducts an annual Organizational Clothing & Individual Equipment (OCIE) inspection of all items issued on OCIE records.” This entails laying out your OCIE to inventory annually before you go onto AKO and sign an updated hand receipt. If you sign without verifying that you actually are in possession of all those items, you become responsible for them whether you have them or not. When clearing supply at your unit you must receive either your original signed hand receipt, a DA 2062 signed by the supply sergeant, or a California National Form 137-1 (Unit Clearance Record) for your records. If you do not obtain any of those valid documents you can be held liable if items come up missing.

Airmen have a similar process to follow. Air Force Instruction 23-111 states: “Personnel having custodial responsibility may be held pecuniarily liable for the loss, destruction or damage to property caused by willful misconduct, deliberate unauthorized use or negligence in the use, care, custody or safeguard of the property from causes other than normal wear and tear.”

In summary, the requirement to properly inventory, maintain and safeguard government equipment applies to all individuals and all services.
An F-15 Eagle from the 144th Fighter Wing streaks over the clouds prior to participating in the Weapons System Evaluation Program (WSEP) at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida, in September. WSEP provides a combat-like environment for pilots and crews to test their abilities. Photo by Master Sgt. David Leffler