

# THE BLUEGRASS GUARD

*Serving the men and women of Kentucky's Army and Air National Guard*

Volume Twelve, Issue One  
October 2007



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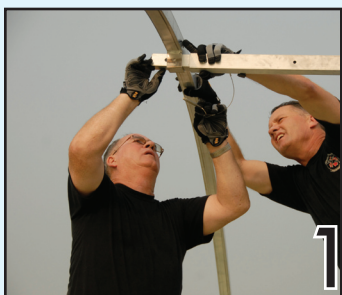
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Cadets at Eastern Kentucky University strain their abdominal muscles during flutter kick exercises during Physical Training. The Colonel's Battalion received high rankings at the 2007 Leadership Development and Assessment Course this summer at Fort Lewis, Wa..



## THE COVER

*Photo by Spc. Cassandra Groce/133rd Mobile Public Affairs Det.*

Fall 2007 was Kentucky's largest homecoming celebration, as more than 700 troops came home from deployment. Read more on page 11.

# Fletcher sends prayers to Guard Families

Nothing has given me more pride as Governor than the extraordinary service that has been rendered in these extraordinary times by the men and women of the Kentucky Army and Air National Guard.

Since the beginning of our statehood 215 years ago, Kentuckians from all walks of life have answered the call to serve their nation and their commonwealth through the Guard. Since the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, you – our Kentucky citizen-soldiers – have answered the call like never before.



You have distinguished yourselves as warriors and as humanitarians – supporting village schools, rendering medical aid and otherwise befriending innocent victims of war. America's allies respect Kentucky Guardsmen as fighters but also as peace makers.

When you have deployed, we have seen you off with heartfelt pride and earnest prayer. When you have suffered casualties, we have mourned. When you have returned safely home, we have rejoiced.

I was honored recently to join in welcoming home, after more than 18 months, the soldiers of the 2/123rd Armor, the 2123rd Transportation Company and the 149th Mountain Warriors. But amid the joy of homecoming, all were mindful that some 750 of our Kentucky citizen-soldiers remained deployed in the Global War on Terror.

We also are mindful that the sacrifice inherent in Guard service is borne by more than the men and women in uniform. It also is borne by the families and loved ones left behind when a Guard unit deploys. They, too, have earned the gratitude of our commonwealth.

Glenna and I wish to express that gratitude. We are proud of your commitment and courage as soldiers and airmen. We appreciate the sacrifices made by your families.

For those who have returned, welcome home. For those yet to return, we continue to pray for your safety.

Ernie and Glenna Fletcher  
Governor and First Lady



## THE BLUEGRASS GUARD

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# *Veterans Parade*

*Honoring Kentucky's Veterans Together!*

**Saturday**  
**November 10<sup>th</sup>**  
**11:00A**

**Downtown Lexington**  
**Midland Rd. to Mill Ave.**



***Want to be in the parade?***  
**Contact us at:**

**(859) 281-4877**

**[www.Lexington.va.gov](http://www.Lexington.va.gov)**

*Sponsored by the Lexington VA Medical Center and  
Lexington Fayette Urban County Government*





Department of  
Veterans Affairs

*Lexington VA Medical Center*

*~ Post Parade ~*

# *Welcome Home Celebration*

*Honoring Operations Enduring & Iraqi Freedom Service Members*



**Saturday**  
**November 10<sup>th</sup>**  
**1:00P – 3:00P**  
**VA Medical Center**  
**2250 Leestown Road**

*Families Welcome*  
*Children's Activities*  
*VA Healthcare Enrollment*  
*Employment Opportunities*  
*Educational Resources*  
*Community Resources*  
*Free Food, Fun, Fellowship*

***Open to public. All are invited to attend this  
welcome home celebration!***

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*Sponsored by Lexington VA Medical Center*

# YOUR HEALTH

***D***o you have dental insurance? If not, perhaps the TRICARE Dental Program is for you.

**I have enrolled my family in TRICARE Medical. Is dental coverage included in my medical coverage?**

No. TRICARE Medical and Dental are two different programs. You must enroll in each separately.

**Well, what is the TRICARE Dental Program?**

The TDP is the only dental plan sponsored by the Department of Defense (DoD) for National Guard and Reserve sponsors and their Families. It has a network of more than 57,000 participating dentists, and a sponsor does not have to be enrolled for Family members to be eligible for this program.

**What type of dental coverage is available for my family members once I'm activated?**

Family members of National Guard & Reserve sponsors are eligible for the TDP whether the sponsor is activated or not. The TDP provides comprehensive dental benefits that are comparable to civilian dental insurance plans.

**Where can I get more information on enrollment, monthly premiums, cost-shares and benefits of TDP?**

Visit the TDP Web site at [www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com](http://www.TRICAREdentalprogram.com), or call the TDP contractor, United Concordia Companies Inc., at 1-800-866-8499.





# Junior joins the Guard team

By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell  
National Guard Bureau Public Affairs

DALLAS - Dale Earnhardt Jr., whose family's name is part and parcel with the American motorsports legend, will drive the Chevrolet sponsored by the Army National Guard in NASCAR's top-level Sprint Cup series next year.

Earnhardt, "Junior" to the millions who follow the sport, will drive the 88 car for Hendrick Motorsports' new team that will have PepsiCo products Mountain Dew and AMP Energy as its other major sponsors, it was announced during a nationally televised press conference here Sept. 19.

The popularity of the Earnhardt name raises the Guard's participation in one of America's two most popular spectator sports, the National Football League being the other, to a new level, said Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, director of the Army National Guard.

NASCAR appeals to the same age group, 18-24, that is the prime recruiting group for the Guard and the other military services, Vaughn pointed out. The Army National Guard has to recruit about 70,000 new people every year, he said at the Dallas Convention Center.

"If the strength of our recruiting is the same place that you run NASCAR, which it is, and if Dale Earnhardt Jr., is the most popular of all the NASCAR drivers, which he is, than you would think that would make a difference in the number of people who will follow the Guard, the Guard car, and maybe effectively think about joining our team," Vaughn elaborated.

"And that's all we ask him to do. Dale will have an enormous, enormous impact on that effort," Vaughn predicted. "People will look at the partnership this way: The Guard is a great way to serve. It's a first-class organization. And I like Dale Earnhardt Jr. So does the Guard. I'm going to have to think about that."

"I think it's important to support the military,

especially now,” said Earnhardt about his new affiliation with the National Guard. Previous Guard car drivers have been Todd Bodine and Greg Biffle who finished second in the Nextel Cup Series in 2005. Casey Mears is this year’s driver.

Earnhardt, 32, has won 17 Cup-level races and two NASCAR Busch Series championships. He is the son of racing legend Dale Earnhardt Sr., who was killed in a crash on the final corner of the final lap of the NASCAR season’s inaugural race, the Daytona 500, in February 2001. He is the grandson and nephew of, respectively, NASCAR pioneers Ralph Earnhardt and Morgan Shepherd. His mother’s father, Robert Gee, built NASCAR cars.

Earnhardt will replace Mears as the driver for the Guard car and will add his name and pedigree to the Hendrick lineup of dominating drivers that include Jeff Gordon and Jimmie Johnson.

Earnhardt has signed a five-year contract with Hendrick Motorsports, he announced in June. His new car number is no accident. He has driven the No. 8 Chevrolet since he entered the Cup Series in 1999. His grandfather raced with that number, as well as 88, and Dale Sr., drove the 8 car early in his career. Earnhardt family politics, however, precluded Junior from bringing the famed single-digit number to the Hendrick team.

“We considered every number with 8 in it that was available,” he told a room filled with media and Texas



Photo by Master Sgt. Bob Haskell/NGB Public Affairs

Dale Earnhardt Jr. (middle) will drive the National Guard car next year in NASCAR’s top-level Sprint Cup series for Hendrick Motorsports. He stands with Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, director of the Army National Guard, and Rick Hendrick, Hendrick Motorsports owner, in Dallas where the announcement was made on Sept. 19.

# VALUE OF THE MONTH

*Each month The Bluegrass Guard will explore a different Army Value and how to use that value in your daily life.*



## Honor

“What is life without honor? Degradation is worse than death.”

- Lt. Gen. Thomas J. “Stonewall” Jackson

Honor is living up to the Army Values. We must make choices, decisions and actions based on our Army Values. Honor is a matter of carrying out, acting and living the values of Respect, Duty, Loyalty, Selfless Service, Integrity and Personal Courage in everything you do.

# Airmen in Korea

## Medical Group trains for the fight

By Capt. Amy Mundell

123rd Medical Group

Medical personnel from the Kentucky Air Guard deployed to Suwon Air Base, Korea, in September to ensure that medical contingency war reserve materials are ready for action.

During the two-week deployment, about 35 Kentucky Airmen built and inspected a pre-positioned Expeditionary Medical Support, or EMEDS, facility to ensure it will be operational in the event it's ever needed in the region, said Lt. Col. Diana Shoop, 123rd Medical Group administrator.

The EMEDS concept provides health care to troops in deployed environments and is similar to a MASH (Mobile Army Surgical Hospital) unit.

A high-threat region like Korea has a number of EMEDS assets that must be tested by a cadre of trained personnel who deploy to the region to perform the task, Shoop said.

"The 123rd has demonstrated expertise in this area time and time again, most recently during Hurricane Katrina and regional FEMA exercises" (in Savannah, Ga.), she said. "As a result, we were hand-picked to deploy to Korea to exercise and inventory a real-world asset."

Participants, including physicians, nurses and medical support troops, also conducted



Photo by Sgt. Gina Valle/KYARNG



Photos by Staff Sgt. Dianne Stinnett/KYANG

Airmen from the 123rd Medical Group conducted annual training in September at the Suwon Air Base, Korea. The Airmen set up and operated an Expeditionary Medical Support facility.

Top photo: Airmen construct a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital during an annual training exercise at Suwon Air Base, Korea.



a mass-casualty exercise and completed specialty training in subjects like infectious diseases and public health during the joint Pacific Air Force/National Guard Bureau-directed mission.

Teamwork was essential to the success of the deployment, said Col. John Moore, commander of the 123rd Medical Group.

“During this deployment, the cooperation and work ethic can be summed up by stating that Day Two objectives had been met by lunch on Day One,” Moore said. “From colonel to airman, everyone pitched in.”

Tech. Sgt. Jason Hobgood, a health services manager in the 123rd Medical Group, agreed.

“As always, our team pulled together and worked hard to get the job done regardless of

## FAMILY DAY

Air Guard Families enjoyed a day of fun in the sun during the annual Family Day picnic held at the base on Sept. 23. Children enjoyed games and activities while everyone learned a little about what their Airman does for the Kentucky Air National Guard.



# WELCOME HOME!

**I**t has been a glorious fall for the Kentucky National Guard. The Commonwealth has welcomed more than 700 troops home since late August, making Fall 2007 the largest homecoming celebration ever for the Kentucky Guard.

“Our Soldiers, Airmen and their Families are among the best in the nation,” said Maj. Gen. Donald C. Storm, Adjutant General for Kentucky. “When our men and women receive the call, they answer - many of them several times.”

Units now back in the state after serving in the Middle East include: the 410th Quartermaster, based in Danville; the 123rd Air Wing, based in Louisville; the 2nd Battalion, 123rd Armor, based in Bowling Green; the 2123rd Transportation Company (HET), based in Richmond; the 1st Battalion 149th Infantry Mountain Warriors from Eastern Kentucky; and F Company 135th Aviation based in Frankfort.

➤ First Lt. Christopher Dean, commander of the 2123rd Transportation Company (HET), speaks to Families and Soldiers about the unit's year-long deployment in Iraq. (Kentucky National Guard Photo by Sgt. Gina Vaile/133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)

➤ Thousands of Family members and friends clapped as more than 600 Soldiers from Eastern Kentucky were welcomed home to Rupp Arena Sept. 30. (Kentucky National Guard Photo by Capt. David Page/133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)





- ▲ Soldiers of the 2123rd Transportation Company (HET) and the 1st Battalion 149th Infantry, Mountain Warriors, bow their heads in thanks for a safe return from a year-long deployment in Iraq. (Kentucky National Guard Photo by Sgt. Gina Vaile/133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)
- ◀ Thousands of Family members greeted their Soldiers during a welcome home celebration Sept. 30 at Rupp Arena, honoring more than 600 Soldiers from the 2123rd Transportation Company and the 1st Battalion 149th Infantry, Mountain Warriors. (Kentucky National Guard Photo by Capt. David Page/133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



- ▲ Lieutenant Col. John Luttrell speaks to Soldiers and their Families after a year-long deployment in Iraq. (Kentucky National Guard Photo by Capt. David Page/133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)



One happy young man joins Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 123rd Armor in formation during a welcome home ceremony held in Bowling Green, Ky. on Sept. 28. Known as "The Orphan Battalion," the Soldiers conducted combat patrols, responded to escalation of force incidents and participated in base defense exercises. They were also instrumental in building a playground for Iraqi children.



- ▲ Children of Soldiers in "The Orphan Battalion," 2nd Battalion, 123rd Armor were reunited with their fathers on Oct. 15 in Bowling Green, Ky. (Kentucky National Guard Photo by Spc. Cassandra Groce/133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)
- ▲ More than 100 people greeted the Airmen of the 123rd Airlift Wing at the Louisville Air Guard Base Sept. 9. (Kentucky National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Dianne Stinnett/123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs)
- Colonel Mark Kraus, commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing, is greeted on the tarmac of the Louisville Air Guard Base after a two-month deployment to Bagram Airfield, Afghanistan. (Kentucky National Guard Photo by Staff Sgt. Dianne Stinnett/123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs)



Photo by Spc. Cassandra Groce/MYARNG



- ▲ Sergeant Mike Kinslow, 410th Quartermaster Company, is greeted by his Family Aug. 25 after a year-long deployment in Iraq.
- ▲ Sergeant Nicholas Lewis receives an enthusiastic welcome home from his Family on Aug. 25 after his deployment with the 410th Quartermaster Company.
- ▲ An estimated 1,000 people crowded Lexington's Heritage Hall Oct. 17 after aviators from F Company, 135th Aviation returned from a year-long tour of duty in Iraq.
- ▲ Excited friends and Families await the arrival of Company F, 135th Aviation following a year of duty in Southwest Asia.



# Dragon Challenge fun for Soldiers

By 1st Lt. Noy B. Mayon  
103rd Chemical Battalion

With many deployments and restructuring of the National Guard within the state, the 103rd Chemical Battalion held the first ever Dragon Challenge competition in order to foster a sense of cohesion within the battalion.

Units from various parts of the state make up the 103rd. The Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 103rd is based in Richmond; the 298th Chemical Company based in Louisville; the 299th Chemical Company from Maysville and the 301st Chemical Company based in Morehead.

The Dragon Challenge took place the first weekend of August at the Artemus Training Site in Eastern Kentucky. Each company was represented by teams of eight to ten Soldiers. Seven stations tested the knowledge and skills of basic chemical tasks, and one station tested the Soldier's awareness of the M16A2. Points were given for each task.

Despite the 105 degree heat index, Soldiers remained motivated and focused throughout the competition.

Private 1st Class Christopher Camp, of the 298th Chemical Co. was named Dragon Warrior - voted by graders as the Soldier who displayed exceptional skills at each warrior station.

The battalion also awarded Spc. Robert Yenshaw of the 238th Chemical Co. as Battalion Soldier of the Year and Sgt. Gabrielle Koym of HHD 103rd as NCO of the Year.

"Expectations were met and this was a well-focused training that brought the battalion together for something different other than a home-station IDT weekend," said Battalion Commander Col. Bob Hayter.



Photo submitted by 1LT Noy B. Mayon

Soldiers participate in a buddy assisted check of equipment during a simulated chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack during the Dragon Challenge station exercise.

## DRAGON CHALLENGE WINNERS

- 1ST** Team from 301st Chem. Co. lead by Staff Sgt. Timothy Smith
- 2ND** Tie: Team from 301st Chem. Co. lead by Cadet Charles Whitt and Team from 298th Chem. Co. lead by Sgt. 1st Class Gerald Smith
- 3RD** Team from 299th Chem. Co. lead by Cadet Charles Brannon

# EKU Stomps out competition at 2007 LDAC at Fort Lewis

By 2nd Lt. Desiree Nicely  
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Every year Cadets from across the nation matriculate to Ft. Lewis, WA to participate in the Army's Leadership Development and Assessment Course, and this year, as in years past, the EKU Colonels took home top scores. The Colonels were significantly above Cadet Command averages, Eastern Region averages, and became the bar setters for 7th Brigade.

Cadet Command is responsible for running LDAC and is the higher headquarters for all ROTC programs throughout the United States and its territories (300 plus programs). EKU falls under Cadet Command's Eastern Region and is one of 18 schools within Ohio and Kentucky that make up 7th Brigade.

"At LDAC we learn to take charge when we are in a leadership position," said SMP Cadet Nathaniel Brown, a member of the 63rd Aviation. "No one wants a leader who has to sit and think about what to do next. LDAC helped me be able to make a decision and get everyone on the same page.

EKU had the top Basic Rifle Marksmen scores, the highest peer evaluation ratings, tied for second in the Army Physical Fitness Test, tied fourth place for amount of "Excellent" ratings, and was fourth place in Land Navigation.

Eastern's scores and placement, being higher than that of Cadet Command and Eastern Region, is a demonstration of the program's excellence and success in every area of training compared to that of "average" and "below average" placing schools.

EKU Cadets are molded into warriors via



Photo submitted by Eastern Kentucky University ROTC

Eastern Kentucky University Cadets stand in formation prior to the start of training. The Eastern ROTC program received excellent ratings at the 2007 LDAC.

the ROTC program, and LDAC scores are a reflection of how proficient the Eastern staff and cadre are at training the cadets.

It is also a testament as to what exceptional students Eastern has.

Eastern cadets also credit much of their success to the university's continued generosity and support as well as all the assistance they receive from their local Guard units. Over 48 of Eastern Cadets, to include Cadets from University of the Cumberlands and Union College, are already Soldiers in the Kentucky Army National Guard.

"As an SMP Soldier I have had a chance to see both sides of the military as an enlisted Soldier and a potential officer," said Cadet Brandon

Davison, who currently serves in HHC 1/149th Infantry. "As an SMP Cadet, I have experienced what Soldiers experience while holding a leadership position in my unit as well as in ROTC experiencing more than just the average cadet who only experiences the military through ROTC."



Photo Submitted by EKU ROTC

Cadets run through the Eastern campus while training for schools such as LDAC.

# NOT JUST HORSIN' AROUND

## *Guard Soldier skips car and rides horse and buggy to work*

By Rachel Tolliver  
Turret Associate Editor

As a toddler, Sgt. 1st Class Darrin Taskey rode along with his father as the older Taskey rode trails on his horses. Later, after Darrin was big enough to sit his own horse, he rode along with his father in the hills of southern Indiana.

Today, Taskey, who works with the 307th Maintenance Company at the Kentucky National Guard Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site on Fort Knox, lives on seven acres in Ekron, has three of his own horses, and rides each of them every chance he gets.

"Missy (his standard bred horse) is 17, and likes to go places," the guardsman said. "I'll hook her up to a buggy and go to get Chinese, or to go to the DQ, or go to Little Dave's on the river—in Brandenburg. I used to ride a quarter horse and load up the saddle bags with groceries....and then come home. But you can get more in a buggy than in a saddle bag."

He said he likes to ride his horses wherever he is going because, "you can see more at 10 mph than at 60 mph...and it's fun." And, he added, it's good exercise because it moves every muscle in the body.

"And as long as you maintain the horse, there is minimal up-



Photo by Rachael Tolliver/Fort Knox Turret

Guards at Fort Knox check the I.D. of Sgt. 1st Class Darrin Taskey as he enters post. Taskey traded his car for the cart a few days this summer when gas prices were high.

keep—they have to be worked," Taskey said.

But of equal importance, he said of his horse riding ventures, it's cheap.

"In my off-time (from work) I split my time between riding my motorcycle, and the horses," he explained.

So much so, that in addition to riding socially in trail rides in the region, going to get his groceries, and going out to eat, sometimes he hooks Missy up and rides his buggy to work.

"It takes a little longer to ride my horse to work, but I got (ticked) off because it took \$17 to fill up my motorcycle one day—so I hooked

up the horse,” he explained.

The local media picked up on Taskey’s horse rides and the reason he was riding, and later the National Trotters Association in New Jersey ran a story on him and his choice of transportation. As a result, a CBS morning news crew rode with Taskey last week as he traveled from his home to Knoxville.

“I hadn’t intended for anything to come out of it—I ride all the time,” he said. “There is no place I couldn’t go or wouldn’t do on a horse. My dad and brother-in law drive too and we spend entire weekends just driving around finding places to eat (in southern Indiana).”

First Lt. Brian Dawson, the assistant superintendent of the MATES shop, and Taskey’s supervisor, said having a Soldier who rides his horse to work doesn’t bother him at all, and if he had the opportunity, he would ride a horse too.

“(For me) it would be more for novelty than anything—and the only way to maintain a horse, if I had one, is to ride it regularly,” Dawson said.

Dawson’s main concern wasn’t whether Taskey would ride a horse to work, but that he was safe—whether it is a bicycle, a motorcycle, or a horse, Dawson has the same concerns for his Soldiers.

“If you’re on some mode of transportation other than a car or truck, you always have to expect someone (in a car or truck) doesn’t see you. I let motorcycles in front of me in traffic so I can protect them and they know I am there—it’s not a surprise.”

Taskey rides with chemlights, flashlights, and reflectors, and has a cell phone in case anything happens.

He also brings a bucket for water and a bale of hay so that Missy is fed and watered.

Taskey takes all her harness gear off when he rides her to work, and she spends the day in a shady area, under trees, in the rear of the MATES area.

If people would ride their bikes, or ride horses, Taskey said he thought it would help the environment, people would be healthier, and they would save money.

“Ya know, it would also make people friendlier—if you ride by on a motorcycle people won’t look at you, but on a horse, they want to take pictures, pet the horse, and talk to you,” he said. “And the nice part—we live in a country where I can (ride whatever I want).”

# Orange assumes command of 1204th Independence home to new battalion

By Pfc. Brandon Cornell  
133rd Mobile Public Affairs Det.

Lieutenant Col. Terry Orange assumed command of the recently formed Kentucky Army National Guard’s 1204th Aviation Support Battalion based in Independence, Ky., during a ceremony held at the unit’s armory Sept. 16.

The 1204th Aviation Support Battalion provides military and aviation support to the Governor’s Counter-Drug Task Force as well as provides maintenance, signal and logistical support to combat aviation brigades during wartime missions.

Orange enlisted into the Kentucky Army National Guard in 1984 as a Military Police Officer. He received his commission through the ROTC program at the University of Louisville in 1988. Orange has held numerous positions on active duty status as well as with the Kentucky Army National Guard over his 23-year career.

Orange lives in Shelbyville with his wife, Randi, and their four children, Jacklyn, Stuart, Samantha, and Jodi.



Photo by Pfc. Brandon Cornell/KYARNG  
Lieutenant Col. Terry Orange assumed command of the 1204th Aviation Support Battalion in September. Orange, an Operation Iraqi Freedom veteran, has 23-years of service.

## DEADLINES

Now that The Bluegrass Guard is going monthly, write these dates down to have your photos and stories submitted to the editor!

**January issue:**  
- Dec. 20

**April issue:**  
- March 20

**February issue:**  
- Jan. 20

**March issue:**  
- Feb. 20

E-mail your submissions to:  
gina.vaile@us.army.mil

# FROM FRONT LINES Bluegrass growing in the desert

By **Spc. Charles P. Espie**

65th Public Affairs Operations Center

**T**hough he's thousands of miles from his old Kentucky home, one Kentucky National Guard Soldier is helping to bring the Bluegrass to the desert.

Staff Sgt. Jared P. DeAtley, a Kentucky National Guardsman with B Battery 2/138th Field Artillery attached to the 1103rd Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Air Cavalry Brigade, 1st Cavalry Division, has played Bluegrass for almost 20 years. He's used to the sound of a banjo being plucked coming from a front porch in the hills of Eastern Kentucky.

Back in September during a visit to the Mud Hut Coffeehouse at Camp Taji, DeAtley felt almost at home.

"The guys playing there were pretty good, and I told them I had a guitar and played Bluegrass, so I just started playing with them," he said.

DeAtley, who after 10 years in the National Guard, began his first overseas deployment in August, said he plays guitar, banjo and "just about any stringed instrument around."

His guitar skills fit right in with the Taji Mountain Experience, a band started by two Apache Pilots here. "I can play Country and Southern rock, but Bluegrass is what I was



▲ Staff Sgt. Jared P. DeAtley sings lead vocals for the Taji Mountain Experience during a concert Sept. 27 at the Mud Hut Coffeehouse at Camp Taji Iraq.

◀ Kentucky National Guardsman Jared DeAtley plays his guitar during a performance. DeAtley has been playing guitar and banjo since for as long as he can remember.

U.S. Army Photos by 65th Public Affairs  
Operations Center

raised on," he said. "I never expected to find myself playing in a Bluegrass band in Iraq though."

"Playing Bluegrass is a great way to unwind after a tough day of doing my job out there," said DeAtley, who works as convoy security here. "It's fast paced, and the music has a lot of energy to it."

Taji Mountain Experience, drew more than 60 Soldiers to the Mud Hut on its first night. The five-Soldier band plays traditional bluegrass music as well as cover songs played in Bluegrass rhythm. "My favorite song is 'Salt Creek' (traditional Bluegrass), but the crowd really gets a kick when we do songs like 'Ice Ice Baby,'" a rap by Vanilla Ice, he said.



## THE BLUEGRASS GUARD

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