The Straight Arrow

Vol. 53 No. 2 Joint Force Headquarters North Dakota National Guard Spring 2007

'It's good to be home'

Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Billie Jo Lorius, Joint Force Headquarters

1st Battalion, 188th Air Defense Artillery Regiment (188th ADA-SECFOR), based out of Grand Forks and Bismarck, returned home the end of March. The unit, which served in Afghanistan, originally deployed with 152 Soldiers and has been on active duty since December 2005. The unit had four Soldiers killed in action.

"The 188th ADA (SECFOR) successfully accomplished a wide array of missions all across Afghanistan," said N.D. National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk. "Whether it was security patrols, border protection or humanitarian aide, these great Guardsmen always performed exceptionally well."

On March 22, 115 of the unit's Soldiers went through the demobilization process at Ft. Lewis, Wash. The remaining 29 Soldiers stayed in Afghanistan an additional week to ensure a smooth mission hand-off to follow-on forces and arrived at Fort Lewis March 28. After the demobilization process, the first group arrived home March 30 and the second group arrived April 3rd.

"It's good to be home," said Sgt. Donald Vetter.

The 188th ADA (SECFOR) had a difficult and important mission while in Afghanistan, said Sprynczynatyk. "The unit was looking out for the safety of troops and citizens; that mission is complete and we are very proud of them."

"North Dakotans can be proud of the way our SECFOR Soldiers executed their numerous missions under hostile conditions," said Hoeven.

On a daily basis, Soldiers trained Afghan police, conducted presence and control patrols and participated in surveillance of the area. The unit also performed humanitarian aid missions that gave them the opportunity to interact with local citizens.

"The Afghan people have very little, so we distributed packages from communities and churches back home," said Sgt. Ryan Sayer. "Being with kids and providing humanitarian aid was the best part of the deployment - seeing the kids and seeing them smiling – or fighting over a stuffed animal; something that is small to us, but big to them."

Sgt. First Class Dawn Holm keeps a constant smile as she goes through the demobilization process.

Recent mobilizations have affected virtually every facet of the North Dakota National Guard. Since Sept. 11, 2001, approximately 3,500 North Dakota Soldiers and Airman have been activated to support the war on terror. This is the second highest number of mobilized troops since WWI from 1917 to 1918 when 3,700 Army Soldiers from North Dakota were activated.

The Soldiers believed that they made a direct impact on the Afghan citizens.

"I think one person at a time is where we made the most difference," said Sgt. Josh Kramer. He said that their presence and interaction with the locals influenced a positive attitude about Americans. "Seeing that we are really there to help might in 20 to 30 years influence the people."

Kramer added that the Afghan Soldiers were always happy to see them, often cheering as they approached. "We made a lot of good friends, even though we didn't speak the same language."

Our unit helped the Afghan government regain control of its communities and it was rewarding to see the progress that happened over time", said Vetter. "We provided a strong image of order, security and peace. I saw it make a difference; there was no order when we got there, but as soon as we helped establish that order the schools re-opened."

Sgt. First Class Dawn Holm worked as a medic while deployed. She said she valued her experience because she learned something new every day. "I was highly trained, but had zero real-world experience. This showed me that I could deal with emergency situations," she said.

"My biggest fear wasn't being killed; it was performing my job adequately and I did. I am proud of that. It was the most fulfilling experience of my life – helping people very day. I fell in love with the country and the people," added Holm.

Soldiers also learned that they value being an American.

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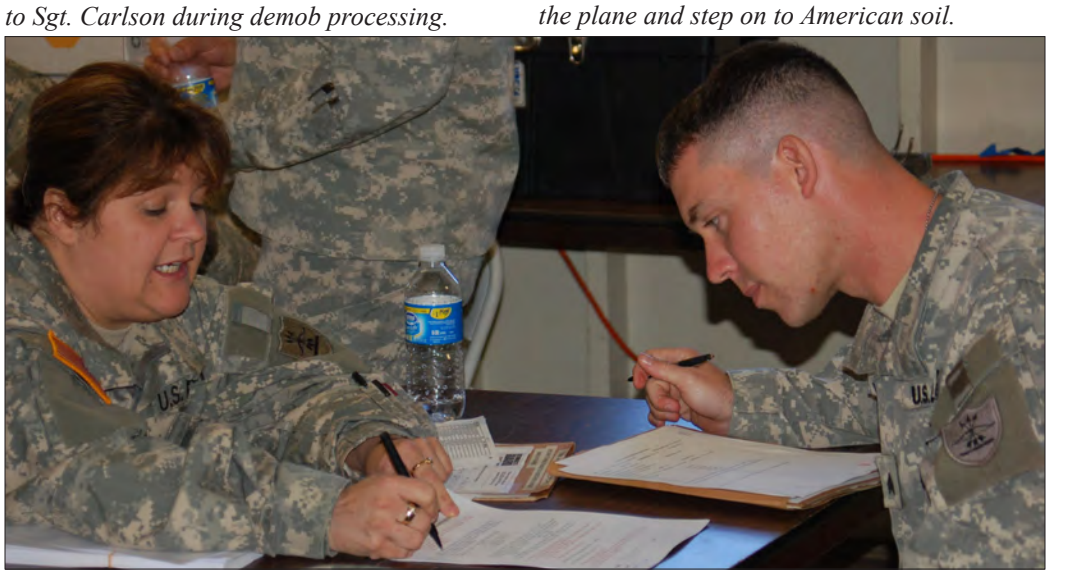
N.D. National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk greets Sgt. Amanda Ostlie as she exits the plane.

New full-time Chaplain (Lt.) Justin Schmidt talks to Sgt. Carlson during demob processing.

A group of 188th ADA SECFOR Soldiers exit the plane and step on to American soil.



Staff Sgt. Diane Wald helps Sgt. Autumn Gietzen, 188th ADA, through his demob paper work.

957th engineers receive Valorous Unit Award

A North Dakota Guard unit received a prestigious award on March 24 for superior mission performance while in Iraq. The 957th Engineer Company received the Valorous Unit Award after serving in Iraq from April 2003 through May 2004. The award is given to units for extraordinary heroism in action against an armed enemy. It`s an award that can only be given during wartime. It requires the same degree of heroism that an individual would receive the Silver Star for.

"To me, it personally means each one of these Soldiers committed a whole year of their life to do the best they can and a lot of them received awards but this one is an award they share as a unit, as a family," says Capt. Dan Buer, who commanded the 957th while the unit was in Iraq.

The Soldiers assigned to the 957th can wear the award on their dress uniforms.

Photo by CW3 Kiel Skager, Joint Force Headquarters

Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, Adjutant General shakes hands with Brig. Gen. Jerald Engelman at the change-of-responsibility ceremony held on April 14, Brig. Gen. Jerald Engelman, Deputy Adjutant General, North Dakota National Guard transfered his position as Adjutant General for Air to Col. Patrick Martin and as Deputy Adjutant General to Col. Alan Dohrmann. Presiding over the change of responsibilities ceremony was N.D. National Guard Commander-in-Chief, Gov. John Hoeven.

Brig. Gen. Engelman retires

(Editor's note: The following is a letter written by Brig. Gen. Jerald Engelman and submitted to the Straight Arrow.)

As we donned the uniform many years ago together, less change and more tranquility permeated the organization. Today, the events of current times stress and stretch this organization as never seen or been felt before. For the foreseeable future, you will continue to have mobilizations in dangerous locations and fast-paced change at home stations. As a result, many opportunities will present themselves as you are called to new duty stations and many of you are asked to take on new responsibilities. To ride this tide of changing landscape, you must take the professionalism, integrity, esprit decour, character and can-do attitude of the North Dakota Army National Guard culture that you an your predecessors have fostered, and apply it to your new roles.

As you deal with change, transition, and the stresses of war, you need to pull together as individuals, families and as an organization and bolster and support each other. Strengthen your relationships with each other. Champion your successes and remember your heritage as a professional military ogranization. Use the many and varied resources put in place as a result of lessons learned from past wars and conflicts, like the chaplaincy, including the full-time state chaplains and the family programs and the National Guard social workers. Take the Critical Incident Stress Management trained crisis responder course and use the Emergency Relief Fund (ERF) if necessary or the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), if applicable. Trust that all North Dakota leadership at every level -- national, state and National Guard -- is doing everything within their power to ensure your continued success.

In their own words

As we retire, we want you to know that we have never been prouder to be a part of any organization. We look to cheering you on, now, from the side lines. Because your identity is deeply imbedded in the organization and is so strong and professional, we have evey confidence that you will not falter or fail. After all, you are the best. You are the North Dakota Guard.

All the best,

Brigadier General Jerry and Linda Engelman

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Band brings music to 2,500 students during tour

By Staff Sgt. Mike Hagburg, 188th Army Band

Seeking to expose young people to the National Guard, the 188th Army Band traveled more than 1,500 miles during its January Music in Schools tour.

The miles paid off: more that 2,500 students in eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota saw the band during its Jan. 3-5 tour.

"I think it was the most successful recruiting event the band has ever done," said Sgt. Teri Ruff, a clarinet player who served as a recruiting assistant during the tour.

Hundreds of students filled out lead cards and the tour generated "approximately 80 credible recruiting leads," said Spc. Chris Hanson, the band's operations specialist. Hanson planned and organized the tour.

"Some kids just wanted free stuff but an alarming amount showed genuine interest in serving their country," said Spc. Quaya Schock, a saxophone player. As a recruiting assistant during the tour, Schock was able to meet with students and talk with them about the Guard.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Jeff Pfingsten, 188th Army Band

Spc. Jesse Braunagel, Sgt. Tom Jankowski, Spc. Chris Hanson and Sgt. Tim Knabe play brass quintet music for students at Fargo South High School.

The band presented 14 concerts during the Music in Schools tour. On Jan. 3, it performed in the Fargo area at Lewis and Clark Elementary School, Fargo South High School, West Fargo High School and Moorhead High School. On Jan. 4, the band traveled to schools in Casselton, Enderlin, Kindred and Valley City. On Jan. 5, the band played in Devils Lake, Finley, Grafton, Lakota, Mayville, and Karlstad, Minn.

"It was good to do something new and cover so much ground in such a short time," said Spc. Amanda Carvalho, a horn player and recruiting assistant for the band. "I think it was a very effective AT as far as training and publicity both."

The band was able to visit 14 different schools during the tour because it split into small groups: a brass quintet, a flute trio, a large jazz band, a small jazz combo, a Dixieland band, a country/rock band and a blues/rock band.

"It was wonderful to see students and teachers alike get up and shake a leg."
Spc. Quaya Schock, 188th Army Band

Aside from giving the band more mobility and the ability to reach more venues and a wider audience, splitting into small groups also allowed the band to use its Soldiers more productively and gave its small group leaders new leadership opportunities, said Sgt. 1st Class Don Nagle, one of the band's music directors.

Schock said the small musical groups – especially the rock bands – showed students a different side of military music and of the Guard.

"It was wonderful to see students and teachers alike get up and shake a leg," said Schock. "Being able to get out into the area communities and share the talent and bring smiles to kids' and adults' faces was truly a wonderful experience."

'Now is the time for family'

Continued from page 1

"You realize just how good we have it in America. The poorest Americans are a lot richer than the people of Afghanistan; they just don't have much," said Kramer.

Spc. Drew Vinchattle said he also learned to appreciate the everyday things that are sometimes taken for granted. "It feels really good to know we are done. After everything we went through, my family is much more valuable to me; I had a son while I was away. To see how much I missed – I know that every minute is important."

"Now is the time for family," Vinchattle said.

Mission highlights

The 188th ADA SECFOR is credited with over 1,200 successful missions. Some of the mission highlights included:

Training over 2,700 personnel from the Afghan Border Police and Afghan National Police Forces which directly contributed to improved border and internal security.

Humanitarian assistance missions including medical treatment of over 2,500 Afghan citizens and delivering humanitarian assistance food packages which helped feed over 5,000 families last winter.

Participation in three school reconstruction projects which served over 3,000 Afghan children; coordinated construction of ten community water wells; coordinated Commanders Emergency Relief Projects (CERP) which assisted Afghans in improving their communities with various construction projects.

Photo by Staff Sgt. Billie Jo Lorius, Joint Force Headquarters

During the demobilization process, Spc. Cole Larocque takes a moment to smile. "I feel like I did some positive things for Afghanistan. I helped out schools and did humanitarian aid. The experience has been valuable. I've learned my strengths and weaknesses," he said.

Combined conference held

Story and photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

The annual North Dakota National Guard Combined State Associations Conference was held Feb. 23-25 at the Best Western - Doublewood Inn in Bismarck. Activities during the conference included recognition of the Soldiers, Airmen and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO) of the Year, a National Guard Association of North Dakota (NGAND) Executive Council meeting, an NGAND Board of Directors meeting, an NDNGEA Auxiliary meeting, and a Combined Executive Board (Officer, Enlisted and Auxiliary) meeting. Speakers addressed legislative updates, leadership, military health care, Military One Source and USAA. There was an awards banquet and a military ball, with music by the Fargo based 188th Army Band.

The Soldier of the Year was Spc. Joel Erickson, Lisbon, N.D., a member of the Lisbon, based Detachment 2, 815th Engineer Company. The alternate was Spc. Corey J. Moen, Williston, N.D., of the Williston based Detachment 2, 816th Engineer Company.

The Army Non-commissioned Officer (NCO) of the Year was Sgt. Russell Garrett, Riverdale, N.D., of the Bismarck based Detachment 2, 832nd Medical Company (Air Ambulance). The alternate was Sgt. Jason P. Lothspeich, Grand Forks, N.D., of the Williston based 818th Engineer Company.

The Airman of the Year was Senior Airman Joshua C. Bartholomew. The Air Guard NCO of the Year was Tech. Sgt. Jacy J. Voglewede, and the Air Guard Senior NCO of the Year was Master Sgt. Duane R. Kangas. All are members of the Fargo based 119th Wing.

The Company Grade Officers of the Year was Chief Warrant Officer Two Kevin R. Mehrer (Army National Guard) and Cpt. Teresa McDonough (Air National Guard). Field Grade Officers of the Year was Maj. David L. Johnson (Army National Guard) and Maj. Greg McDonald (Air National Guard).

The Army Family of the Year was Sgt. Justin and Kate Gartner, Bismarck, with children Bryce and Baylee. Gartner is a member of the Bismarck based Co. C 2nd-285th Aviation Assault Battalion, and was deployed to Bosnia with Task Force Strike. The Air National Guard Family of the Year was awarded to Master Sgt. Chris Heise and Master Sgt. Monica Heise.

The NGAND Executive Council members are the Adjutant General, ex officio, Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk; Chair, Maj. Brian Keller; Chair Elect, Lt. Col. Mike Nelson; Vice Chair, Maj. Sean Johnson; Treasurer, 1st Lt. Penny Ripperger; Insurance Representative, Col. (R) Gene Orsund; and President / Executive Director, Lt. Col. Brent Ehrichs.

The new Auxiliary officers are: President, Shelly Kasin; Past President, Jeri Christiansen; Vice President, Pam Johnson; Secretary, Marie O'Brien; Treasurer, Barb Ransom; Army at Large, Vaune Cripe; and Air at Large, Sharon Jacobson.

Army Non-commissioned Officer (NCO) of the Year Sgt. Russell Garrett, Riverdale, of Detachment 2, 832nd Medical Company, and Soldier of the Year Spc. Joel Erickson, Lisbon, of Detachment 2, 815th Engineer Company.

Officer Candidate School:

Holding onto the past, moving into the future

By Officer Candidate Peter Hartje and Officer Candidate Anthony Kessel

Where do you, or did you, want to be when you turned 50 years old: getting ready for retirement? North Dakota's Officer Candidate School (OCS) has approached this milestone. But, instead of slowing down after many successful years, the tradition of OCS continues to produce many officers of the highest quality. The 50th class is compromised of eight Officer Candidates: Peter Hartje, Anthony Kessel, Lance Meier, Patrick Rodgers, Alan Roehrich, Robert Roehrich, Sandra Wade, and James Wald. (We have a set of twin brothers but no, it does not confuse the TAC staff.) In just a few short months, our class will begin leading various platoons around the state. As a class, we are looking forward to serving the National Guard and supporting the Regular Army.

Tradition is more than doing the same things repetitively. As the program progresses, it continues to evolve and serve the needs that the Army presents it. One of the key changes in today's Army consists of the use of new technology. The 164th Regiment - Regional Training Institute has taken great strides to address this change in the OCS program, issuing each Officer Candidate an "iPAQ" Personal Digital Assistant (PDA). The PDAs aid in organization, information processing, and classroom skills. The PDAs will also aid future classes through rapid communication, electronic mapping, and the preparation of documents. These very important tools have improved the quality of the program.

Many alumni remember the OCS program including many "out of the ordinary" and at times humorous tasks candidates would perform en route to becoming officers. With the stresses applied by the TAC officers, humorous moments will always happen in OCS. But recently, a greater emphasis has been placed on tasks to improve the candidate's leadership abilities in battle preparation, troop care, communication skills, understanding of the Army's structure, awareness of current events and conflicts. This transition has aided greatly in the formation of officers passing on experience and knowledge to new leaders.

Today in the National Guard, we are greatly in need of leaders necessary to operate fully and efficiently. Now is the time to take advantage of this and move forward in your military career. If you are interested in becoming an officer, speak with your chain-of-command about Eagle Flight weekend and the OCS program. As Soldiers, we are all aware of sacrifice and dedication. Helen Keller once said, "Many persons have the wrong idea of what constitutes true happiness. It is not attained through self-gratification but through fidelity to a worthy purpose." It is because of the willingness to sacrifice and the dedication of North Dakota Soldiers that many of us will find, not self-gratification, but satisfaction in what we have become.

Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

Above left: Lt. Col Pete Conlin shares a lighthearted moment with his family before he departs Bismarck to deploy with the Engineer Brigade. Above right: Lt. Tracy Hanson hugs two of his family members before leaving the Bismarck RJB Armory to deploy with the Engineer Brigade. Forty-five Soldiers of the N.D. Army National Guard's Engineer Brigade were honored with a "send-off" ceremony in Bismarck on March 23.

Engineer Brigade deploys

The North Dakota Army National Guard`s Engineer Brigade left the Raymond J. Bohn Memorial Armory in Bismarck on March 24 to go to Camp Atterbury, Indiana. There, they got more training prior to deploying to Iraq on April 17.

"Our Soldiers are scheduled to plan and coordinate U.S. construction efforts in Iraq, a task that they are exceptionally qualified to accomplish," said Maj. Gen. Sprynczynatyk. "Their important role in managing the quality control of these projects will enhance security for our forces in Iraq as well as improving the quality of life for Iraqi citizens."The unit is scheduled to manage U.S. Army Corps of Engineer construction projects in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Family, friends, and Patriot Guard riders, as well as other community members, lined the streets near the armory to wave goodbye. The 45 soldiers in the Engineer Brigade loaded onto busses and left the armory, as hundreds of people clapped, held flags, and waved a tearful goodbye. The unit has been on alert since last fall, and today begins the countdown for family members already waiting for their return.

"It`s mixed feelings, it`s sad, it`s going to be a long year, but I think it`s gonna go by pretty quick after we get into a nice little routine," says Maureen Wanner, wife of Sherwin Wanner.

"Mentally they`re prepared for this. They know that they have a mission ahead of them, they know that this is the start of it and I feel pretty confident right now that they`re ready, they`ll do an outstanding job and succeed in the mission," says Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, Adjutant General of North Dakota.

There are currently almost 500 National Guard soldiers alerted or mobilized to Iraq and Afghanistan in support of the Global War on Terrorism.

Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

Freedom Salute tribute ceremonies

Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

AWARDED - *Above: Spc. Robert Monley shakes hands with the Adjutant General, Brig. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, with Rep. Earl Pomeroy at left and Gov. John Hoeven at right. In the background, Chief Warrant Officer Three Theresia Hersch. The North Dakota Army National Guard and the local community said thanks for a job well done to the Soldiers of Company A of the 164th Engineer Battalion at a Homecoming Tribute and Freedom Salute ceremony. Company A returned to North Dakota late last year after serving in Iraq. The event featured words of encouragement from guest speakers Gov. John Hoeven, Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., and Rep. Earl Pomeroy, D-N.D., and North Dakota Adjutant General Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk. It also included awards for Soldiers and those supporting them. "It's a significant ceremony that recognizes soldiers for what they have done, and it recognizes family, community members, and employers who have supported the soldiers," said Sprynczynatyk.*

Left: Spc. Ryan Nicklos with niece Tiffany Ohlhauser, daughter of Command Sgt. Major Monte Ohlhauser, wearing her Youth Service Medal at the 1-112th Aviation Freedom Salute held at the Bismarck AASF on Feb. 10. The Freedom Salute Campaign began in December 2003, and since, has recognized more than 100,000 deserving soldiers, family members, friends, employers and centers of influence for their contributions.

JLENS returns

Story and photos by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

Home, sweet home.

After a year in Afghanistan, 39 Soldiers of the 1-188th Air Defense Artillery JLENS unit flew into Bismarck and Grand Forks on Feb. 8, 2007.

Neither distance nor wheelchairs stopped families from gathering at the airports to welcome their Soldiers home. Balloons flew, signs waved, electronic pins blinked, tears flowed, and ribs bent under fervent hugs.

"The feeling of coming home was amazing. It is unreal the feeling that most of us had. I am happy to be home and am adjusting to the civilian life," said Spc. Johnathan Schaf.

JLENS stands for Joint Land Attack Elevated Netted Sensor. The system utilizes early warning and surveillance sensors which provide over-the-horizon detection and reconnaissance through electronic means in support of security missions. Sgt. Laura Bearfield, stationed at Bagram Air Field, said, "Basically, we watched the perimeter, through various means and the use of different systems, for anyone who might get a little too close or pose a threat to BAF."

"The feeling of coming home was amazing. It is unreal the feeling that most of us had. I am happy to be home and am adjusting to the civilian life."
Spc. Johnathan Schaf, 1-188th ADA JLENS

"The men and women of the 188th ADA JLENS have performed incredibly well under difficult circumstances," said Gov. Hoeven. "I had the great opportunity to see firsthand the professionalism and dedication to duty that these soldiers displayed during their mission when I was in Afghanistan."

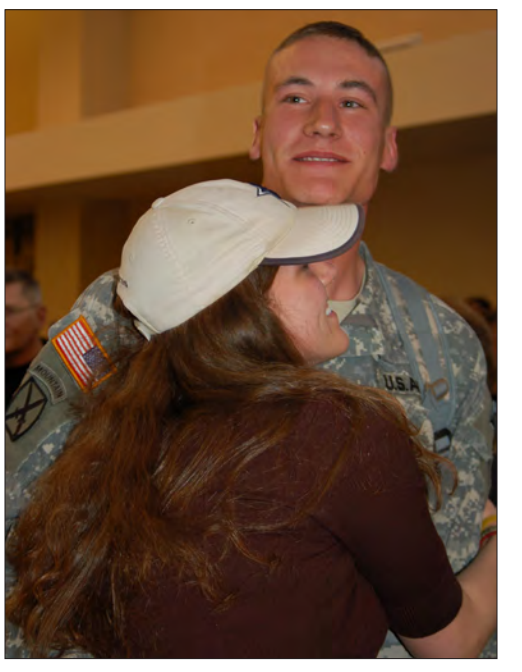
Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk said, "The 1-188th Air Defense Artillery JLENS not only lived up to their mission but actually surpassed it and set the standard and reputation that has followed all North Dakota National Guard deployed units. North Dakota is indebted to these citizen Soldiers and their families for the sacrifices they made for our state and nation."

Additional alerted or mobilized units

- 1/129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment (13 Soldiers), Bismarck, currently serving in U.S. Army Central Command area of operations. Duty locations include Qatar, Tampa, Fla. and Atlanta, Ga.
- 1st Battalion 188th Air Defense Artillery (RAID) (39 Soldiers), Grand Forks. (Afghanistan).
- 164th Engineer Battalion (Headquarters) (Alerted and awaiting mobilization) (119 soldiers), Minot.
- 132nd Quartermaster Company (Alerted and awaiting mobilization) (21 Soldiers), Cando, N.D.
- 815th/817th Engineer Companies (Alerted and awaiting mobilization) (110 Soldiers), Jamestown, Edgeley, Wishek and Lisbon, N.D.

Staff Sgt. Jay Sheldon, wife Elsie Sheldon, and daughter Evelyn Sheldon embrace at the Bismarck Airport.

Left: Sgt. Ryan Sabin with son Kyler Sabin meet at the Bismarck Airport as the 1-188th Air Defense Artillery JLENS unit returned home on Feb. 8.
Below: Spc. Johnathan Schaf and girlfriend Lindsay hug as they celebrate the return of the 1-188th ADA JLENS return home after a year-long tour of duty in Afghanistan.



Legislation wrap-up: A look at bills that will impact the National Guard

Lt. Col Dave Thiele, Staff Judge Advocate

Another very successful legislative session has just been completed. At the forefront was a bill to prevent protests at funerals (HB 1040). Now, if someone wishes to exercise their First Amendment right to protest, they will do so no less than 300 feet from the funeral home, church, or cemetery or they will be charged criminally. It's too bad this legislation was necessary, but it was quickly and unanimously passed and will help to protect families from needless harassment.

SB 2064 will help prevent service members from having their mobilization negatively impact child custody determinations. With this legislation, the court may not make a final award of custody until the service member returns from the mobilization and, if the service member has previously been given custody, he or she must again be awarded custody unless there is clear and convincing evidence that other arrangements are in the best interest of the child.

The Veteran's Bonus Program has been extended through 2009 and expanded to include all National Guard members, regardless of state residency (SB 2115). The death benefit has also been increased from $2,500 to $5,000 (HB 1291). These changes are retroactive, so if you had previously applied and been denied because of residency, please contact the bonus program manager.

The tuition assistance program has been funded with $2 million and has been expanded so that all North Dakota accredited programs are eligible (SB 2115). This, when combined with available federal funds, should allow us to achieve our goal of 100 percent tuition reimbursement for National Guard members attending North Dakota schools.

Other items of interest include an additional $400,000 for recruiting and retention (SB 2016). Veteran's preference has been strengthened and expanded to include all service members serving on active duty during the first Gulf War and the current conflict (SB 2353). Previously, you had to serve in the war zone to qualify. Service members on leave can now hunt (small game) and fish without a license (SB 2293).

As we closed out the session, our legislators paid tribute to our fallen Soldiers with Senate Concurrent Resolution 4036. They also contributed nearly $4,000 of their own money to the North Dakota Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, (TAPS) which helps to pay the costs for the families of our service members who have died to attend the national TAPS program in Washington, D.C. This is an incredible program that helps families to deal with the grieving process. This year, we are scheduled to send some 31 family members to Washington, D.C. When you see your local legislator, please thank them for their strong support!

For further information on legislation, go to: http://www.legis.nd.gov/assembly/60-2007/leginfo/index.html.

VA compensation benefits

By Master Sgt. (Ret.) Dan Dewey, AMVETS NSO

There are a lot of Guard members both current and retired that served on orders under Title 10 of the United States Code (USC). A frequent problem has been occuring with these activations because until September 11, the Guard did not have to issue a DD-214 until the 91st day of continuous duty - unless they were requested. In the end, all we were left with was a set of orders that showed Title 10 USC service on them and, of course, we all saved those. Luckily, Bismarck can still print up Title 10 periods and the VA will accept this.

How long must I have served?

For basic qualification: "The amount of time you were called to federal service." This could be a year or a day. There are certain timeframes for certain services, but the only two concerning VA benefits that today's returning veterans should be concerned with include: if you have served 90 consecutive days on Title 10 and DD-214 block 17 shows no dental service within 90 days prior to separation, you should request a dental exam by the VA. This could be done when you fill out your VA for 10/10 EZ. This is also the form you fill out to qualify for two years of free medical services for any condition that you feel occurred during or because of your military service in Iraq. It is important because it puts you in the VA system as a Category 6 veteran and after the two years, you drop to an 8e which still allows you to get treatment, but you have to pay the co-pays. This two year period resets after each deployment to Iraq. For more information, call Dan Dewey at 701-451-4642 or e-mail dan.dewey@va.gov.

CST gets its certification

By Sgt. 1st Class Mike Jennens, CST

Photo by Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

Sgt. Jamie Roaldson helps Sgt. Jason Horner remove his protective suite.

Bismarck, N.D. - Gov. John Hoeven and the N.D. National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk announced recently that the Department of Defense has awarded the 81st Civil Support Team (CST) their official certification.

This official certification allows the team to respond to state and national events involving weapons of mass destruction or accidents involving hazardous materials. The 81st CST is able to rapidly deploy to assist local first responders in determining the nature of an attack or accident, provide medical and technical advice and pave the way for arrival of follow-on response assets.

"The CST provides the state with an important response resource," Hoeven said. "They can be deployed anywhere throughout N.D. providing vital assistance to local and state agencies in the event of a natural disaster or terrorist attack."

"The dedicated men and women of the 81st CST have worked hard to achieve their certification," said Sprynczynatyk. "Competent, well trained Guardsmen working with state of the art military and commercial detection and communications equipment will prove to be a significant contributor to our state and nation's security."

North Dakota's CST, comprised of 22 full-time Army and Air Force National Guard personnel, was authorized by the Department of Defense in Nov. 2004. Since then, the unit members have participated in intensive technical training and rehearsals to prepare them for their potential missions. In Aug. 2006, the team successfully passed an exercise evaluation conducted by the U.S. Army.

CST members are available to respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Because of the unit's rapid deployment nature, the members will always be ready to go at a moment's notice.

In addition to assisting N.D.'s first responders, the team also may be called to respond to national and regional incidents. The team is part of a nine state region which also includes S.D., Alaska, Idaho, Neb., Mont., Ore., Wash. and Wyo.

"This certification is our reward for our nearly two-year challenging journey of training and preparation." stated Lt. Col. Larry Shireley, commander of the 81st CST. "We are honored to be able to assist N.D.'s civilian first responders and provide an important asset for the homeland defense of our citizens."

The CST is currently housed in a leased facility. The construction for the new team building will break ground at Bismarck's Fraine Barracks National Guard facility this spring. This new building will consist of nearly 24 thousand square feet at a cost of nearly $4 million. Construction is estimated to be complete in July 2008.

Currently 47 CSTs have been certified by the Secretary of Defense.

Gartner family is this year's recipient of Family of the Year award.

Family of the Year award announced

Submitted by Chief Warrant Officer Shelly Sizer

Each year, the North Dakota Army National Guard selects one National Guard family to be the recipient of the "Family of the Year" award. Through a nomination and selection process, this award is presented to a family who demonstrates outstanding leadership qualities and more importantly, a genuine caring for fellow service members and their families.

The recipient of the 2006 N.D. Army National Guard's "Family of the Year" award is the family of Sgt. Justin Gartner of Bismarck, N.D. Gartner and his wife Kate have two children Baylee and Bryce. Sgt. Gartner is a member of Company C (-), 2nd of the 285th Aviation Assault Battalion and was deployed to Bosnia with "Task Force Strike".

"Our strong families are an extremely important component in the successful mission completion of our Soldiers and Airmen," said Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, N.D. National Guard Adjutant General. "The Gartners are only one superb example of the many tremendous families that help make our organization a great place to work and serve."

During Sgt. Gartner's deployment to the Balkans, Kate Gartner served as the President of Task Force Strike's Family Readiness Group. She took a non-existent element and through her leadership helped form a strong, cohesive group which supported soldiers and families throughout the deployment. Sgt. Gartner works full-time for the telecommunications branch of the N.D. National Guard and Kate Gartner works as the clinic nurse manager at Medcenter One in Bismarck.

Although young, Baylee and Bryce Gartner also did their part to help. They participated in numerous activities and formed many friendships within the unit's families. Baylee's class wrote monthly letters to her dad during his deployment.

"I am pleased to hear that Justin and his family received the 2006 Family of the Year for the North Dakota Army National Guard," said Lt. Col. Russell Buchholz, Gartner's National Guard supervisor. "Justin, Kate and their two children are a well deserving family for this award especially overcoming their recent separation hardship."

A permanent statue representing the first Military Family is displayed at the North Dakota National Guard State Headquarters, along with a perpetual plaque with the names of each family for every year the award is issued. The "Family of the Year" award recipients receive an engraved plaque as well as recognition. The recipient's unit of assignment also receives a plaque of recognition.

The award was presented on Feb. 10 to the Gartner Family during the Freedom Salute for the 1st of the 112th Aviation Battalion, Task Force Strike. Freedom Salutes are the formal recognition ceremony given to honor and welcome home Army National Guard units mobilized during the Global War on Terrorism.

Justin Gartner is a native of Killdeer, N.D. and Kate (Conley) is from Bowman, N.D.

Chaplain's Corner

By Chaplain (Col.) William Ziegler

Chaplain (Col.) William Ziegler

Called to Washington D.C. for several days of meetings, it was a blessing when the gathering unexpectedly ended early. Freed from the Pentagon, I changed clothes and headed for the Smithsonian stop on the Metro. Since childhood, when my father worked in D.C., I have made visits to our nation's museums. I have fond memories of my brothers and me wondering the halls of the National Air Museum in the "Castle" (the forerunner of Air and Space), or looking at our nation's sacred documents at the National Archive. This day, I looked forward to seeing a collection of hand tools at the Museum of Science and Industry, and I was in a hurry to get there before closing time.

When I finally entered the rotunda of the museum, I realized, I was in the wrong place; I had mistaken the National Museum of Art for Science and Industry. As I was about to turn around an elderly woman at the information desk said to me, "You should really see the 15th century alter paintings down the hall." I remember thinking, "Why not, I'm here. I had never been in the Museum of Art before, and I could always take the exit at the end of the hall on my way to Science and Industry."

I never found the alter paintings by 15th century masters. As I looked in a room to my left I was suddenly greeted by a host of paintings by Rembrandt. I was intrigued. I'd recently read Nouwen's reflection on his painting, The Return of the Prodigal Son, and was touched by it. As I entered the room more fully, Rembrandt's 1669 Self-Portrait caught my attention. I'd seen pictures of this painting in art books, but never "in the flesh." Held by it, five minutes turned into an hour, and an hour into closing time.

Reflected in the painting was sadness. Rembrandt too struggled with the speed of time, changes of the flesh, disillusionment and mortality. He said of this final portrait, "...and I came, it may be, to look for myself and recognize myself. What have I found? Death painted, I see..."

Pushing fifty years of age, I too was struggling. There were now more years behind, than in front of me, and some dreams would never be realized. I identified with Rembrandt's sadness as tears began to fill my eyes. And yet, the longer I sat and took the painting in, the more I drew from its honest and humble strength. There was a mysterious dignity and wisdom that emanated from the self-portrait. The message for me was: old age is not devoid of gifts, death the final lesson. As I sat and drank it in, I found myself moved from sadness to peace and a sense of renewed strength for the "road."

I mused then, and since, about getting into the "wrong" museum. This Felix culpa – happy accident – was meaningful, timely, and healing. I may have sought woodworking tools in my head that day, but another tool, "Rembrandt's mirror" if you will, provided a balm for my soul.

Joint mentor training held

By Sgt. Ann Knudson, Joint Force Headquarters

The first dozen North Dakota National Guard mentor-mentee pairs went through a day of training at Bismarck State College at the end of January. They were a diverse group: Army and Air Guard, male and female, officer and enlisted, fulltime and part-time, from all around the state.

Mentors and mentees began separately, with binders of mentoring material to study and take home. They did icebreaker exercises, recalled informal mentors they had had, and studied the four steps of the mentoring process. They heard from a school principal, Terry Kuester, and two Department of Transportation (DOT) employees, Robin Reidman and Pat Krieger, about their experiences in mentoring programs in their organizations. At the end of the day, mentors and mentees came together to get acquainted and begin work on their mentoring plans and agreements.

The Adjutant General, Major General David Sprynczynatyk, Bismarck, mentored a young engineer from Dickinson while in the DOT, and is mentoring 1st Lt. Penny Ripperger, 119th Wing Public Affairs Officer, North Dakota Air National Guard (NDANG).

Sprynczynatyk said, "After almost 35 years in the National Guard, I have had a broad range experiences and opportunities to learn. Passing on those experiences and knowledge can be beneficial to the organization. In my past experience at the DOT, mentoring was well worth the time and effort. As a mentor, it was helpful for me to see the organization from the eyes of someone at a different level in the organization, someone at an earlier stage in their career, and someone from outside headquarters. It helped me to better understand the organization from many aspects. I hope my mentoring of 1st Lt. Ripperger does the same."

> ***"(It's) an opportunity to bring green shirts and blue shirts together in a joint operation, plus help out a young whippersnapper."***
>
> ***Chief Master Sgt. Rodney Shaw, JFHQ***

Tech. Sgt. Samantha Clarke, Fargo, services training manager, NDANG, is a mentee. She applied to the program "to learn more about myself and how to better myself… I want to be a better leader and not sound too over-eager." She said the training helped her figure out "how I want to approach my goals with assistance from my mentor."

Her mentor, Chief Warrant Officer Two Amber Wilson, of the Staff Judge Advocate's office, NDARNG, said, "I wanted to try something new, maybe learn something from my mentee. When I leave, I'd like to have somebody say 'I learned something from her.'"

Mentee Maj. Grant Wilz, Bismarck, State Family Program Director, has been "on the outside looking in to the fulltime side - I wanted somebody who's been inside to give me the tools."

His mentor, Lt. Col. Dave Skalicky, Bismarck, J5 Plans Officer, looks forward to "sharing some experience with someone who wants to learn."

Senior Airman Josh Rivera, Grand Forks, F-16 weapons loader, NDANG, enrolled in the mentor program to "get to know people, to learn, to network, and to avoid mistakes."

His mentor, Chief Master Sergeant Rodney Shaw, Fargo, Plans Office, NDANG, assigned to JFHQ, Bismarck, sees the mentoring program as "an opportunity to bring green shirts and blue shirts together in a joint operation, plus help out a young whippersnapper."

Tech. Sgt. Jacy Voglewede, Fargo, Technical Order Distribution Office Manager, NDANG, said she signed up for mentoring "to meet new people and gain skills that I would not otherwise gain. I'm very excited to learn from my mentor. I think you paired us well."

Her mentor, Lt. Col. Jill Thomas, Joint Force Headquarters Equal Opportunity Advisor, NDARNG, said, "I believe mentoring is very important both personally and professionally… Today I learned what a mentee is looking for in a mentor."

God on the front lines

By Sgt. Suzanne Dennis

Separation of church and state has a niche in today's society, but when our military men and women go off to fight a great many of them do so after a prayer or moment of silence. It seems that even on the front lines there is room enough for both God and the Soldier. Texas National Guardsmen and woman deployed overseas received spiritual guidance and religious council from an unlikely source. Oh, for sure, he is a Catholic Chaplain certified and all, but, what is so unlikely, is where he is from.

Chaplain (Maj.) Brian Donahue

When El Paso based 3rd Battalion of the 133rd Field Artillery deployed for Iraq, there were no Chaplains available. The National Guard Bureau sent out word and help came from above - above the state line to be exact, from Fargo, North Dakota. The 142nd Engineer Battalion's Chaplain (Maj.) Brian Donahue. January marked a year since his return from Operation Iraqi Freedom III (OIF III.) Quite a few of the same Service-members he worked with in Iraq now serve on Operation Jump Start (OJS) in the El Paso Sector.

Being deployed to a war zone offered opportunity to the Chaplain for personal growth and many lessons on life and God. "My greatest joy was, getting to know them [Soldiers]," Donahue said. Donahue describes one of the challenges as a Chaplain in combat, "There is no time for surface relationships over there. At first they [Soldiers] see what you are gonna be like as a chaplain. There is sort of a testing period. But once they determine that they can trust you - that you are going to be there with them, and you're not going to abandon them, they trust you a lot, they entrust you with their lives."

When I did this interview, I had no way of knowing how deeply moved I would be from a lesson that Donahue shared of his experience in Iraq. The Chaplain simply states, "To trust in the providence of God. I think that is one experience that I brought out of Iraq, for myself, personally that I now trust so deeply in the providence of God. I have no questions of it. No doubts that God is present in every moment." As he recounts his experience in the city of Samarah, Iraq. He needed to get back to headquarters, but there was no ground transportation available and no air flow. The only possible time to fly out would not be until 2100 hr and that was long after he was due. The unit he was visiting apologized profusely; all he said was, "We've done everything we could to make it happen, so there is a reason that I am going to be here till then, we just don't know it yet." The reason became obvious when he got word that a Ranger unit was looking for him. They were heading out on a particularly dangerous mission that night but could not meet with him until around 2000 hr. Father Donahue's eyes opened wide and he held up one finger to say, "You guys are why God has kept me here!" Father Donahue said this incident truly was the providence of God. The fact that every other time he traveled to that unit's area he left early morning without any troubles getting flights in or out, until the Rangers needed him, solidified this for him.

Service-members put their life on the line every day. Military Chaplains provide a needed outlet or source that is both more profound and elementary than any other tool the military offers, the fundamental need to believe and be believed. If ever there was a more appropriate place for God to be, it is on the front lines where our service-members protect our freedoms to say "In God we trust."

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What's inside

1 188th ADA SECFOR returns
2 Engelman retires
4 Engineer Brigade deploys
5 188th ADA JLENS comes home
6 CST certified
7 Mentor training held

From war zone to home

Photo by Staff Sgt. Billie Jo Lorius, Joint Force Headquarters

***WELCOME HOME**: Maj. Warren Pauling gives Sgt. Rodney Cabezas a hug as he exits the plane that flew the 188th ADA SECFOR unit back to American soil. He was the final Soldier to leave the plane when the first group of 114 landed in Fort Lewis, Wash., to go through their demobilization process. Pauling leads the North Dakota contingency of demobilization experts that greeted the Soldiers at Fort Lewis to expedite the process, allowing Soldiers to go home right away when they get to North Dakota. "Our job is to make the transition easier. We do it here so they can be with their families when they get home. It's a North Dakota standard," said Sgt. 1st Class Pam Anderson, who was part of the demob team. Pauling has served in Iraq and understands the importance of taking care of Soldiers when they arrive home. "They deserve to have the best treatment they can get. We complete the standard and go beyond to do the right thing for the Soldiers. This is the beginning of the process where they have a change in mental thinking and way of life – this junction right here - war zone to reintegration," he said.*