



PELICAN

DISPATCH

THE QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FOR THE LOUISIANA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD

SPRING 2009

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first black general**

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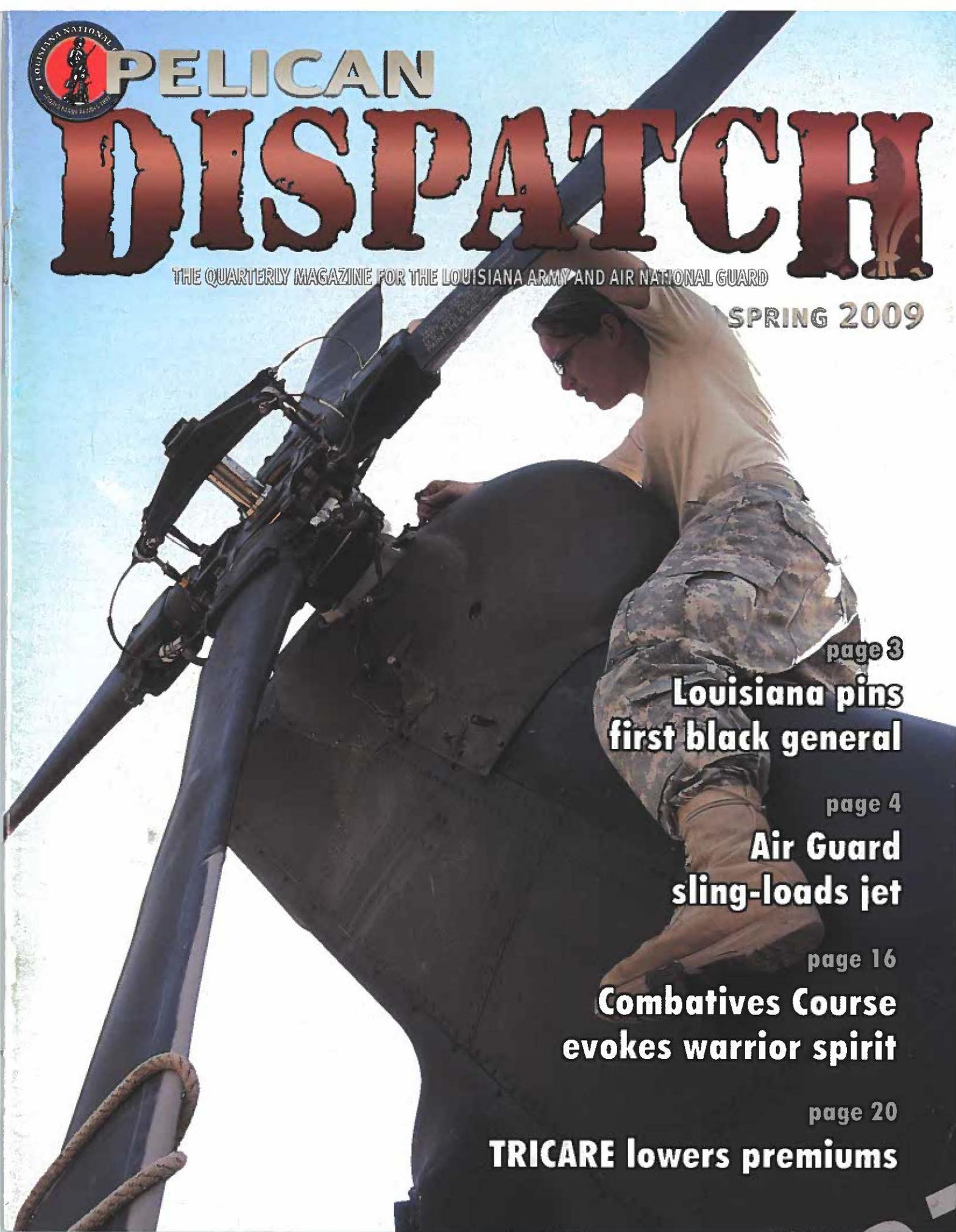
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Bobby Jindal



The Adjutant General
Maj. Gen. Bennett C.
Landreneau

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Avionics mechanic Spc. Can L. Davis of Palmetto, Fla., checks the wires on the tail rotor blade of a UH 60 Blackhawk helicopter before a mission in Joint Base Balad, Iraq. Davis, a current Florida Guardsman, is attached to the Louisiana Army National Guard's 1st Battalion, 241st Aviation Regiment, out of Hammond, La. She is currently serving a one-year deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Davis intends to move to Louisiana upon returning from Iraq to become a full-time LANG Soldier.

Photo: Sgt. Amiee S. Vegas, 1st Battalion, 241st Aviation Regiment

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From the Adjutant General



My fellow Guardsmen,

As we turn the page on another exceptional year for our organization, I would like to personally thank you for your direct impact on our successes. As always, I grow prouder of what our team accomplishes each year and I am honored to continue serving as your Adjutant General.

It is evident that as a result of your hard work and preparations to respond to any disaster, we were again able to battle back-to-back storms with extreme success. Your professionalism and teamwork displayed time and again in the face of adversity has grown to embody our organization's public image.

We have witnessed many of our fellow Guardsmen deploy overseas in the past year. At the same time, we have also joined in welcoming home many of our Guardsmen from overseas deployments. Each of you continues to answer the call to duty by defending our Nation and helping people in need, and this does not go unnoticed by the great citizens of our state and the rest of the country.

Our number one goal continues to be personnel readiness. This includes not just taking care of Soldiers, Airmen and our Families, but increasing and maintaining our personnel strength. Our Air Guard has again led the way by achieving and maintaining approximately 110% authorized strength, while for the first time in many years the Army

Guard has achieved over 100% authorized strength. These two numbers indicate implicitly the quality of our leadership and of our troops, especially during a time of war and deployments. Your hard work is sincerely appreciated.

As we approach another hurricane season, we continue to strive for excellence in preparation for emergency operations. It is crucial we don't lose the focus and determination while we continue to train at our best, in order to prepare for the worst. Our state has always depended on its bravest citizens, you the Citizen Soldiers and Airmen, to be "Always Ready and Always There" whether it is a hurricane, flooding, or other disaster. The Guard has never failed to deliver.

On the heels of a successful 2008 season, we will be ready once again.....let's dig in, focus our team and train as we fight! As always, I ask that each of you stand proud of what you accomplish every day, keep up the great work, and I thank you for proudly serving our communities, our great state and our nation.

Sincerely,

Major General Bennett C. Landreneau, The Adjutant General

Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers

The Unemployment Compensation for Ex-servicemembers (UCX) program provides benefits for eligible ex-military personnel. If you were on active duty with a branch of the U.S. military, you may be entitled to benefits based on that service. You must have been separated under honorable conditions.

The best method to obtain general information on the program is to visit the following website:
<http://www.servicelocator.org/OWSLinks.asp>

To find out if you are eligible for unemployment compensation and/or to file a claim you must contact your State Workforce Agency through the website at <https://laors.laworks.net/laclaims/website/> as soon as possible after discharge. It may be helpful to have a copy of your service and discharge documents (DD-214 or similar form) when you open your claim.

There is no payroll deduction from servicemembers' wages for unemployment insurance protection. Benefits are paid for by the various branches of the military, NOAA or USPHS.

If you have problems, or require further assistance, you can call 1-866-783-5567, which is the Louisiana Unemployment Call Center.

Louisiana Guard pins star on first black general officer

By Sgt. Rebekah Malone, 225th Engineer Brigade Unit Public Affairs Representative

BAGHDAD – Four weeks to the day after the inauguration of America's first black president, the Louisiana National Guard promoted its first black officer to the rank of brigadier general.

Brig. Gen. Owen Monconduit, commander of the 225th Engineer Brigade, received his first star during a ceremony at Camp Liberty, Iraq, Feb. 17.

"This honor is bigger than me," Monconduit of Pineville, La., said. "Many great Soldiers have come before me to allow this event to take place today, and many more will follow."

February is Black History Month, a time to remember the many great black individuals who paved the way toward equal opportunity for all.

"I am proud of the National Guard, Louisiana and our country for the progression of equal opportunity for all races and genders," said Monconduit. "The first bill President Obama signed was the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act; Louisiana just elected the first Vietnamese U.S. Representative, Anh Cao; and last year elected the first governor of Indian decent, Gov. Bobby Jindal. This is a sign of our times – moving forward on equal ground."

Monconduit graduated from Louisiana State University in 1984 with a Bachelor of Engineering Technology. He then earned a Master of Arts in organizational management from the University of Phoenix in 1998 and a master's degree in strategic studies from the United States Army War College in 2007.

During his 28-year career, Monconduit served as a platoon leader, company executive officer, and as a company and battalion commander with the 225th Engineer Brigade. He became the chief of the environment management section for the Louisiana National Guard in 1991, where he served before becoming the Construction Management and Facilities Officer in 2000. Before accepting command of the engineer brigade in 2007, Monconduit served as the executive officer to the Adjutant General of the Louisiana National Guard, Maj. Gen. Bennett C. Landreneau.

"The National Guard is a great organization. It's a value-based organization, and it certainly expresses equality and has many opportunities available for any young person that is interested in the military," Monconduit said. "It's a humbling experience to achieve your dreams, but through perseverance and hard work, it pays off."

A veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom, he commanded the 528th Engineer Battalion in Monroe, La., through a year-long tour to Afghanistan in 2005 before leading a battalion for six months on state active duty for Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

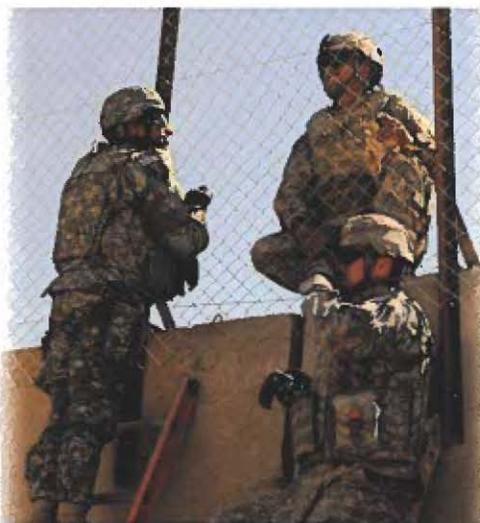
Monconduit's wife, Anges Chenevert, and Landreneau viewed the promotion via video teleconferencing between Louisiana and Baghdad.

"Most importantly, he leads in the direction of taking care of Soldiers; because of that, he has earned the respect of the Soldier and NCO corps he leads," Landreneau said. "Owen's a great Soldier, a great patriot, very dedicated to his Soldiers and a great leader."

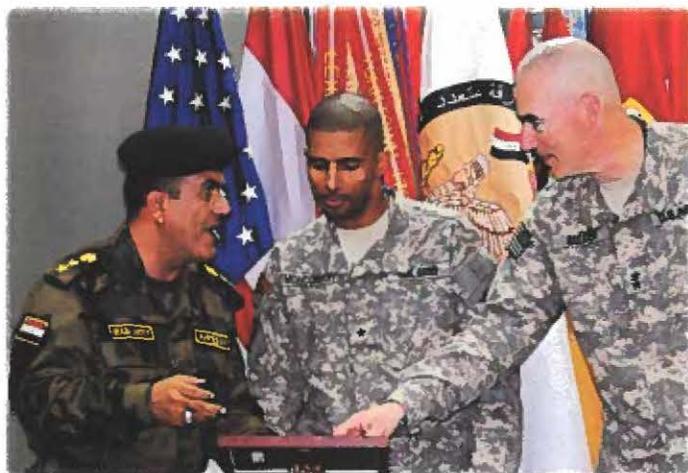
Monconduit's awards include the Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Army Superior Unit Award, Army Reserve Components Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Humanitarian Service Medal and the Army Reserve Components Overseas Training Ribbon.

The 225th Engineer Brigade from Pineville, La., officially unveiled their unit colors as the provincial engineers in Baghdad on Feb. 9, after replacing the 926th Engineer Brigade from Montgomery, Ala. ■

Please visit <http://www.dvidshub.net/units/LAANG> for the latest Louisiana National Guard releases, photos and videos.



Pineville, La., native Brig. Gen. Owen Monconduit (left), commander of the 225th Engineer Brigade, discusses the screen construction progress with two Soldiers from the 46th Engineer Battalion. They have worked for the last week on installing screens around the entire perimeter of Joint Security Station Ur in northeast Baghdad to increase the compound's defenses against terrorist attacks.



Col. Ahmed Khalifa (left), commander, 6th Iraqi Army Engineers, presents newly promoted Brig. Gen. Owen Monconduit (center) of Pineville, La., a gift in celebration of the newest general officer in the Multi-National Division – Baghdad during a ceremony Feb. 17. Maj. Gen. Daniel Bolger (right), commander of the 1st Cavalry Division, MND-B, pinned a star on Monconduit, commander of the 225th Engineer Brigade.

Photos: Scott Flanner, 225 Engineer Brigade PAO

Joint National Guard operation sling-loads jet

F-15 moved to Camp Beauregard

By 2nd Lt. Alex Juan,
159th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The Louisiana Army National Guard, Air National Guard and Mississippi Army National Guard joined forces to complete a sling-load mission that involved a CH-47 Chinook helicopter towing a 20,000-pound F-15 static display from England Air Park to Camp Beauregard March 4.

Guardsmen spent two days disassembling and reassembling the jet in order to prepare it for transport and display.

"This is the first time we have actually slung an F-15," said Staff Sgt. Michael Chaney, flight engineer with B Company, 1/111th Aviation, from Meridian, Miss.

The jet's final flight on Dec. 17, 2008, commemorated the 105th anniversary of the first powered flight by the Wright brothers. The name of Brig. Gen. Brod Veillon, LANG assistant adjutant general – Air, is displayed as the pilot, along with two deceased members of the 159th Fighter Wing family, Chief Master Sgt. Roy Ripp and Master Sgt. Pat Hock, former crew chiefs.

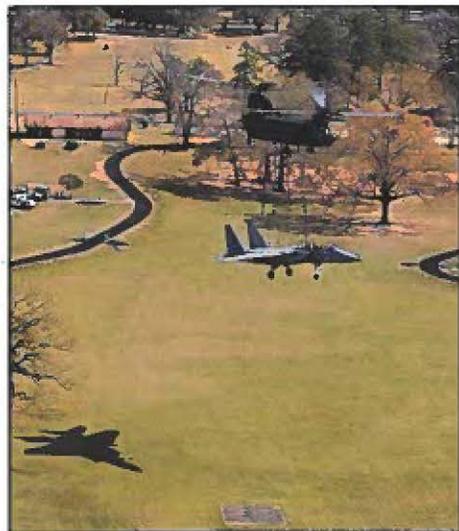
The CH-47 Chinook helicopter used for the towing was the first one given to the United States Army by the Boeing Company in 1961, according to the Chinook crew.

"Tenacity" is what most impressed Lt. Col. Pete Schneider, 159th Maintenance Group commander, about those involved with this event. "This is their first time facing this type of challenge, and it's just been fun to watch them put their minds together," Schneider concluded.

The F-15 has a wingspan of 42 feet 10 inches. "The wider the aircraft, the tougher the mission," said Chief Warrant Officer Wesley T. Skinner, CH-47 Chinook helicopter pilot for the MANG. ■



Mississippi Army National Guard's B Company, 1/111th Aviation, CH-47 Chinook helicopter makes their first attempt to properly balance the 159th Fighter Wing's F-15 static display at England Air Park, March 3.



Right, Staff Sgt. Michael Chaney and Sgt. John T. Rogers of the Mississippi Army National Guard's B Company, 1/111th Aviation, helicopter crew complete the process of hooking the 159th Fighter Wing F-15 static display on three mounting points in preparation for flight to Camp Beauregard in Pineville, La., March 4.

Left, Guardsmen from the Mississippi Army National Guard's B Company, 1/111th Aviation, CH-47 Chinook helicopter safely land the 159th Fighter Wing F-15 static display on the parade grounds at Camp Beauregard in Pineville, La.

Photos: 2nd Lt. Alex Juan

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LOUISIANA GARNERS SEVEN AWARDS FOR RECRUITING, RETAINING SOLDIERS;

State ranks first in three categories despite hurricanes, mobilizations



Staff Sgt. David L. Rogers with Detachment 2, 844th Horizontal Company, 527th Engineer Battalion in West Monroe, La., and Spc. Kimberly M. Straughter with Forward Support Company, 527th Engineer Battalion in Ruston, La., are sworn in during a re-enlistment ceremony at a Louisiana Tech University home football game in Ruston. Lt. Col. Daniel P. Bordelon, commander of the 527th, swears in the Soldiers for another six-year enlistment. Photo: Spc. Scott D. Longstreet

By Spc. Scott D. Longstreet, State Unit Public Affairs Representative

The trophy case for Recruiting and Retention Command at Camp Beauregard in Pineville just became home to a few new items. Encased within the glass-covered cabinet are trophies from past successes, now joined by some new state awards.

The Louisiana National Guard made a strong showing Oct. 11 at the National Guard Bureau's Strength Maintenance Conference in Florida by bringing home seven awards, including three first-place trophies, proving LANG is completing its mission of recruiting and sustaining Soldiers.

The state ranked number one in three categories for the large-state division. These awards focused on maintaining the current strength or enlistments in the Guard and were awarded for highest retention rate, lowest attrition rate and lowest training pipeline loss rate.

"We were the best in these strength readiness categories, which once again proves that the Louisiana Army National Guard is made of outstanding units and Soldiers," said Col. Jonathan T. Ball, commander of Recruiting and Retention Command.

The state also received four awards for achieving or exceeding the mission goal established by NGB in retention, enlisted strength, attrition and Recruit Sustainment Program mission.

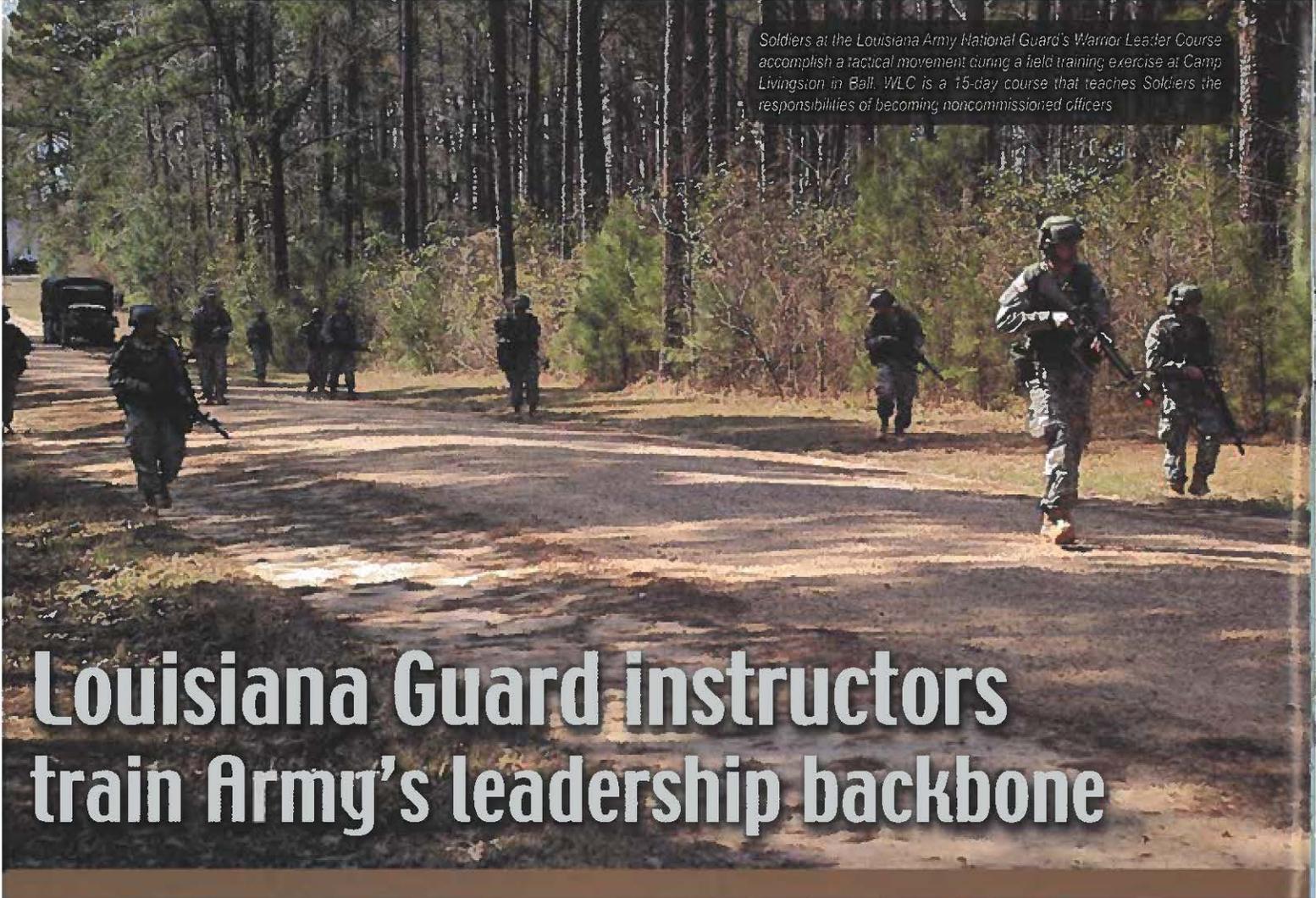
"We are extremely proud to receive these awards," said Lt. Col. Lee W. Hopkins, deputy commander for Recruiting and Retention Command. "They recognize the great work that everyone in the Louisiana National Guard has done."

In addition, a plaque and certificate for the Recruit Sustainment Program now decorate the densely populated display case. Louisiana had a summer ship rate of over 93% with a ship rate of 85.4% for the year. That means LANG had the most successful summer ship rate in the nation for getting troops off to Basic Combat Training.

The state also added another feather to its cap when the enlistment number of 166 was released at the end of October. For the seventh time since 1998, the state had over 165 enlistments in one month – even immediately following Hurricanes Gustav and Ike.

"There are people who join the Guard for the excellent benefits, but there are many who join to be part of a team and to serve their country and state," said Ball. ■

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Soldiers at the Louisiana Army National Guard's Warrior Leader Course accomplish a tactical movement during a field training exercise at Camp Livingston in Ball. WLC is a 15-day course that teaches Soldiers the responsibilities of becoming noncommissioned officers.

Louisiana Guard instructors train Army's leadership backbone

By Sgt. Michael L. Owens,
State Unit Public Affairs Representative

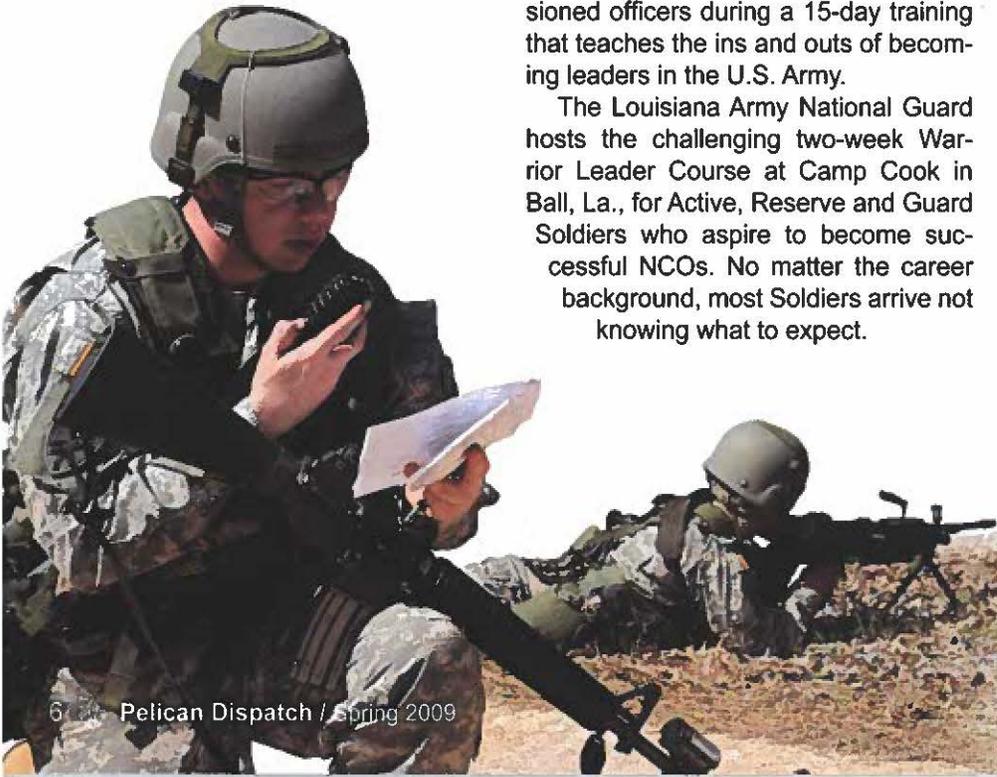
"Train to lead" is the motto used to motivate new and future noncommissioned officers during a 15-day training that teaches the ins and outs of becoming leaders in the U.S. Army.

The Louisiana Army National Guard hosts the challenging two-week Warrior Leader Course at Camp Cook in Ball, La., for Active, Reserve and Guard Soldiers who aspire to become successful NCOs. No matter the career background, most Soldiers arrive not knowing what to expect.

"On the first day, everyone seems so nervous," said Sgt. 1st Class Kelly McFarlain, senior WLC instructor. "It reminds me of recruits reporting to initial basic training."

During the initial week of the resident training, the students learn what is expected of NCOs in a garrison, or nontactical, environment. "Since most Soldiers will spend the majority of their careers in this type of atmosphere, the instructors stress the importance of becoming a good garrison leader," McFarlain explained.

As a part of garrison training, the students spend up to 12 hours in the classroom. These classes are intended to



A student at the Louisiana Army National Guard's Warrior Leader Course calls in a 9-line medical evacuation report during a field training exercise at Camp Livingston in Ball. WLC is a 15-day course that teaches Soldiers the responsibilities of becoming noncommissioned officers.



Above, Soldiers at the Louisiana Army National Guard's Warrior Leader Course react to an "enemy combatant" during a field training exercise at Camp Livingston in Ball. WLC is a 15-day course that teaches Soldiers the responsibilities of becoming noncommissioned officers.

renew their knowledge of basic soldiering skills and how to apply the leadership aspect to them.

"These classes can be long, but the knowledge we obtain is priceless," said student class leader and Pineville, La., native Spc. Jesse M. Futrell of the Louisiana Army National Guard's 812th Medical Company (Air Ambulance), 1st Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment.

Along with attending classes, the future leaders learn to conduct physical training sessions in addition to leading and moving troop formations.

Week two contains the more physical part of the course. This is when the students learn and begin to apply their leadership training in a tactical, or field, environment by participating in a 96-hour field training exercise.

"This is when the students really get to test their capabilities. They are running off very little sleep and under very extreme pressure to make the right decisions," said McFarlain.

During the FTX, each student is assigned to a leadership position with many different possible scenarios, such as responding to improvised explosive devices, calling in a 9-line medical evacuation report, and rescue and recovery missions. Along with the given scenarios, each student is as-

signed a team and is in charge of ensuring the safety of each member, just as they would in a battle environment.

"The effects of the field can sometimes be stressful," said Indiana Army National Guardsman and WLC student Sgt. Bridgette C. Kelly. "Some of the activities can be tough because females do not have the same physical strength as males, but I have learned that with

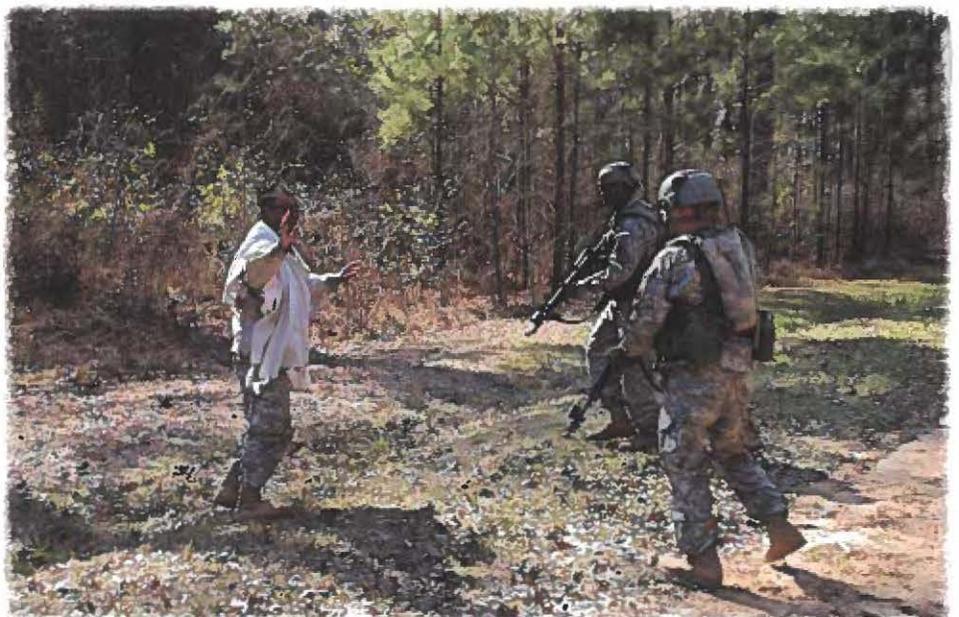
a little willpower, you can overcome any challenge," added the Saginaw, Mich., native.

After two weeks of intense and rigorous training, the knowledge the Soldiers learned is apparent in their actions and performances. "Comparing these Soldiers at day one versus day 14.... it is almost like day and night," explained McFarlain. "They are more confident in their abilities to lead and make decisions. Toward the end of the course, the students can basically run the show with little interference from the instructors."

By graduation, the students have shared the same experiences and have formed a bond with each other. They have lived in close quarters for 15 days and learned that nothing can be accomplished without teamwork.

"Coming here and working closely with other Soldiers has been awesome," said Kelly. "Though I have learned a lot, I will mostly miss my new battle buddies." ■

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Soldiers at the Louisiana Army National Guard's Warrior Leader Course practice a tactical movement during a field training exercise at Camp Livingston in Ball. WLC is a 15-day course that teaches Soldiers the responsibilities of becoming noncommissioned officers.

OPERATION OVERSEAS *Mardi Gras* 2009

LOUISIANA GUARDSMEN CELEBRATE IN IRAQ

By Sgt. Rebekah Malone, 225th Engineer Brigade Unit Public Affairs Representative



769th Engineer Battalion Commander Maj. Cindy H. Haygood of Gonzales, La., prepares for a Mardi Gras celebration by putting the finishing touches on a king cake. In an effort to spread Mardi Gras cheer to deployed soldiers, Soldiers' Angels, a nation-wide organization, sent decorations and party supplies to the Louisiana National Guard's 769th, which recently completed a 12-month deployment to Iraq.

BAGHDAD – For deployed Soldiers of the Louisiana-based 225th Engineer Brigade, you can take the Soldier out of the state, but you can't take Mardi Gras out of the Soldier.

Thanks to a generous donation of more than 170 care packages as part of "Operation Overseas Mardi Gras" from Soldiers' Angels, an organization aimed at supporting deployed service members, the engineers were able to celebrate in style.

The boxes, each addressed to an individual Soldier, were filled with decorations, beads, colorful masks, moon pies and, of course, well wishes.

"You could tell Soldiers were happy to receive boxes full of moon pies, beads and other decorations," said Lt. Col. Greg Parker of Gonzales, La. "The Mardi Gras décor and food provided "joie de vivre" (joy of living) to experience Mardi Gras in Iraq."

The headquarters building was decorated for more than a week as Soldiers opened their boxes and added decorations to the displays.

"I received a T-shirt, mask, beads, fleur-de-lis and some candy," said Sgt. 1st Class Janis Smith. The Winnsboro, La., native gave her mask to members of a jazz band playing on Camp Liberty in celebration of the holiday.

Soldiers even gave the recipe for a Mardi Gras favorite, king cake, to the cooks in the dining facility. While the interpretation wasn't perfect, it definitely added to the electric atmosphere.



Members of the Louisiana National Guard's 225th Engineer Brigade celebrate Mardi-Gras in style by dressing up in the traditional holiday attire of colorful beads and masks while showing off their Louisiana state pride, Feb. 24. These Soldiers just returned the seventh month of their eight-month tour here. The engineers assist the Government of Iraq and Iraq Security Forces with the building and construction of various projects throughout Baghdad.
Photo: U.S. Air Force Sgt. 1st Class Rebekah Malone



Members of the Louisiana National Guard's 225th Engineer Brigade pose in front of their headquarters, Feb. 24. The Soldiers didn't let a deployment to Iraq stand in their way of celebrating Mardi Gras. Donations from home and a "joie-de-vive" keeps the good times rolling.

Photo: Scott Flenner, 225th Eng. Bde., 1st Cav. Div., MND-B

Soldiers dressed in full garb celebrated as armored vehicle horns honked as they passed by the Soldiers adorned in elaborate masks and costumes.

Louisiana Soldiers said sharing Mardi Gras was the chance to share just a little piece of themselves, the state they represent and a culture rich with history and tradition.

"We can learn a lot from the Iraqi culture, but we can also share ours at the same time," Parker said. "Iraqi people love to celebrate just like we do."

This year, 1st Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment of Ham-



Members of the Louisiana National Guard's 225th Engineer Brigade celebrate Mardi-Gras Feb. 24, thanks to donations from Soldier's Angels and Operation Overseas Mardi Gras, while handing out Mardi Gras beads, stuffed animals and school supplies to Iraqi children.

mond, La., was also a recipient of Operation Overseas Mardi Gras 2009. The unit is currently deployed to Balad, Iraq.

Last year, in an initial effort to send Mardi Gras merriment to deployed troops, Soldiers' Angels sent decorations and party supplies to companies of the 769th Engineer Battalion from Baton Rouge, La., which was then on a 12-month deployment to Iraq. ■

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Louisiana Army National Guard Soldiers from the 528th Engineer Battalion in Monroe use a barrier of tear gas during the annual Emergency Deployment Readiness Exercise at Ouachita High School in Monroe. The exercise simulated the closing of an imaginary local company which would cost hundreds of locals their jobs. The Soldiers trained in vehicle searches, diversion and riot control tactics with Louisiana State Police Troop F during January drill activities.

Photo: 2nd Lt. Angela K. Fry, 528th Engineer Battalion Unit Public Affairs Representative

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Louisiana Air National Guard intercepts Marcus Schrenker plane

By Capt. Beverly G. Couto,
159th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Officer

Two Louisiana Air National Guard pilots intercepted the airplane used by Marcus Schrenker in what is now being called an attempt to fake his death. Maj. Matt Rippen and Capt. Josh Fogle, both with the 159th Fighter Wing, were manning their alert mission in Belle Chasse, La., when they got the call.

"This is just one part of our mission, which includes homeland defense," said Rippen. "We have conducted many intercepts, with the situation usually being one of someone accidentally flying off course or perhaps being on the wrong frequency."

At no time were they expecting that there was not a pilot in the airplane at all.

Sunday evening the two pilots were assigned to fly out and find an airplane which had previously made a distress call to the Federal Aviation

Administration and then gone silent. When they arrived, the airplane was still in the air headed toward the Gulf of Mexico.

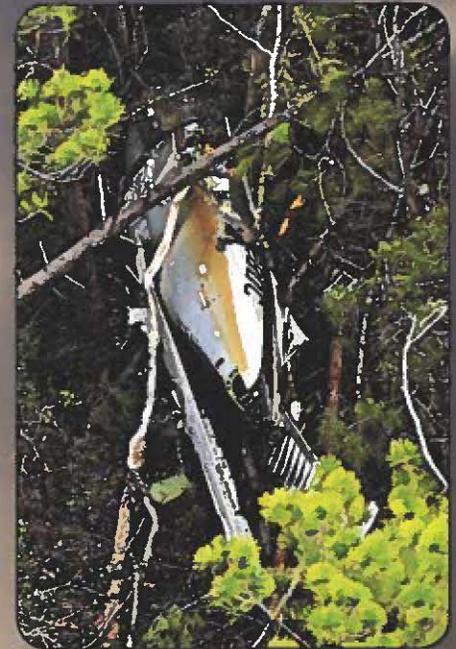
With Rippen flying above and Fogle flying next to the plane, they "shadowed" the aircraft until it impacted the ground. Fogle was then able to direct local authorities to the crash site to recover the plane and try to locate the pilot.

After finding out that the pilot was not in the aircraft in an apparent plot to fake his death, Fogle commented on Schrenker's lack of concern about the houses and people the unmanned airplane could have crashed into, "It is a little bit frustrating to me."

The 159th Fighter Wing is tasked to provide air superiority over Louisiana and the Gulf coast, while supporting the North American Aerospace Defense Command. To fulfill this mission requires air defense alert 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Rippen joined the Louisiana Air National Guard in August 2005. He has been assigned as a flight commander and alert operations officer and is now the 159th Fighter Wing's safety officer. He has flown F-15s for 12 years with more than 1100 flight hours.

Fogle is an active-duty pilot who has been assigned to the Louisiana Air National Guard's 159th Fighter Wing since August 2007. He has flown F-15s for six years and has more than 700 flight hours. ■



Military jets were scrambled to intercept Schrenker's aircraft. When they arrived, they noticed the cockpit door was ajar and could see no bloodstains. AP Photo



An F-15 from the 159th Fighter Wing of the Louisiana Air National Guard prepares to launch. Two pilots flying F-15s from the 159th intercepted the airplane used by Marcus Schrenker in what is now being called an attempt to fake his death. LANG Photo



With the assistance of Spc. Adam C. Tucker of Denham Springs, La., Sgt. Brian L. Hoffmann of Prairieville, La., prepares the 922nd Horizontal Company's meatloaf cuisine, Cajun style, incorporating a southern Louisiana taste during the Louisiana National Guard's participation in the Phillip A. Connelly Food Service Excellence field kitchen competition in Gonzales, La., Nov. 2. Photo: Staff Sgt. Stephanie J. Cross, State Aviation Command Unit Public Affairs Representative



Cajun cooks crank it out for Connelly competition

By Staff Sgt. Stephanie J. Cross,
State Aviation Command Unit Public Affairs Representative

The smell of onions and spices fills the air as two Louisiana National Guard cooks, Sgt. Brian L. Hoffmann of Prairieville and Sgt. Anthony T. Nguyen of Baton Rouge put on their game faces and prepare pepper-pot soup and meatloaf cuisine... Cajun style.

With the help of these two top-notch cooks and eight fellow Soldiers to assist with preparations, 922nd Horizontal Company Food Operations Sergeant, Staff Sgt. Pete Freeman of Baton Rouge, is determined to win the esteemed Philip A. Connelly Award, the Army's highest and most coveted award for food service excellence.

During the competition, cooks must follow a military menu, but additional ingredients may be added as long as they are

specified on the production schedule for evaluators.

"We add a Louisiana flavor to everything we cook," said Freeman. "Tony Chachere's is the number one ingredient we use," he said, pointing to the Louisiana Creole spice.

In the heat of the competition, Hoffmann and Nguyen were faced with a dilemma that could have signaled the end of their participation and shot at the title. As their pans of meatloaf and cornbread were cooking, the generator powering their mobile kitchen trailer failed. But with quick thinking and teamwork, they were able to switch out the generator and continue in the competition to meet their noon deadline.

"I was impressed with their speedy recovery," said Army Reserve Food Advisor Chief Warrant Officer 5 Daniel W.

Ormsby of Fort McPherson, Ga. "If the burners are not working, then there's no meal."

Nguyen, originally trained as a carpentry masonry specialist by the Army, honed his culinary skills working as a sushi chef at Kamado's Japanese Grill and Sushi Bar in Baton Rouge, where he quickly learned the ins and outs of the food industry.

"After working as a sushi chef, things just came naturally to me," said Nguyen. "I learned my way around the kitchen pretty quickly."

Hoffmann, then a private, found his passion while temporarily assisting the food operations sergeant. This led him to trade in his screwdriver and toolbox for a spatula and a set of knives.

After completing his training to become a cook in 2006 at Camp Parks in Dublin, Calif., Hoffmann re-enlisted in April 2008 in order to compete for the Connelly Award.

"He's the best help I've ever run across," said Freeman in his deep southern accent.

"If I were looking for a top notch food sergeant, I would look to these three cooks," said 225th Engineer Brigade Food Service Adviser, Master Sgt. Roy G. Cobb of Oakdale, La., as he complimented Hoffmann, Nguyen and Freeman on their abilities.

The 922nd was nominated by the LANG to enter the competition, and in July, they were recognized as the best in the region. Now they are seeking the national title for having the top Army National Guard field kitchen.

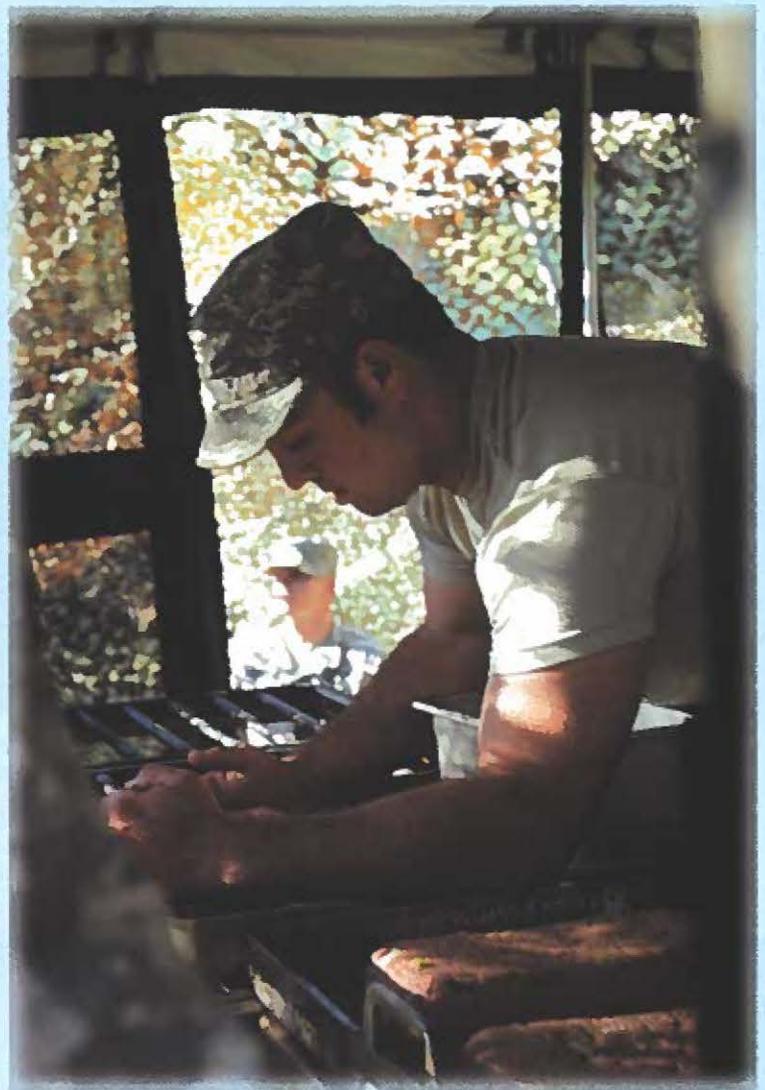
Established in March 1968 to recognize excellence in Army food service, the Philip A. Connelly Award was named after a former International Food Service Executives Association president. Connelly was known for his involvement in closely aligning military and civilian food service programs and combining goals in personnel education, training, career development and job opportunities.

The winner and runner-up are scheduled to be announced by mid-2009. The winning teams will attend the annual IFSEA Conference in Atlanta to receive their trophies. ■

Please visit <http://www.dvidshub.net/units/LAANG> for the latest Louisiana National Guard releases, photos and videos.

Soldiers of the Louisiana National Guard's 922nd Horizontal Company, Sgt. Anthony T. Nguyen and Spc. Scott A. Hancock, both of Baton Rouge, peel more than 50 potatoes for a Cajun style mashed potato recipe, incorporating Louisiana's southern spices during the Phillip A. Connelly Food Service Excellence field kitchen competition in Gonzales, La., Nov. 2.

Photo: Staff Sgt. Stephanie J. Cross, State Aviation Command Unit Public Affairs Representative



Louisiana National Guard Soldier Sgt. Brian L. Hoffmann of Prairieville, La., ensures that the 922nd Horizontal Company's Cajun style meatloaf cuisine, which incorporates many Louisiana spices, is neatly placed onto the cooking pan to keep it from falling apart during the baking process in the Phillip A. Connelly International Food Service field kitchen competition in Gonzales, La., Nov. 2.

Photo: Staff Sgt. Stephanie J. Cross, State Aviation Command Unit Public Affairs Representative



Army Combatives Course brings out the warrior in all

By Staff Sgt. Lacy L. Brown,
State Unit Public Affairs Representative

I will place the mission first.
I will never accept defeat.
I will never quit.
I will never leave a fallen comrade.

The Warrior Ethos instilled in Louisiana Army National Guard Soldiers throughout Basic Combat Training is a set of principles that every Soldier implements in both their personal and professional lives.

This ethos was apparent during the Modern Army Combatives Course at Camp Cook in Ball, La., where Soldiers from across Louisiana and Arkansas participated in a course that is fairly new to Louisiana. The combatives course was first introduced to the state in August and continues to be implemented in Guard training.

The grueling concepts and techniques of Army combatives are pulled from many types of fighting techniques from around the world.

"The program begins with the ground grappling of modern jujitsu, progresses through the throws and take-downs from wrestling judo, advances through the stand-up fighting skills of boxing and Muay Thai; and incorporates the weapons-fighting skills of Kali in the western martial arts," said Sgt. 1st Class Timothy W. Pearson, assistant instructor and course manager with the 199th Leadership Regiment at Camp Cook.

He added, "When combined with scenario-based training, a strong program is built to incorporate hand-to-hand combat at the smallest unit level.

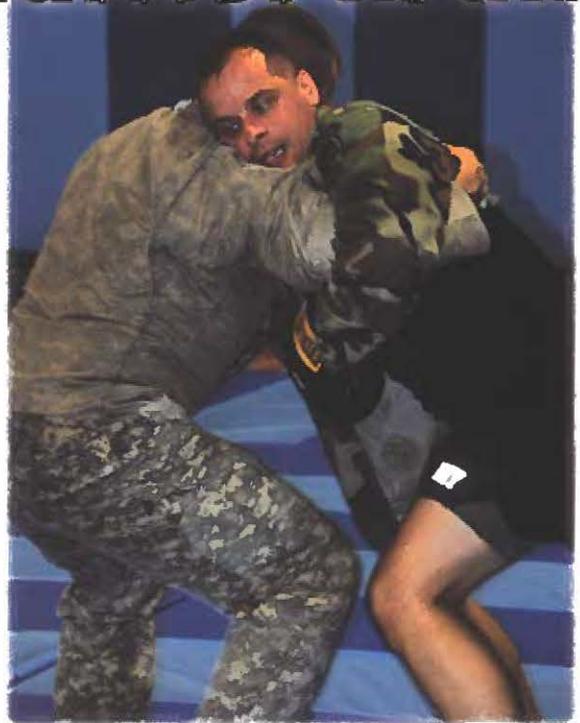
"The purpose of this course is to train the trainer and uses the Warrior Ethos as the defining characteristic to enhance the warrior's willingness to close with the enemy, no matter what skill sets they may have.

"If they are not willing to go through the door with you when it's time, then they are not really a warrior; that's what hand-to-hand training is all about," Pearson, a native of Pineville, La., stressed.

The main goal of the five-day course is to build an instructor base at the unit level so participants can train other Soldiers.

"It doesn't matter what job you have in the National Guard," said Staff Sgt. Richard G. White, of Alexandria, La. "You don't have to be infantry or combat arms. Our goal is to have a Level I Instructor in each platoon and one Level II Instructor in each company in the National Guard," the course's head instructor explained.

1st Lt. Nick S. Acosta of Thibodaux, La., and company commander of C Company, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment,



Arkansas National Guardsman Sgt. Sean R. Walters, left, attempts to put Louisiana Army National Guardsman Sgt. 1st Class Timothy W. Pearson, assistant instructor of the Modern Army Combatives Course, into a defensive hold during a sparring session at the five-day combatives course at Camp Cook in Ball, La. The goal of the course was to enhance warrior skills of the 10 Soldiers in attendance.

Photo: Staff Sgt. Lacy L. Brown, State Unit Public Affairs Representative

knows the importance of incorporating basic combative skills into his daily unit mission, as he works full time for the Pre-mobilization Training Assistant Element at the Gillis W. Long Center in Carville, La.

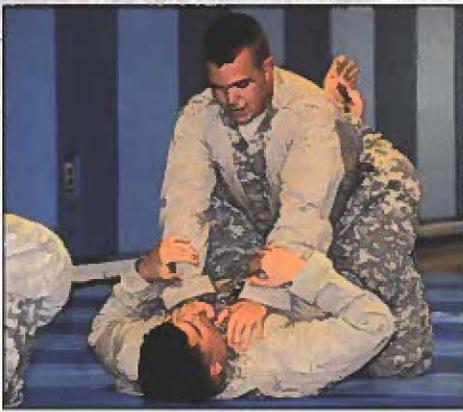
The PTAE is responsible for validating warrior tasks and battle drills to units prior to deployment.

"This training helps me see what 'right' looks like," said Acosta, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom. "When we are all trained to the same standard, it makes it easier to properly teach combatives to units that are preparing to deploy overseas."

Soldiers received blows during the physically challenging sessions. There were many bruises and abrasions, but there was an overall sense of accomplishment at the end of the training.

"My body is sore, but this is great training to bring back to the unit," said Spc. John E. Callahan of the 415th Military Intelligence Battalion in Carville, La.

"This is one of the more challenging military schools I've been to, both physically and mentally," said Acosta. "Anyone interested in this course should come well prepared and be physically fit, flexible and possess strong endurance levels."



Arkansas National Guardsman Sgt. Sean R. Walters dominates Spc. John E. Callahan of the Louisiana Army National Guard's 415th Military Intelligence Battalion in Carville, La., while practicing ground grappling drills during the Modern Army Combatives Course held at Camp Cook in Ball, La. Callahan, a native of New Orleans, accompanied nine other Soldiers in enhancing their warrior skills during the five-day course.

Photo: Staff Sgt. Lacy L. Brown, State Unit Public Affairs Representative

Aggression, motivation and endurance are all elements that are focused on during this course.

"Soldiers are not going to win the next war because they are better hand-to-hand fighters physically. They are going to win the next war because they have the discipline to be the better hand-to-hand fighter," Pearson concluded. ■



Louisiana Army National Guardsman 1st Lt. Nick S. Acosta of Thibodaux, La., with C Company, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry Regiment, defends himself against sparring partner Capt. Daniel H. Fritts, of Baton Rouge, La., with Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 256th Infantry Brigade Combat Team during the Modern Army Combatives Course at Camp Cook in Ball, La. Acosta and Fritts were among eight other Soldiers who practiced their warrior skills and combative techniques during the week-long course.

Photo: Staff Sgt. Lacy L. Brown, State Unit Public Affairs Representative



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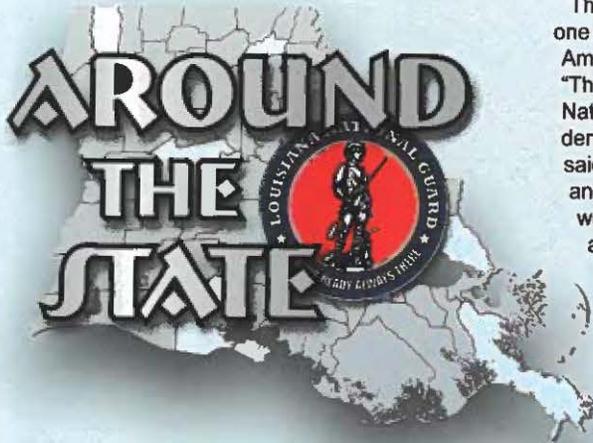
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ZACHARY

Louisiana Army National Guard Maj. Cindy H. Haygood, commander of the **769th Engineer Battalion, 225th Engineer Brigade**, presented Zachary Mayor Henry J. Martinez with a U.S. flag at a city council meeting at Zachary City Hall, Jan. 27.

"On behalf of every Soldier in the 769th, I am giving this flag as a token of appreciation for the support that the city of Zachary has shown the battalion," said Haygood, a Leesville, La., native.

The flag, which was flown over Multi-National Corps Headquarters in Iraq, was originally presented to Maj. Gen. Hunt B. Downer, LANG Assistant Adjutant General, at the city's annual Z Fest May 6, 2006, when the mayor and city council signed a declaration officially dedicating that date as 769th Day.

Upon deploying in 2007, the engineers' request to take the flag with them overseas was granted. "We had every intention of returning the flag to the city, but we wanted to fly it during our deployment to give it a more symbolic value," said Maj. Jason P. Mahfouz, 769th operations officer.

NEW ORLEANS

Col. Roy V. Qualls of Gretna, La., formally took command of the Louisiana Air National Guard's **159th Fighter Wing** during a ceremony at the Naval Air Station Joint Reserve Base in Belle Chasse, La., Feb. 8.

Qualls, who assumed command from Col. Michael J. Lopinto, addressed more than 600 members of the wing, emphasizing the Air Force core value: service before self. "It is a circle of selflessness that builds upon itself and makes us better people," he stressed, as he also acknowledged his appreciation for the support and heroism displayed by the families and friends of members of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Outgoing commander Lopinto, a 25-year veteran of the Air Guard, recognized the hard work of the wing during his two years of leadership. The New Orleans native listed the many accomplishments of the unit to include excellent ratings for the operations group, the medical group and the wing in several higher headquarter inspections.

The 159th was also named the number one Air Sovereignty Alert unit in North America during Lopinto's command. "The past success of the Louisiana Air National Guard is the work of the wonderful Airmen I see in front of me," he said. "You are our greatest resource and our greatest power. I'm proud to wear the 159th Fighter Wing patch and to have led the unmatched professionals who make this a world-class organization."

PINEVILLE

The Louisiana National Guard celebrated the completion of a multi-million dollar project during a ribbon-cutting ceremony at Camp Beauregard

in Pineville, Feb. 27.

A \$33 million project, the new building houses the **Joint Force Headquarters** and the **Joint Operations Center**.

"This is a facility that gives the Guard exactly the tools they need to protect us, to serve us and to keep us safe, and I'm glad it's here in central Louisiana," Gov. Bobby Jindal said after speaking of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. "It gives the Guard the ability to respond to all corners of the state quicker."

Equipped with an automatic back-up generator throughout, and a staff of more than 100 personnel capable of conducting 24-hour operations during emergencies, the headquarters building is specifically designed to enable operations throughout the state for emergency response missions and year-round planning and preparation.

BATON ROUGE

The Louisiana National Guard broke ground Nov. 20 to mark the start of construction for the long-awaited joint military center to be built in Baton Rouge.

"This is a great day for Baton Rouge, and I am proud to be a part of such an extraordinary event," said Mayor-President Melvin "Kip" Holden. "It is not only an effort to build a partnership between the city and the military, but it is about forming a family," explained Holden.

The new Armed Forces Reserve Center will provide operation and training facilities along with a field maintenance shop for the Louisiana Army National Guard, Army Reserve and Marine Corps Reserve forces.

LANG will have the largest presence at the facility with approximately 370 Soldiers from the **769th Engineer Battalion**. The Army Reserve's 1190th Transportation Group will be second with approximately 250 Troops and 3rd Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment, will bring in approximately 130 reserve Marines. These units are currently based throughout the Baton Rouge area.

"With this new facility, we will be able to provide realistic training environments that maximize the capabilities of our Soldiers throughout all military forces," said Capt. William W. Saint, project officer for the Construc-

tion Facility Management Office.

The multi-use facility, adjacent to Louisiana State University's South Campus, will be built on approximately 44 acres and will comprise a 160,000-square-foot joint readiness center and a 20,000-square-foot maintenance building.

CARVILLE

The Louisiana National Guard's **61st Troop Command** reached a new milestone as they officially opened their new state-of-the-art Readiness Center in Carville, Dec. 4, three years after Hurricane Katrina destroyed their headquarters at Jackson Barracks in New Orleans.

"Our responsibility is to help get resources to units that are engaged in their local communities during a state of emergency," said Col. Jordan T. Jones, commander of the unit. "We want to ensure they have all the resources and assets they need to help the local governments."

The center provides an area for conducting periodic emergency training events and can house more than 80 personnel for 24-hour operations during large-scale emergencies.

"Learning from what happened at Jackson Barracks, we realized that the 61st Troop Command should be located in the center of the state, closer to Baton Rouge, to provide a command and control node," said Construction and Facility Management Officer Lt. Col. Bill R. Aldridge of Alexandria, La. "The Gillis W. Long Center rose as the best possible location for the unit to support state and federal missions," he added.

The Readiness Center is one of approximately 16 projects in Louisiana funded after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina to increase the ability of the National Guard to respond to future disasters.

MARRERO

The Louisiana Army National Guard's **2225th Multi-Role Bridge Company, 205th Engineer Battalion**, celebrated the opening of their new Readiness Center with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in Marrero, Dec. 6.

"This is an awesome success story," said Maj. Gen. Bennett C. Landreneau, LANG Adjutant General. "When the idea of putting a unit in this area originated, local officials were supportive, but finding a place for a new armory somewhere became a complicated mission itself."

The new facility was a welcome relief for the 190 members of the 2225th, who for the past three years have been training in cramped quarters. Lack of space forced the unit to share a facility owned by the Jefferson Parish Health Unit with LANG recruiters and the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals.

"This building lets us take advantage of new training opportunities," said Capt. Josh S. Davis, 2225th company commander. "With all of the new training equipment and space, we can efficiently prepare for future missions," added the Bogalusa, La., native.

The new center is equipped to support the local, state and federal missions of the 2225th which include providing personnel and equipment to transport, assemble, disassemble, retrieve and maintain all standard U.S. Army bridging systems.

BOSSIER CITY

The Louisiana National Guard welcomed home approximately 80 Soldiers of the **165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, 139th Regional Support Group** from Bossier City at a redeployment reception in Baton Rouge, Dec. 30.

The 165th is composed of 10 separate elements at nine armories located across the state. While overseas, their mission in Iraq included delivering heavy equipment supplies, transferring bulk fuel, and performing maintenance operations.

This diversity of jobs was made possible through the Army's "plug and play" philosophy that allows support units to have more flexible missions. The battalion completed over 10,000 maintenance jobs, 20,000 deliveries of heavy equipment and distributed an estimated 150,000 tons of supplies throughout Iraq.

PINEVILLE

Louisiana Army National Guard Soldiers from **Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 225th Engineer Brigade**, said farewell to family and friends at a deployment ceremony held in December at Louisiana College's Guinn Auditorium.

Approximately 140 Soldiers departed for Fort Hood, Texas, to begin training for their one-year deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Brig. Gen. Owen W. Monconduit of St. James, La., will command the 225th during its deployment. The unit will provide command and control over subordinate engineer battalions within their area of operation to include route clearance, route sanitation, force protection improvements, infrastructure improvements and military construction.

"People are just beginning to understand how important you are," said Pineville Mayor Clarence R. Fields. "To make the decision to serve and to deploy, it speaks volumes for who you are, and I want to thank both you and the families and friends that support you."

AT&T donated 600 phone cards to help the deploying Soldiers call home for free over the upcoming holidays.

NEW ORLEANS

The Louisiana Army National Guard's **1st Battalion, 141st Field Artillery Regiment**, participated in an annual wreath-laying ceremony Jan. 8, at historic Jackson Square Park in New Orleans. The ceremony honors the fallen Soldiers of the Battle of New Orleans and is sponsored by the U.S. Daughters of 1812.

"This event endures year after year and symbolizes our tradition," said Maj. Jacques D. Walker of New Orleans, fire support commander of the 256th Infantry Brigade Combat

Team. "It gives me great honor to be able to play a part in such a wonderful event," added Walker, who is also the president of Louisiana's branch of the Society of the War of 1812.

The Battle of New Orleans took place on Jan. 8, 1815, on the Chalmette, La., battleground and was the last major battle of the War of 1812. It marked Louisiana's admission into the Union.

CARVILLE

Soldiers of the Louisiana National Guard's **A Company, 415th Military Intelligence Battalion**, gathered at the Gillis W. Long Center in Carville to bid farewell to family and friends during a deployment ceremony, Dec. 3.

Approximately 11 LANG Soldiers will deploy to Afghanistan with the Texas National Guard's 636th Military Intelligence Battalion in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The 415th will supplement the 636th with intelligence agents, human intelligence collectors, linguists, and administrative and logistical support personnel.

"I am very honored to be here today with these patriots who have stepped up to serve their country and state," said Landreneau. "They are dedicated professionals, and we are extremely lucky to have such talented men and women in this unit."

While deployed, the 415th will focus on conducting counterintelligence, force protection, interrogations, document exploitation and language support operations to the land forces commander.

ST. GABRIEL

Louisiana National Guard Recruiter Staff Sgt. Michael I. Davila of New Orleans and 20-year-old LANG recruit Pvt. Crystal M. Collins of Dutchtown, La., gave the students of East Iberville High School in St. Gabriel a lesson in rock climbing during their physical education class, Jan. 15.

Davila chose the climbing wall because he knew the students would enjoy the challenge, and it promotes something that is very important in the military — physical fitness. It is also a great recruiting tool.

Davila recruits at the school, and Principal Maria Delouise has given him a permanent hall pass because she feels that having Soldiers walking through the school is a good example for the students to follow.

"I have received a tremendous amount of support from the school's administration," said Davila. "The principal's daughter, an active duty Army officer, is currently deployed to Iraq, and Ms. Delouise feels that it is her duty to expose her students to the military."

RESERVE

The Louisiana Army National Guard's **1084th Transportation Company, 165th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion**, unveiled its new \$15.9 million readiness center with the help of Gov. Bobby Jindal during a ceremonial ribbon-cutting event in Reserve, Jan. 14.

"It is an amazing privilege and honor for me to be here today for these incredibly brave men and women who did extremely well in serving their state during Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. I have never been more impressed and more grateful than I was with the response of this National Guard unit," Jindal said.

The 32,500-square-foot center will house approximately 172 Guardsmen from the 1084th during annual training and drill weekends. The readiness center was specially designed to support the federal, state and local missions of the unit.

HAMMOND

Louisiana National Guard Soldiers of **Detachment 38, Operational Support Airlift**, said farewell to family and friends Oct. 23 during a deployment ceremony held at the Army Aviation Support Facility #1 in Hammond.

The fixed-wing detachment of the **204th Theater Airfield Operations Group** is deploying for approximately nine months to Djibouti, Africa, with two C-12 fixed-wing aircraft to provide Priority Air Transport, a "high-priority" air taxi service to embassy personnel and commanders of the United States Africa Command throughout Africa and the Middle East.

"My real heroes are the men and women here today in uniform," said Gov. Bobby Jindal. "I look forward to the day, months from now, when we welcome our Soldiers back."

This is the first time a C-12 unit has been called to deploy to Africa in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Pilots and crewmembers of the fixed-wing unit flew the two aircraft to Djibouti, Africa, and the trip took approximately a week of travel before reaching their final destination.

NGB

The Department of Defense announced recently the promotion of Air National Guard Lt. Gen. Craig R. McKinley to the rank of four-star general at a Pentagon ceremony hosted by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates.

McKinley, the first four-star general to hold this position, also assumed duties as chief of the **National Guard Bureau**, succeeding Army Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, whom Gates selected to become the deputy commander of U.S. Northern Command. McKinley had previously served as the Director of the Air National Guard and will be the first reserve component officer to serve as deputy commander in a combat command.

The Guard Bureau chief is the senior uniformed National Guard officer responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, programs and plans affecting more than half a million Army and Air National Guard personnel, including civilian employees.

Congress authorized the elevation of the position of chief, National Guard Bureau, to the rank of four-star general in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008. At the same time it significantly increased the duties and responsibilities associated with the position. ■

Monthly premiums decrease for TRICARE Reserve Select

Effective Jan. 1, 2009, TRICARE will reduce the rates for TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS). Monthly premiums for TRS individual coverage will drop 44% from \$81.00 to \$47.51, and TRS family coverage will drop 29% from \$253.00 to \$180.17.

The 2009 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), section 704, required TRICARE to analyze Reserve Select costs from 2006 and 2007, and set new rates for 2009.

"Now that TRS has been in place for several years, we were able to calculate premiums for 2009 from actual cost data obtained in earlier years," said Army Maj. Gen. Elder Granger, deputy director of TRICARE Management Activity. "It is important to provide high quality and affordable healthcare coverage for our National Guard and Reserve families."

Established in 2005, TRS is a premium-based health plan for National Guard and Reserve personnel available for purchase by members of the Selected Reserve who are not eligible for or enrolled in Federal Employee Health Benefit plans.

TRS provides a health plan option to members of the Selected Reserve and their families when they are not on active duty status. The TRS plan delivers coverage similar to TRICARE Standard and Extra to eligible members who purchase the coverage and pay monthly premiums. TRS also features continuous open enrollment.

"It's an excellent health care option we are proud to offer," Granger said.

For more information about TRS visit the TRICARE Web site at: <http://www.tricare.mil>.

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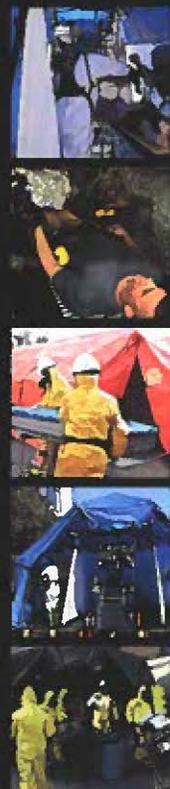
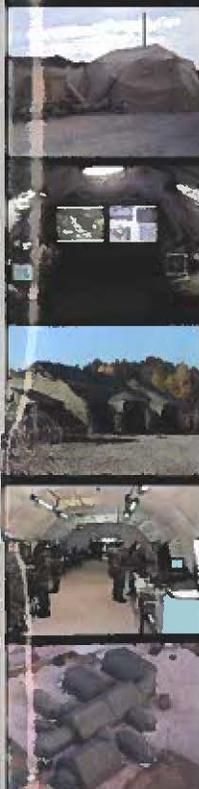
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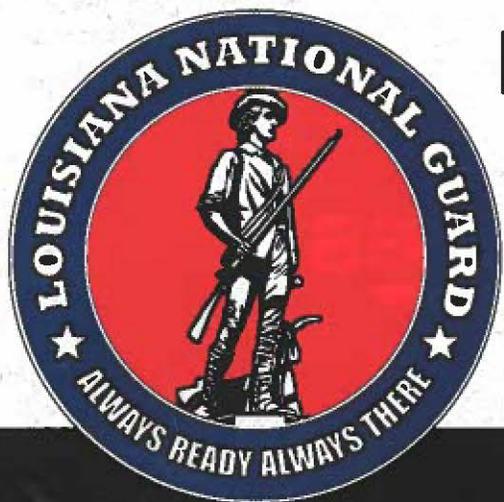
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