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Labor Day holiday is about the strength of our Nation

By Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III
Commanding General, U.S. Army North and Fort Sam Houston

We are approaching another great holiday, and I want to ask each and every person here at Fort Sam Houston, Camp Bullis, Camp Stanley, and throughout our Regions to consider its meaning.

Labor Day is often called the end of summer, the beginning of the school year, the start of football season, or another opportunity to just take a break. Those are all good happenings, but really that is not it at all.

I challenge you to look around and try to imagine San Antonio minus its skyline, with bare earth instead of the floor, without a car to take you home, and no paper to read these printed words.

History records that Americans began celebrating this holiday at the dawn of the 20th century, when we would grow to become the greatest power on Earth. Let us never take for granted the toil, determination, and sweat that has built our nation and continues to make her strong.

Join me in thanking each and every person who is erecting and working inside the new healthcare facilities here. We salute every driver that is moving people, material, and sustenance by plane, train, and automobile. We appreciate every accountant and administrative assistant for keeping us straight. Every educator, manufacturer, maintainer and yes, every federal employee serving our nation here, has earned our gratitude. The list goes on.

Be safe this weekend in everything you do as we celebrate and honor the muscle that is making our nation strong. I want to wish the very best to our students as they head back to school. Labor Day really is about the strength of our nation.
Joint Task Force Civil Support answers nation’s nightmare

Story and photo by
Staff Sgt. Keith Anderson,
Army North PAO

FORT LEAVENWORTH, Kan. — America has eight nightmarish scenarios outlined in a publication known as the National Response Framework; eight possible incidents first responders and disaster response units prepare for so that our nation is never caught off-guard and unprepared.

The most unthinkable, known as “key scenario set two,” is a nuclear detonation. It was exactly this scenario that the military’s Joint Task Force – Civil Support, based at Fort Monroe, Va., tackled during a weeklong command post exercise at the Battle Command Training Center here from Aug. 11-19.

Vibrant Response 11.1, an exercise scenario involving a notional 10-kiloton nuclear detonation in Omaha, Neb., was designed to test the task force’s ability to support civil authorities in a large-scale terrorist incident, said Maj. Gen. Perry Wiggins, deputy commanding general, Army North.

“This exercise gives our forces the confidence and capability to enter this particular catastrophic event by rehearsing the necessary operations and coordination between local, state and federal agencies,” Wiggins said.

As a notional plume of radiation and debris swept westward across Nebraska, task force members assisted the Federal Emergency Management Agency and other partners in emergency support functions such as search and rescue, medical evacuation, logistics, decontamination, route clearance, and other functions.

More than 400 service members, Department of Defense civilians and contractors from more than 30 units participated in the exercise.

“It has grown considerably, and so has the support we receive from our interagency partners,” said Kevin Kirmse, chief exercise division, Army North.

Representatives from the state of Nebraska and the city of Omaha participated in the exercise, to inject more realism, and to ensure that the military’s commitment to support civil authorities is fulfilled.

“We, as Title 10 (federal military) forces, don’t do anything unless we’re requested,” Kirmse said. “We are continuing to build relationships early with our state and interagency partners.”

The Vibrant Response 11.1 command post exercise is preparation for the task force’s upcoming, much larger field training exercise slated to run in March 2011 at Camp Atterbury, and the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center, Ind.
VR 11.1 photos in review

Above: Soldiers from the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, based out of Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., coordinate notional missions from a tent on the grounds of the Battle Command Training Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kan., as part of Task Force Operations during Vibrant Response 11.1. Below: Personnel from Joint Task Force - Civil Support, based out of Fort Monroe, Va., conduct a shift-change brief as part of 24-hour command and control operations Aug. 16 at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. The brief, which occurred every 12 hours, was part of Vibrant Response 11.1, a U. S. Army North-supervised command post exercise that tested the command and control mission of JTF-CS and Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear and High Yield Explosive Consequence Management Response Force personnel. The mission of JTF-CS is to save lives, prevent further injury and provide critical support to enable community recovery.


www.arnorth.army.mil
Qualify
CAMP BULLIS, Texas — Sgt. 1st Class Darin Ingle, Headquarters and Headquar ters Company, U.S. Army North, fires from the kneeling position as part of the semi-annual M16 qualification Aug. 3 at the Automatic Record Fire range here. Soldiers fired at pop-up targets from the prone supported position, the prone un supported position and the kneeling position.

Sentinel
Fort Sam Houston honors military retirees

Col. Jane Morrical, Army Medical Department Center and School; Col. Lawrence Sansone, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pacific Ocean Division, Fort Shafter, Hawaii; Lt. Col. James Jones, U.S. Army South; Lt. Col. Robert Hookness Jr., U.S. Army South; Chief Warrant Officer 4 Clinton Fosbenner, U.S. Army South; Master Sgt. Frank Narvaez III, U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy, Fort Bliss, Texas; and Staff Sgt. Angel Chamorro, 3rd Brigade, 1st Armored Division, Fort Bliss, Texas, stand before a crowd of family, friends and peers during an installation retirement ceremony Aug. 26 in U.S. Army North’s historic Quadrangle grounds.

Maj. Gen. David Rubenstein, commander, U.S. Army Medical Department Center and School and chief of the Army Medical Service Corps, pins a Legion of Merit award onto Col. Lawrence Sansone, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pacific Ocean Division, Fort Shafter, Hawaii, during an installation-wide retirement ceremony Aug. 26 in U.S. Army North’s historic Quadrangle grounds. Sansone’s wife Candace was presented a certificate of appreciation. The two said they plan to make San Antonio their home.

Please join us Sept. 10 at 5:20 a.m. in the historic Quadrangle grounds at U.S. Army North for Freedom Walk 2010.

5 a.m. setup begins.

5:20 a.m. all participants formed inside Quadrangle grounds.

5:30 a.m. Reveille

5:31-5:36 a.m. Opening remarks by Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III, commanding general, Army North and Fort Sam Houston

5:36-5:41 a.m. remarks from Operation Homefront speaker

5:45 a.m. walk begins
Flexibility, adaptability key to team’s success

By Sgt. Maj. Richard Henson
CCP1 SGM, U.S. Army North

Flexibility and adaptability are two crucial aspects of an individual’s ability to contribute to the overall success of a team.

In football, sometimes position players, such as quarterbacks, are asked to move to wide receiver to enable the team to be more competitive and successful. They may have played the position in high school or college, but because the team and coaches needed their abilities at another position, players are sometimes repositioned for the overall success of the team.

This is also true for the members of our Army team, where the concept of teamwork is vital in achieving success.

During my career, I have been assigned many different positions and, as an infantryman, I have played different roles to contribute to the unit’s success. The path for success may vary from person to person. For me, the answer is flexibility and a willingness to adapt.

Having arrived here roughly 13 months ago and being assigned as the G5 sergeant major, U.S. Army North has provided a unique – yet challenging – opportunity in accomplishing the mission of Homeland Defense, Civil Support operations and Theatre Security Cooperation activities.

As is the case with most of us arriving to Army North, this position was a new and challenging one for me because I had never worked in the spectrum of operations known as Homeland Defense. In this spectrum, we always serve in a supporting role while conducting operations in our rather unique area of responsibility: our own backyard here in the United States.

This is a dramatic change from my previous assignments. We now operate in an environment where we even have to get permission from the Secretary of Defense to carry weapons and arm ourselves. This is a contrast from everything I had been habitually used to doing. I was used to leading Soldiers in both garrison and in combat in Iraq, a foreign country, which was our assigned area. In this environment, we were in charge in our assigned areas and we always carried our weapons everywhere we went.

Both missions are very important, and both are quite different in many aspects. What is important, however, is both require competent, adaptive yet flexible leaders.

In conducting our Homeland Defense mission, the National Response Framework works similarly to the chain-of-command philosophy we use in the Army in that we must have approval from the proper authorities before we deploy. Our missions are vital.

We can deploy, at any time, to provide Department of Defense support to civil authorities in the event of natural or man-made disasters in any of our 10 regions. Or, our assistance could be requested to provide support as a result of one of the 15 national planning scenarios. These missions require us to be vigilant in protecting our homeland. To succeed requires flexible, adaptive leaders. Becoming an adaptive leader is hard, and it takes time. It is always easy to follow directions. The challenge lies in leading the way to success.

Education, training and drills are the keys to building the foundations for success. They enable us to react. We do what we are taught and it becomes habitual. In a combat environment, a Soldier will drop and instinctively return fire. They will do this as a result of their training, their drills and their education.

Adaptability is built into our doctrine. Being a Soldier is like being a football player. If the team needs you somewhere else: Be flexible; be adaptable and contribute to the success of the team.

After all, our mission is perhaps the most important one I can think of: To protect the American people and our way of life.
Army North stands up headquarters battalion

Photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Manuel Torres

Right: Lt. Gen. Guy Swan III, commanding general, U.S. Army North (Fifth Army) and Fort Sam Houston, passes the Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion colors to Lt. Col. Shannon Miller, commander, HHBn, U.S. Army North, during the battalion’s activation ceremony Aug. 13 at the historic Quadrangle at Fort Sam Houston. “This is an important day for the history of U.S. Army North,” said Swan. “Since 2006 the command has continued to grow and this is but another step in Army North’s history.”

Below: Lt. Col. Shannon Miller, commander, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, U.S. Army North; and Command Sgt. Maj. Eddie Fields, command sergeant major, HHBn; unfurl the new battalion guidon during the activation ceremony for the battalion. Miller previously served as the operations officer for the Defense Coordinating Element Region IV, Army North. Region IV is based out of Atlanta.

Above: Maj. Rene Rodriguez, commander, Headquarters Support Company, Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, U.S. Army North; and Sgt. 1st Class Richard Bernard, first sergeant, HSC; case the colors of the Headquarters and Headquarters Company to officially deactivate it, before uncasing the colors for HSC, during the HHBn activation ceremony Aug. 13. Originally supported by a single headquarters company, Army North is now supported by a battalion composed of the Headquarters Support Company, the Intel and Sustainment Company, and the Operations Company. “It is a better support structure and will enable ARNORTH to continue its mission of Americans supporting Americans,” said Bernard, a Pensacola, Fla., native. Army North achieved full operating capability Oct. 16, 2006, and was designated as the U.S. Northern Command Joint Forces Land Component Command and achieved full operating capability in October 2008.
Hispanic Heritage Month begins on September 15, the anniversary of independence for five Latin American countries—Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico declared its independence on September 16, and Chile on September 18.

The term Hispanic, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, refers to Spanish-speaking people in the United States of any race. On the 2000 Census form, people of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin could identify themselves as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or "other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino." More than 35 million people identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino on the 2000 Census.

As a young captain in the Spanish militia (1769-1771), Don Bernardo de Galvez fought the Apache Indians in Texas. He learned to respect them and to treat them fairly rather than to oppress them, as was so often the case at that time. He would later be known as a man of honor by other Indian tribes along the Mississippi valley. In 1776, de Galvez, now 30, was appointed colonel of the Spanish regiment in Louisiana. Despite the lack of a formal agreement, de Galvez supported U.S. forces, which were fighting Great Britain for their independence.

He provided them cattle from Spanish herds in Texas and sold weapons and other supplies to U.S. agents, who shipped them by road and river to Philadelphia. De Galvez fought several battles in and around the Florida territory and eventually reclaimed the entire peninsula for Spain, as well as securing the valuable Spanish trade routes in the Gulf of Mexico.

Americans remembered him for the assistance he provided during their time of greatest need. Galveston, Texas is named after him, as was Santa María de Galvez, the previous name of Pensacola Bay.

Hispanic Statistics

The percentage of Hispanic Americans accessed by the Army in 2004 was 12.1%

Active-duty Soldiers with a Hispanic heritage sorted by year and rank.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Enlisted</th>
<th>Officer</th>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
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<td>2004</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the 2000 Census, the projected population for 2010 and beyond shows significant growth in Hispanics in the U.S. population.

Information provided by www.Army.mil/hispanicamericans

www.armnorth.army.mil
During National Preparedness Month, we stress the importance of strengthening the security and resiliency of our Nation through systematic preparation for the full range of hazards threatening the United States in the 21st century, including natural disasters, cyber attacks, pandemic disease, and acts of terrorism. This year marks the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, one of the most tragic and destructive disasters in American history. In remembrance of this national tragedy, we must reaffirm our commitment to readiness and the necessity of preparedness.

By empowering Americans with information about the risks we face, we can all take concrete actions to protect ourselves, our families, our communities, and our country. The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s Ready Campaign provides simple and practical steps every American can take to be better prepared. At the community level, Citizen Corps enables volunteers to contribute to homeland security efforts by educating, training, and coordinating local activities that help make us safer, better prepared, and more responsive during emergencies. I encourage all Americans to visit Ready.gov and CitizenCorps.gov for more information and resources on emergency preparedness, including how to prepare a family emergency plan, create an emergency supply kit, and get involved in community preparedness efforts.

My Administration has made emergency and disaster preparedness a top priority, and is dedicated to a comprehensive approach that relies upon the responsiveness and cooperation of government at all levels, the private and nonprofit sectors, and individual citizens. I also encourage Americans to get involved with the thousands of organizations in the National Preparedness Month Coalition, which will share preparedness information and hold preparedness events and activities across the United States. By strengthening citizen preparedness now, we can be ready when disaster strikes.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, BARACK OBAMA, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim September 2010 as National Preparedness Month. I encourage all Americans to recognize the importance of preparedness and observe this month by working together to enhance our national security, resilience, and readiness.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-seventh day of August, in the year of our Lord two thousand ten, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and thirty-fifth.

BARACK OBAMA

All hands
SAN JUAN, P.R.

Photo by Yuisa Rios, Federal Emergency Management Agency

www.arnorth.army.mil
55th CST helps decontaminate Best Buy corporate HQ during training exercise

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

Minneapolis — Throughout the United States, television news agencies broadcast images to the world on a daily basis that an attack has happened against people, places and even corporations. Usually the question isn’t if an attack will happen but when.

These man-made attacks can be just as devastating as natural disasters. In fact, it is against such scenarios that the U.S. Army North, and its federal, state, city and local partners, train on a daily basis to overcome.

Such was the case Aug. 25 when members of Army North’s Civil Support Training Activity, out of Fort Sam Houston, Texas, deployed to Minneapolis during a pre-evaluation training exercise in support of the 55th Civil Support Team, which was called upon by the local Richfield County police and fire department to help decontaminate a crime scene.

The exercise was based on a scenario in which a couple of local residents entered the Best Buy Corporate Headquarters building in Richfield, Minn., and wounded numerous employees. To further complicate matters, the attackers used Anthrax, a serious illness caused by a spore-forming bacterium, to contaminate employees associated with the company.

The 55th CST is a Minnesota Army National Guard
unit based out of Fort Snelling, Minn. The Army North CSTA members served as observer controller/trainers during the event and provided assistance and feedback throughout.

“This scenario helps prepare both local and military responders to handle any type of situation,” said Javier Rodriguez-Ramos, observer controller, CSTA, Army North. “They have to know how to enter into a building with the information they get from the survivors, and local police must ensure the safety of the populous and know when to call on the 55th CST for support.”

The main emphasis during the exercise was the coordination and communication between local law enforcement and the CST. The Army North CSTA’s mission was to ensure that proper coordination and procedures were being followed and that any potential conflicts that arose during the exercise were addressed. Overseeing the communication from start to finish helped to ensure that both agencies were fully aware of their duties, responsibilities and capabilities.

“Our very first priority in this situation is getting the information out to our local responders, and we have to know what situation we’re in, what we can do,” said Lt. Jay Henthorne, Richfield Police Department. “We have a very good relationship with the 55th CST. We use training like this to ensure that we know all the people involved and develop our relationship now instead of when an event actually occurs.”

The Richfield special weapons and tactics team participated in the exercise as well as a security team working in the Best Buy Corporate Headquarters and some Best Buy employees. The corporation authorized the training at their corporate headquarters building in an effort to assist its local responders and, at the same time, evaluate its own security and emergency management team.

“It’s very important we know how to handle these types of situations,” said Ed Johnson, emergency management security team member, Best Buy. “We understand the building security features and are able to help out the local law enforcement to determine any type of threats and provide critical information that they would need to help us.”

With everyone involved, Best Buy Corporate employees were able to observe as the local law enforcement and the SWAT team helped those initially affected by the attack and how the law enforcement professionals figured out what happened during the start of the chaos. Once the law enforcement officials discovered that it was not only an attack with gun, but with a chemical agents as well, they called upon the 55th CST to support.

“The CSTA team does these types of mission throughout the United States,” said Bill Havlic, director of Civil Support Readiness Group — West, CSTA, Army North. “There are training events like this every month. The CSTA team travels to numerous states to assess the training and to strengthen the confidence of the local CSTs and the local authorities.”
BUFFALO, Minn. — Two days after a groundbreaking ceremony here, seven local residents who attended the ceremony started developing strange symptoms of fever, in addition to severe headaches, vomiting and fluid-filled blisters.

The 55th Civil Support Team, a Minnesota National Guard unit based out of Fort Snelling, Minn., deployed to an abandoned school in downtown Buffalo Aug. 24 as part of this notional scenario to help local authorities investigate. Members of U. S. Army North’s Civil Support Training Activity – Charlie Division, based out of Fort Sam Houston, Texas, deployed to the area to provide support during the pre-evaluation training event.

“Our responsibility is providing the overhead evaluation of their processes,” said Jeffery Carter, observer controller, CSTA, Army North. “We help ensure that they look at every step in the setup, administration, logistics and decontamination process.”

“The 55th CST’s priority is to ensure the safety of the local community, to pinpoint areas of contamination in the building and to make recommendations to the incident commander on disposal of contaminated material.”

“We have to maintain our overall safety and look for the mysterious substance that caused all the symptoms,” said Sgt. Brent Emery, 1st Reconnaissance Team member, 55th CST. “The big picture is to find anything out of the ordinary, to locate any chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear agents, and, especially, to work hand-in-hand with the local authorities and maintain constant communications and to share critical information in these types of situations.”

The first two-man team to enter the building wore chemical protection suits with breathing apparatuses, which sustained them in the contaminated environment for up to one hour.

During that hour, the team worked together to investigate the building for any substance and cleared almost two floors, which consisted of more than 15 rooms.

“This team has done extraordinarily well,” said Javier Rodriguez-Ramos, observer controller/trainer from Civil Support Training Activity, U.S. Army North, based out of Fort Sam Houston, Texas, helps the first reconnaissance team members of the 55th Civil Support Team, Minnesota National Guard, based out of Fort Snelling, Minn., read measurements taken from their radiological detection device during their annual lanes training exercise Aug. 24 at the vacant, former St. Francis school in downtown Buffalo.
while constantly taking pictures and relaying any type of clue to the command center.”

As the team searched the area, it came across an old boiler room that contained a suspicious can filled with an unknown substance, later determined to be Anthrax.

Further investigation showed that the substance could have been the cause of the symptoms that the victims experienced.

The proper techniques in acquiring the known cause is essential in any training event, and it was vital to practice relaying any type of intelligence to help the next team being able to contain the device and or chemicals.

“We have had a lot of personnel change within the last year,” said Sgt. Eric Laursen, survey team member, 55th CST. “This helps our team get on the same page and learn the systems and processes. You can talk about the process and steps, but you really don’t know the full extent until you actually do it.”

As members of Army North’s CST observed, the team members leaped into action, room by room, protected by their chemical and radiological alarms as they sought out the dangerous substance. The 55th CST members worked together to help find the source, contain the dangerous material and to ensure the safety of the local residents.

“Successful exercises like this one strengthen the confidence that the local authorities have in the CST teams and build partnerships for future cooperation,” said Bill Havlic, director of Civil Support Readiness Group – West, CSTA, Army North. “Teams have to be prepared for anything on short notice.”

Jeff Carter, an observer controller/trainer from Civil Support Training Activity, U.S. Army North, based out of Fort Sam Houston, Texas, briefs members of the 55th Civil Support Team, Minnesota National Guard, based out of Fort Snelling, Minn., during their annual pre-evaluation training exercise Aug. 24.
Army preparedness starts at the top
Army.mil

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Army is set to support National Preparedness Month in September as part of an ongoing initiative to ensure that Soldiers and Army civilians are ready to react if disaster strikes.

National Preparedness Month was started in 2004 by the Federal Emergency Management Agency to encourage Americans to prepare themselves for possible emergencies, and the Army has been doing the same with its workforce for years. This summer the Army began outfitting the office of the Secretary of the Army with Shelter In Place and Go Kit bags.

The kits contain equipment that would allow personnel to shelter in their offices for up to 48 hours. “That includes food, water, blankets and other essential items,” said David Beltz, director, Security and Safety Directorate at Army headquarters. The Army’s “Ready Army” website, at www.ready.army.mil/, can help Soldiers and their families ready themselves for emergencies. The site suggests critical items needed to create an emergency kit, for instance.

Guam Guard hosts ‘Vigilant Guard’
Pacific News Center

HAGATNA, Guam — The Guam National Guard, in conjunction with the Department of Public Health and Social Services, Guam Memorial Hospital Authority, Guam Homeland Security and the Office of Civil Defense as well as several other Government of Guam response agencies participated in Vigilant Guard 2010, “Kontra piligr-ro na’ fansafo’ ham” August 23-26. Vigilant Guard is a joint exercise that aims to test the Guam National Guard’s resources and capabilities as the first military responder in support of the governor and the state emergency management agencies.

The primary goal is to enhance mutual emergency coordination, response, and recovery. The exercise also tests the Guam National Guard’s reach-back capabilities as it calls on resources from other states in the region and the National Guard Bureau. Units from Hawaii, California, Nevada, Illinois, Wyoming and Arizona were on island to participate in Vigilant Guard 2010.

More states complete disaster planning for children
Emergency Management Magazine

WASHINGTON — A 2009 report by nonprofit Save the Children examined the major disasters of the last 10 years and their impacts on children.

The report outlined four recommendations states could adopt to improve child welfare during disasters including: written evacuation and relocation plans; reunification plans and plans for special needs children at childcare facilities; and written multihazard plans at schools.

Seven states met all four recommendations in 2009. Since then, five additional states — Mississippi, California, Wisconsin, New Mexico and Washington — have incorporated the group’s recommendations into their emergency planning.

Georgia State Defense Force aids rescue missions
The Times-Herald

NEWNAN, Ga. — Law enforcement is now finding an able partner in search and rescue missions through the Georgia State Defense Force an all volunteer arm of the Georgia Department of Defense quickly gaining a statewide reputation for its support of search and rescue operations.

Update: U.S. response to Pakistan’s flooding disaster
U.S. State Department

WASHINGTON — The United States is providing approximately $150 million to support relief efforts in Pakistan. We are expanding pre-existing programs in flood-affected areas, providing temporary bridges, and mobilizing significant U.S. military and civilian resources to rescue victims of the disaster and deliver needed supplies.

U.S. military and civilian aircraft continue to support flood relief operations. Through August 22, these aircraft have evacuated 7,835 people and delivered more than 1,600,000 pounds of relief supplies.

President Obama thanks servicemembers for Iraq War contributions
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — President Barack Obama traveled today to Fort Bliss, Texas, to pay tribute to the post’s servicemembers, whose
contribute and those of their comrades made possible tomorrow’s milestone marking the official end of combat operations in Iraq.

“Congratulations, on a job well done,” Obama told about 130 1st Armored Division Soldiers, accompanied their spouses, who’d recently returned from Iraq as they gathered in a post dining facility.

“There has not been a single mission that has been assigned to all of you in which you have not performed with gallantry, with courage, with excellence,” the president said. “That is something the entire country understands.”

Thanks to these efforts, he said, “Iraq has an opportunity to create a better future for itself and America is more secure.”

Obama told the troops his White House address to the nation tonight will underscore that as Operation New Dawn begins tomorrow, “our task in Iraq is not yet completed.”

“Our combat phase is over,” he said, “But we’ve worked too hard to neglect the continuing work that has to be done by civilians as well as military transitional forces.”

Study focuses on use of animal assisted therapy in Warrior Transition Battalion
Brooke Army Medical Center

FORT SAM HOUSTON, Texas — A study to measure the effectiveness of animal assisted therapy using dogs is in the final stages at the Warrior Transition Battalion at Brooke Army Medical Center.

Researchers with the Army Baylor Doctor of Science in Occupational Therapy program have spent the past few months focused on improving re-integration of Warriors in Transition by studying the use of animal assisted therapy in an occupational therapy environment.

“If we can present a case with data as to the usefulness of dogs in elevating Soldiers’ moods, building confidence and reducing stress that then translate into a better, quicker transition ... that is very powerful,” said Maj. Carol Haertlein Sells, primary investigator and professor with the Army Baylor Doctor of Science in Occupational Therapy Program.

The study was designed to augment the Warrior in Transition Advancement Program. Warriors are enrolled in WINTAP as part of their occupational therapy and take a series of classes focused on further developing skills to manage stress and anger; build communication skills and relationships; maintain healthy living and increase organization and time management.

By augmenting the current occupational therapy life skills classes with dogs, researchers will be able to provide data that will possibly add to the current success with WINTAP.

“We were doing a good job with the skills classes and everybody knows that there is a certain therapeutic value to having a pet around, so what if we put the two together?” said Dr. Sheri Michel, chief occupational therapist, Warrior Transition Battalion, BAMC. “That’s really what we’re doing with the program.”

New Post-9/11 GI Bill Overview
Military.com

WASHINGTON — On June 30, 2008, the president signed the Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2008 - also known as the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which is a benefits program for service members who served on active duty on or after Sept. 11, 2001.

When the bill took effect Aug. 1, 2009, it was met with great enthusiasm. Under the new law, the Department of Veterans Affairs determines eligibility of the applicants and will provide up to 36 months of benefits.

Former Sgt. Brian Parker, a photo-journalist with the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) from 2005 to 2009, applied for benefits soon after the bill was active.

“I thought the application process was going to be difficult,” Parker said, “However, I just applied online and it was really easy. I got it done within half an hour.

Within, I would say, 10 days, I got a letter saying my benefits had been approved.” As a Soldier with qualifying active-duty service, Parker used his benefits for an approved education program at an accredited institution of higher learning, which includes graduate and undergraduate degree programs, as well as vocational and technical training. Some of the key benefits include tuition and fees, a monthly living allowance, and an annual stipend of up to $1,000 for books and supplies, according to the VA website: www.gibill.va.gov.

Army leadership honor women in service
DOD Education Activity

WASHINGTON — U.S. Army leadership gathered at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial in Arlington, Va., Aug. 26, to celebrate Women’s Equality Day on the 90th anniversary of voting rights.

www.arnorth.army.mil