The BLUEGRASS GUARD

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KyANG places first at 'Photo Finish'

By Maj. Ed Tonini

Kentucky Air Guard crews claimed two major national awards in October during "Photo Finish" competition at Gulfport, Miss.

Forty-eight Kentucky Airmen recently traveled to Gulfport to take part in the fourth renewal of "Photo Finish," the Super Bowl of photo reconnaissance. All of the photo reconnaissance units based in the continental United States were invited to this head-to-head competition involving the active Air Force, the Navy Reserves and all eight Air National Guard reconnaissance units under the sponsorship of the National Guard Bureau. Ten of 12 units based stateside answered the call to determine bragging rights for the next two years.

An intense competition had narrowed the Kentucky crews to Lt. Col. Stu Byrne and 1st Lt. John Amshoff; Maj. Bill Leslie and Capt. Jim Allen; and Capt. Don Goley and Capt. Paul Rhodes. They had been carefully groomed by team captain Maj. Gary Burge.

After the first day's sorties over areas in Mississippi, Louisiana and Alabama, where bridges, railroad intersections, radio relay stations, smokestacks and oil tanks became the subject of aerial photography, the Kentucky team found itself in fourth place. In each of the remaining days of competition the posted results had the 123 Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, Kentucky Air National Guard, on top of the list of flying units. At the end, Maj. Gen. John B. Conaway, Director of the Air National Guard, awarded the National Championship Plaque signifying the best reconnaissance flying unit to Kentucky.

When the National Championship individual aircrews were announced, two Kentuckians claimed the top prize. Goley and Rhodes were judged the most proficient of the 30 aircrews competing. "The plaques are nice but the recognition of being judged best is something I'll always remember," said Goley. "The spirit which was generated by the maintenance crews and the guys in the photo shop was unbelievable. It was really a team victory."

The award ceremonies were completed as the Kentucky team accepted the runner-up trophy in the portion of competition which combined flying proficiency with photo interpretation. "They all did a superb job. We couldn't be prouder," said jubilant Wing Commander Col. Carl D. Black at a homecoming celebration at Standiford Field. He continued, "We always knew we were the best, now the whole country knows it!"

WE'RE NUMBER ONE – Crew members from the Kentucky Air Guard's "Photo Finish" winning team display their rank upon their return to Louisville.

Open House draws largest crowd

By Col. Don Armstrong

The day dawned overcast and gray, threatening both the Military Challenge run and the fifth annual open house celebration for the Air National Guard in Louisville. But the spirit of the runners remained enthusiastic as nearly 500 participants covered the 10 kilometer course, running out of the Standiford Field base over a flat, fast course and back again.

By noon the skies had cleared completely, temperatures were in the comfort range, and the crowd began to swell.

With assistance from a police traffic "chopper", the combined security force kept the crowd moving all day long -- and it was no mean task. By day's end the numbers would swell to a record total, estimated by Air Guard officials at 45,000.

"It was an absolutely super day," said Brig. Gen. William P. Gast, who was general chairman for the event.

"After that little delay right at the start because of the clouds and light rain," he said, "people came on in numbers. There's no question about it -- it was the biggest crowd we've ever had."

The array of military aircraft on the Air Guard parking ramp was once again dominated by the mammoth C-5A "Galaxy."

Another popular item at the show was the U.S. Navy's F-14 "Tomcat." Project officers promoting the open house had advertised the appearance of the Tomcat widely prior to the event, based on the recent air-to-air skirmish over the Mediterranean Sea when Tomcats shot down two Libyan jet fighters.

"We were sweating on that one," said Lt. Col. Jim Dougherty, who began working with Lt. Col. Richard Jett months before the open house to line up the various display aircraft.

"At the last minute the Navy unit that was supposed to send the Tomcat called and said they had a schedule conflict," Dougherty said. "But Dick Jett finally found a unit in California that agreed to bail us out."

About 2:30 p.m. there was a three-ship flyover by a trio of RF-4C's on their way to Exercise Photo Finish. That gave the public address announcer a chance to put in a commercial for the accomplishments of the Air Guard's reconnaissance units.

The Open House fulfilled the expectations that were set out for it. "It takes a long time, a lot of dedicated people, and a great deal of pride," General Gast commented. "It was a great show, and has to be considered one of our best."

AIR OPEN HOUSE -- Part of the record-breaking crowd visit exhibits during the Air Guard's Open House at Standiford Field.

Correction

In the October edition of the BLUEGRASS GUARD, Sgt. Bobby Middleton was incorrectly identified as a member of the M-60 team that participated in the Wilson Matches. PFC Guy Wilson, of the 1st Battalion, 149th Mechanized Infantry, actually fired in that position. The staff regrets the error.

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NGAKy relocates its offices to new property

By Capt. Tom Little

The National Guard Association of Kentucky has made a major move that will have a long-term impact upon that organization, according to Col. Jerry Heaton, the association's executive director.

The Association has recently moved its offices from Boone Center in Frankfort to newly-purchased property on Louisville Road, across from Capital City Airport.

NGAKy President Lt. Col. Charles Hillard explained that the property, which was purchased for $147,500, includes a house and two apartment buildings with nine housing units. All of the apartments are rented and the Association's staff has moved administration activities into the house.

Heaton and Hillard agreed that the Executive Council felt the move was essential for the Association to meet its goals and that it was a sound financial investment. Heaton suggested that the property could well pay for itself over 15 years. He also noted that the bulk of the mortgage is being carried at low interest by the previous owners.

Hillard explained that there has already been discussion of the possibility of constructing an office building in the future which could be of sufficient size to attract other agencies as tenants.

In other NGAKy news, 39 members recently represented the state at the annual National Guard Association of the U.S. conference in Biloxi, Miss. Gaining equal support for Guard equipment acquisition during current federal budget actions.

Maj. Gen. Billy G. Wellman, Kentucky's Adjutant General, was elected to the NGAUS Executive Council for his first full three-year term. He has been serving as an appointee to fill an unexpired term.

201st awarded for sixth time

The 201st Engineer Battalion, headquartered in Ashland, has been named the outstanding Guard battalion in the four-state, Sixth Army Readiness and Mobilization Region for the sixth time. Maj. E.L. Raybourn Jr., executive officer for the battalion, accepted the trophy at the National Guard Association of the U.S. convention in Biloxi, Miss. recently. The commander of the 201st Engineer Battalion is Lt. Col. Harold G. Robinson.

Battalions from Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky competed for the coveted award. Selection criteria for the award is based on performance in a wide range of functions related to combat readiness, such as training status, a high manning level and maintenance. The first Reckord Trophy was awarded in 1975 and the 201st Engineer Battalion has won it six out of seven years.

The Reckord trophies are named for the late Maj. Gen. Milton A. Reckord.

MINE SWEEPERS – Three members of the 201st Engineer Battalion, Ashland, check an area for mines before the units moved in during a recent exercise. From left are: Specs. 4 Jim Messer and Matt Snyder and Pfc. David King. The unit was one of the first to conduct tactical training at the Eastern Kentucky Weekend Training Site, located in Powell County. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Ron Bayes)

Different recruiting approach finds success

By Spec. 4 Sparky Goodman

Military medical units have traditionally had a difficult time recruiting an adequate number of qualified personnel but, thanks to a new recruiting approach, the Kentucky Army National Guard has had recent notable success.

Through the efforts of Col. (Dr.) Sidney Steinberg, the State Surgeon, CW4 Edwin G. Birdwhistle and Maj. (Dr.) Charles P. Bradshaw, the Kentucky National Guard has recently filled 12 medical officer positions. Steinberg, Birdwhistle and Bradshaw have been visiting the University of Louisville and the University of Kentucky medical schools encouraging students to join the Guard. Following the formal presentation of Guard benefits, interested students have a chance to discuss the opportunities on an informal basis.

Steinberg remarked, "We have found that a one-to-one, doctor-to-doctor type of approach is very successful."

In the past, recruiters have been emphasizing the tuition assistance program and, while this is a major drawing card of the Guard, it seems that another program known as the Continuing Health Education Program is even more relevant to medical students. This program allows students to broaden their medical backgrounds by exposing them to the military aspects of medicine. Students can satisfy some of their medical school requirements and, at the same time, work at the largest military hospitals in the country during their annual training.

Many states place less emphasis on medical units than Kentucky because of the difficulty in gaining and keeping medical staff. With the formation of the 475th Combat Support Hospital, headquartered in Frankfort, and Company B of the 149th Separate Armored Brigade in Newport, the Kentucky Guard has established its desire to have a well-manned medical contingency.

Two construction contracts awarded

By SFC Gordon Nichols

Spokesmen for Gov. John Y. Brown Jr. recently announced awards of two construction contracts that will provide more facilities for Kentucky Guard units.

The first contract awarded was for a new $950,000 armory to be built in London. The new armory was made possible by Brown's commitment to provide $46,000 in additional state money to the project that began as an addition several years ago.The total federal share will be $604,000, with the remaining paid by state funds.

The contract was awarded to Mitchell Overfelt Construction Company of Horse Cave. Associated Designers, an architect and engineering firm from Lexington, will serve as consultants.

The second contract awarded was for the renovation of an area designed to house a new kitchen at the Fairgrounds Armory in Louisville. The renovation was made possible with a state commitment to provide $65,408 for the project. The contract was awarded to Chambers Construction Company of Westport. E.R. Ronald and Associates, Louisville, will serve as consulting engineers.

21 reenlistments

Tompkinsville Guard members sign up again

The Tompkinsville unit of the Kentucky Army National Guard was recently assured of the continued benefit of a tremendous amount of experience as 21 members extended their enlistments for six years each. Each person received a pewter belt buckle with appropriate information inscribed.

Those who earned the award from Battery A, 1st Battalion, 623rd Field Artillery were: Sgt. Roy Hoffman, Spec. 4 Loyice Cleary, Sgts. Raymond Wilburn and Anthony Helm, Spec. 4 Terry York, Specs. 5 Ronnie Cary, Donnie Parke and Ronald Saderholm, Sgts. James Jones, Jerry Anderson and Kenneth Hodges, Specs. 4 Evans Bartley and Rex Short, Sgt. Gary Sexton, Staff Sgt. Eagle Gearlds, Sgts. Roger Anderson and Robert Morrison, Spec. 5 Robert Richhart and Specs. 4 Timothy Smith and Wendell Fish.

Retention program has high success rate

Though recruiting is essential to maintaining Guard strength, retention plays an equally important role and the Kentucky Army Guard is realizing significant retention achievements. The state's retention rate remains around 75 percent, according to Sgt. Maj. Fred Schleifer, who heads the retention program.

Schleifer cites benefits and several new approaches to the retention problem as the principal causes of the successes that have been achieved.

For example, individuals in specific critical occupation specialties may qualify for a reenlistment bonus of $300 per year for three- or six-year extensions. This is in addition to the benefits available to all Guard members, including tuition assistance, reduced license plate cost, low-cost insurance, post exchange privileges and an outstanding retirement program.

A full-time retention staff is now supplemented by retention NCOs in each unit and a motto of "The Guard Cares" has been adopted.

To demonstrate this attitude, retention staff representatives are visiting units two weekends each month and are surveying individuals who elect to leave the Guard to determine why they made that decision. Whenever possible, they will work to eliminate problems.

A telephone "hotline" has also been installed and Guard members are encouraged to use it to identify problems and seek help with difficulties. According to Schleifer, the service averages 15 calls per week. The toll-free number is (800) 372-7601.

A number of problems have been resolved and the majority of callers appear to be satisfied. For example, staff members have been able to locate paychecks, have insured that overdue promotions are processed and have helped persons on active duty for training.

Schleifer said that he welcomes suggestions concerning ways to further improve the retention program.

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