

THE BLUEGRASS GUARD

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

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FORTUNE FOLLOWS THE BRAVE

Ceremony marks new era of base leadership for Air Guard

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Cover Photo by Tech. Sgt. Dennis Flora/KyANG

The Kentucky Air Guard's Base Color Guard opens a change of command ceremony Nov. 12 as the Wing stands at attention on the flightline. Read more on page 17.





Kentucky NATIONAL GUARD
Unbridled Service

THE BLUEGRASS GUARD

100 Minuteman Parkway
Frankfort, KY 40601
phone: 502-607-5091/1898/1562/1556
fax: 502-607-1468
www.dma.ky.gov

THE ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE

State Commander-in-Chief
Gov. Steve Beshear

Adjutant General
Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini

Deputy Adjutant General, Army
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State Command Chief Warrant Officer
Command Chief Warrant Officer Paul E. Beane

State Command Sergeant Major, Army
Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Gearlds

State Command Chief Master Sergeant, Air
Command Chief Master Sgt. John M. Grant

BLUEGRASS GUARD STAFF

State Public Affairs Officer
Col. Phil Miller

Deputy State Public Affairs Officer
1st Lt. Stephen Martin

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Det. Commander
Maj. David Page

123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs Officer
Capt. Dale Greer

Editor
Staff Sgt. Gina Vaile-Nelson

Assistant Editors
1st Lt. Andi Hahn
First Sgt. John W. Kibler
Dave Altom

Contributors
ANG Multimedia Specialists
Unit Public Affairs Representatives

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The Bluegrass Guard
100 Minuteman Parkway
Frankfort, KY 40601
or: gina.vaile@us.army.mil

FROM THE FIELD

Thank You - Staff Sgt. Vongunten

I am just writing to inform you of the spectacular job one of your noncommissioned officers did this past Veterans Day. I was at Tamarack Elementary School Nov. 11 helping with a fund raiser when my daughter told me she wanted me to go to the Veterans Day celebration they were having. Once there, I found out one of the local Soldiers was going to talk about patriotism to the children.

While the young sergeant gave a speech that may have been considered mundane in the military circles, he showed the children what true patriotism is. Though his words may not have been completely understood by the 4th and 5th graders, the children listened thoroughly to every word he said. The highlight was when a member of the 101st folded the American flag and my child turned to me and said "They really do love that flag, don't they dad?"

The young man did an outstanding job by his actions, his respect for the school, the children, the teachers, and most importantly to me, a fellow veteran. He stood by the rail as several World War II vets climbed to the stage, aiding them when necessary. The sincere thanks he gave to the veterans sitting in the audience was also outstanding.

This young man did an outstanding job of representing the Kentucky National Guard and his service impacted many children in one day. I hope he can receive some recognition from his superiors. I realize it would probably embarrass him but I believe this type of selfless service and genuine display of respect for our country, flag, and veterans deserves some recognition.

I will end with this one last thanks. Thank you for providing me the opportunity to share with my child what a true patriot is.

Humbly yours,
Michael Stovall

Editor's Note: The Soldier referred to in this letter is Staff Sgt. Raymond O. Vongunten of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 206th Engineer Battalion based in Owensboro, Ky.

The Bluegrass Guard values opinions

To comment, keep remarks under 150 words, include your name, rank and address and send them to:

The Bluegrass Guard
KG-133 MPAD
100 Minuteman Parkway
Frankfort, KY 40601
or: gina.vaile@us.army.mil

We reserve the right to edit letters for tone, length, clarity and factual accuracy.

Change of Address

All change of address should be made at the unit level by the unit clerk.

Army retiree address changes should be made through Staff Sgt. Jason Pettit at the Kentucky National Guard Personnel Services Branch. He can be reached at 502-607-1613 or jason.pettit@ky.ngb.army.mil.

Air retiree address changes should be made through retired Chief Master Sgt. James Turpin at jturpin@fewpb.net.

State Command Sgt. Maj. bids farewell after nearly three decades of service

By Command Sgt. Maj. Phillip Gearlds

State Command Sgt. Maj.

Hello Family and Friends! After more than 27 years of exciting and challenging service, I will retire from the military at the end of February 2009, starting with transitional leave Dec. 1.

For nearly four years I have had the distinct honor to serve as the State Command Sergeant Major for the Kentucky Army National Guard. I have also had the pleasure to serve with all you great Soldiers, Airmen and Family members.

I wanted to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your support, encouragement, mentorship and service. It is outstanding Soldiers and Airmen like you that make the Kentucky National Guard the great organization that it is.

It seems like just yesterday I joined the ranks of the Kentucky National Guard and began my full time career as the Assistant Training NCO for HHSB 1st Battlaion, 623d Field Artillery in Glasgow, Ky. Soon thereafter, I deployed in support of Desert Shield/Storm in 1991, Operation Enduring Freedom in 2003, and then was selected as the Command Sergeant Major for the 1st Battalion 623d Field Artillery in 2003. I always knew this day would arrive but I never thought it would come so quickly.



I want to personally thank our Families because they are the cornerstone of support for our Soldiers and Airmen. I also want to personally thank every Family Readiness Group Leader across this great Commonwealth.

Volunteers who assist Kentucky National Guard Families by providing the support and assistance they require allows our Soldiers and Airmen to focus fully on their missions. Your service is invaluable.

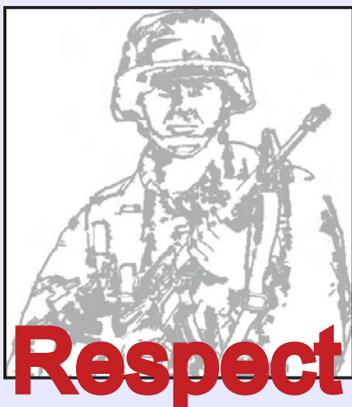
I am blessed to have served with so many extraordinary and patriotic Americans throughout my career. The Guard has been a major part of my life for many years and I will continue to be a strong supporter as a retiree.

I ask that you give the future State Command Sergeant Major the same support you gave me. I also ask that all units continue to be in a high state of readiness at all times; ready to support our governor in case of emergency or disaster, and the President of the United States in the Global War on Terrorism.

Thank you for taking care of our great Soldiers, Airmen and Families, and thank you for all you have done for me, my family and continue to do to serve your state and country. God bless you all!

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.



"I am not concerned with your liking or disliking me ... All I ask is that you respect me as a human being."

- Jackie Robinson

An individual who consistently expresses respect demonstrates consideration for others; is discreet and tactful when correcting or questioning others and creates a climate of fairness. The Army is one team. Respect is what allows us to appreciate the best in other people and work with each other with immediate and unquestioned cooperation and respect.

Scholarship for Military Spouses

"It is critical that spouses of service members obtain the best possible education -- and what is available may not be affordable."

- Joanne Holbrook Patton
Wife of the late Maj. Gen. George S. Patton



Who is eligible for a scholarship?

Spouses of Uniformed servicemembers of any military service branch on Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve, retirees and survivors may apply for a scholarship to obtain professional certification or to attend a post-secondary or graduate school.

How much funding in scholarships is available?

Scholarships range in amount from \$500 to \$1,000, and the number awarded each year varies depending on funding. Scholarship funds may be used for tuition, fees and boarding at a university or college.

Where do I apply?

Applications are only accepted online at www.nmfa.org/scholarship, and must be submitted before midnight, Feb. 1, 2009.

Additional information available to assist with education goals

The National Military Family Association recognizes that unique challenges like frequent moves and deployments can interfere with military spouses' ability to complete their education. In order to help spouses reach their career and education goals, the Association has created a Web portal stocked with military spouse education resources and information. Visit www.nmfa.org/SpouseEd for more info.



A joyous celebration, 438th MPs home again

Story and photos by 1st Lt. Andi Hahn

Assistant Editor

A Welcome home ceremony for 110 Soldiers of the 438th Military Police company took place Nov. 9 at the Calloway County High School in Murray, Ky.

The MPs left home one year ago in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. While in Iraq they performed area security missions in the city of Ramadi.

This is the second overseas deployment for the 438th MPs in support of the Global War on Terror. The unit also supported the detainee mission in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba in 2002-03.

Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 10,000 members of the Kentucky Army and Air National Guard have deployed worldwide in the Global War on Terror.



Honoring those who served

Kentucky Guard pays tribute to Vietnam Vets

Staff Report

Photos by 1st Lt. Andi Hahn

Kentucky veterans received a special tribute Nov. 11 during a ceremony celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Frankfort, Ky.

The Kentucky National Guard's 138th Fires Brigade provided a thunderous 21-gun artillery salute as Veteran's organizations placed wreathes at the monument. The 202nd Army Band played Taps and Reveille while the 63rd Theatre Aviation Brigade performed the missing man flyover. Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, Adjutant General of Kentucky, and Brig. Gen. Leslie E. Beavers, Kentucky Department of Veterans Affairs Commissioner, were keynote speakers.

The Kentucky Vietnam Veterans Memorial overlooks the state Capitol and honors the 125,000 Kentuckians who served this nation with courage and selfless service during the Vietnam era.

Helm Roberts, a Lexington architect and Veteran, designed the blue-gray granite memorial so that Kentucky's 1,103 citizens killed in action are precisely located so the shadow of the sundial pointer touches every Veteran's name on the anniversary of his death.

The memorial is open to visitors every day of the year at no charge. Since it's dedication 20 years ago, it has become one of the most visited landmarks in the Commonwealth.



Guard combats drug abuse

By Staff Sgt. Gina Vaile-Nelson
Editor

Substance Abuse -- it's a war that many Soldiers and Airmen fight here on the home-front.

Whether it's trouble adjusting to civilian life after deployment; dealing with PTSD or Family issues, it is a real and serious problem for some Soldiers and Airmen in the Kentucky National Guard.

Though every Guardsman is required to complete two hours of substance abuse training annually, members of the Kentucky Drug Demand Reduction office noticed that power point presentations and short films about parties was not enough.

"There has been a nation-wide increase in substance abuse since the start of the Global War on Terrorism among our service branches," said Kentucky Air Guard Master Sgt. Leah Williams, the Kentucky Prevention, Treatment and Outreach Coordinator.

"Our goal with this new Prevention Treatment and Outreach program is to assist units and Families become more proactive and identify those who may show warning signs of abusing legal or illegal substances," she said.

Under a directive from the National Guard Bureau, Williams said each state was able to tailor their own program. Williams' goal is to identify the problems Kentucky Soldiers and Airmen face that lead to substance abuse. With Kentucky's three-tier program, Williams hopes to stop substance abuse before it starts.

"I can send any Guardsman to treatment," she said. "If I can find one Soldier who is having problems, and help that person get to the root of the problem before it turns to drug abuse, then I have done my job."

With the outreach tier, Williams said discussions with Family Readiness Groups and units will assist spouses, commanders and battle buddies identify underlying problems that lead to substance abuse.

Williams said one of those struggles Soldiers and Airmen face that often leads

to substance abuse is PTSD.

"During Vietnam, trying to help the Soldier was so new," she said. "Those Soldiers went many years without help, and it shows now in the health issues that Veterans of Vietnam still face.

"Now, we know what our Veterans will face," she said, "and we have the tools to nip it in the bud."

Through her outreach portion of the program, she is able to assist Family members and battle buddies recognize signs of PTSD and other causes of substance abuse so that they can encourage the servicemember to get help.

During a recent visit to a Kentucky Army Guard unit, Williams separated Soldiers into groups and had them work on exercises that showed how to improve communication skills.

"After showing the Soldiers what to listen for – something that may not be a concern of yours might be something another Soldier is struggling with," she

said. "If you catch the warning signs, you can help the Soldier before it is too late.

"Following the class, several people came up to me and told me they recognized or remembered conversations in which another Soldier was showing some of the warning signs we talked about," she said.

"I don't expect you to remember everything I say or

Continued next page



Photo illustration by Staff Sgt. Gina Vaile-Nelson/KYARNG

Prescription medication, although important to the recovery of ill servicemembers, can become the enemy to those with abusive tendencies.



File photo by Staff Sgt. Gina Vaile-Nelson/KYARNG

Maj. Donald T. Corder uses a training aide to demonstrate the affects of tobacco use on the mouth. The Kentucky National Guard Drug Demand Reduction program has many tools to promote a drug free Kentucky.



Protect yourself against the flu

By Dr. Mark S. Adams
Kentucky Guard Health Services

This is the first in a series of articles written by the Kentucky Guard's Health Services department to promote healthy living among Kentucky Guard Soldiers and Families.

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses types A and B. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 5 to 20 percent of the U.S. population gets the flu with more than 200,000 people requiring hospitalization, and about 36,000 people dying.

The illness ranges from a mild sore throat and cough to a severe condition possibly resulting in death.

Symptoms usually come on suddenly and include high fever, headache, extreme fatigue, dry cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle aches; and occasionally gastro intestinal symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Complications of the flu can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration and worsening of chronic illnesses, such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes.

“Catching” the flu is by direct contact. The spread of the virus is primarily person to person through respiratory droplets of coughs and sneezes. These droplets are propelled through the air directly to another person or can land on objects handled by the infected person to be spread by direct contact. The populations at higher risk of infection are children ages six months to 19 years old, people over 50 years old, health care workers and individuals with chronic medical illnesses such as diabetes or asthma.

The two most common ways to prevent infection are the flu vaccine and frequent hand washing. The best form of vaccine is the flu shot. However, the nasal-spray vaccine may be used for healthy people ages two to 49 years old and women who are not pregnant. The vaccine should be taken in September and can be given any time during the flu season which varies



Flu Symptoms 101

- FEVER
- HEADACHES & MUSCLE ACHES
- SORE THROAT & COUGH
- SEVERE TIREDNESS
- NAUSEA

Those with the flu can infect others one day before symptoms begin, and up to five days after showing symptoms. To prevent spreading of the flu virus, you should wash your hands often.

-Information obtained from the CDC Web site and www.flufacts.com

from October through February. The vaccine should not be given to people who have severe allergy to chicken eggs, have had a severe vaccine reaction in the past or people who have had a history of Guillain-Barre Syndrome.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE - *Continued from previous page*

teach you, but if you can pick up on the basics and help someone, that's all that matters,” she said.

Williams said the new lesson plans that outline the program are easy to follow. Units can lead their own substance abuse training or she can come for a unit visit.

In addition to training, Williams uses pre- and post-deployment climate surveys to assist commanders with identifying if they may have

substance abuse issues in their unit.

“It is surprising what you may find in those surveys,” she said.

Finally, in the event that a servicemember admits to a substance abuse problem, or if a Soldier or Airman fails a unit urinalysis, Williams can assist the unit find the servicemember a treatment facility.

Armed with a binder the size of a metropolitan phone book, Williams is able to research at-cost and low

income treatment facilities that are tailored to individual's needs.

“I can give the Soldier options,” she said.

If you think you may have a problem with Substance Abuse, or if you are involved with substance abuse training at your unit and would like for Williams to visit, you can call 859-293-3900 or e-mail: leah.1.williams@us.army.mil for more information about the PTO.

Pope AFB names road after fallen Ky. Air Guardsman

Matero killed in 2002 crash

By Tech. Sgt. D. Clare
Cargo Courier Editor

Tech. Sgt. Christopher A. Matero, a Kentucky Air Guard combat controller killed in the line of duty in 2002, now has a road in his name at Pope Air Force Base, N.C.

Matero Drive, named in his honor earlier this year, is home to a new building for the Air Force Combat Control School. Before enlisting in the Kentucky Air National Guard, Matero was an instructor at the school.

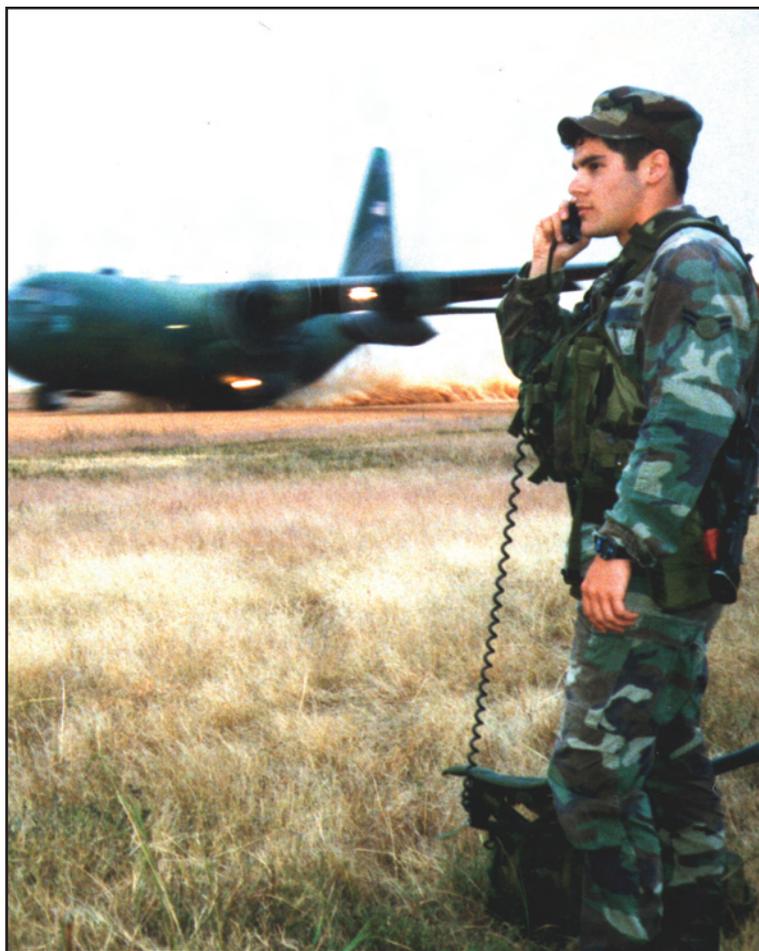
He and eight other Airmen died in a MC-130H crash during a training flight in Puerto Rico on Aug. 7, 2002.

“Chris was an excellent instructor and mentor who embodied all the qualities we seek in a modern special operations warrior,” said Lt. Col. Jeremy Shoop, commander of Kentucky’s 123rd Special Tactics Squadron.

Chief Master Sgt. Jon Rosa, the unit’s superintendent of combat control, and other Kentucky Airmen were among more than 300 people who attended a ceremony honoring Sergeant Matero in April.

“Many of his students, now combat-hardened veterans of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, told of his exacting standards and high ethics -- and how he helped mold the next generation of special tactics warriors for combat against our nation’s enemies,” Shoop said. “His legacy lives on in those Airmen who now wear the scarlet beret.”

From left, Senior Master Sgt. Tom Deschane, Chief Master Sgt. Jon Rosa, Master Sgt. Wes Brooks and Capt. Sean McClane stand at Pope Air Force Base’s Matero Drive. (Photo courtesy of Chief Master Sgt. Jon Rosa, Kentucky Air National Guard)



Tech. Sgt. Christopher Matero, a 123rd Special Tactics combat controller, died in a 2002 plane crash during a training mission in Puerto Rico. Matero was a schoolhouse instructor at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., before enlisting in the Kentucky Air National Guard. (Photo courtesy of Chief Master Sgt. Jon Rosa, Kentucky Air National Guard).



Pop Fly Superstars



The Kentucky Air National Guard's Co-Ed Softball Team took second place in its division at the 43rd-annual Air National Guard Softball Tournament, held Aug. 6-10 in Panama City Beach, Fla. Sixty teams from across the United States participated in the tourney. For more information, visit www.angsoftball.net. (Photo courtesy Maj. Katrina Johnson)

Wyatt nominated for National Guard Director



Air Force Maj. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III is the Oklahoma National Guard's adjutant general. He has also served as commander of the 138th Fighter Wing in Tulsa and as the Oklahoma Guard's chief of staff of its Joint Forces Headquarters.

Air National Guard Headlines

Air Force News Wire

LANSDOWNE, Va. (Nov. 19) -- Less than 24 hours after taking the oath of office as chief of the National Guard Bureau, Air Force Gen. Craig R. McKinley announced here today President George W. Bush will nominate Air Force Maj. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III to the U.S. Senate for confirmation as the next director of the Air National Guard.

If confirmed, Wyatt will be promoted to lieutenant general and succeed McKinley, who served as the Air Guard's director for more than two years until becoming chief Nov 17.

Wyatt is the Oklahoma National Guard's adjutant general. He has also served as commander of the 138th Fighter Wing in Tulsa and as the Oklahoma Guard's chief of staff for its Joint Force Headquarters.

"This is a great honor for Gen. Wyatt and a great honor for Oklahoma. I've always said we had the best adjutant general in the country, and the latest announcement is certainly confirmation of that," said Gov. Brad Henry, commander-in-chief of the Oklahoma National Guard.

If approved by the Senate, Wyatt will be responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, plans and programs affecting more than 107,000 Air Guard members serving in the United States, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Virgin Islands.

"You can be very proud of the direction that, I know, General Wyatt will take us," said McKinley. "We will continue in the fine tradition of Air Guard leadership that we have today."

TAG visits troops in Afghanistan

Tonini: 201st has difficult mission

By Staff Sgt. Gina Vaile-Nelson and
1st Lt. Andi Hahn
Editors

“If you ask me, the 201st Engineers have the toughest job of anybody in the uniform anywhere in the world today,” said Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini, after visiting Kentucky troops in Afghanistan.

The adjutant general made his first trip to the country in September and was able to visit four forward operating bases where the Kentucky Troops are responsible for clearing roadways in eight different provinces along the Afghan countryside.

Tonini described the area of operation for the 201st Soldiers as the “hotbed of all activity in the whole world in terms of violence against coalition forces.

“They are doing a great job there, setting all sorts of records in terms of mission effectiveness in terms of what they are doing there,” Tonini said.

The Kentucky Engineers fall under the responsibility of the 101st Airborne Division, and Tonini said the leadership of the fellow Kentucky-based division had nothing but good things to say about the work the Kentucky Guard was doing in the area.

“Maj. Gen. Schloesser had a special degree of pride in that he is in charge of these Kentucky Soldiers and Kentucky units doing great things,” Tonini said.

“No matter what you do in Afghanistan, the 201st always goes first,” he said. “They are a well-known commodity there and everyone knows the 201st and the nature of the job that they do there.”

Tonini credits the hard work and dedication of Kentucky’s Soldiers prior to deployment as the reason the Kentucky Guard is so highly sought after for missions.



Photo submitted

Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini visits with Soldiers from the 206th Combat Engineers in Afghanistan.

“Kentuckians have a way of adapting,” he said. “The 201st has come up with two or three different ways of doing their job that have never been thought of before across the Army.

“There is a whole safety shield of bullet-proof glass around their gunners in the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicle that they created and manufactured,” he said. “And now it’s the standard for all MRAPs in country.

“Kentucky has come up with a way to drag along the sides of barbed wire that catches landmines that would otherwise go unexploded, only to catch somebody at a later time,” he said.

“They are just very ingenious,” Tonini said. “The Engineers have come up with things that have never been discovered before.

“That’s kind of the Kentucky way of doing business.” Tonini said.

Morale, Tonini said, was still high during his visit despite the tough job the Soldiers face on a daily basis.

“They are truly a remarkable group of young men and women,” he said.



Photo submitted

Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini shakes the hand of Sgt. Eric Weiss, a Soldier deployed to Afghanistan with the 201st Engineer Battalion.

IN MEMORY

Support of Family members to those Soldiers and Airmen stationed in Afghanistan at this time is crucial.

"It's a tough place to be in the world today," Tonini said.

"What I saw, our Soldiers have the best equipment, the best technology and the best support available that money can buy," he said. "They are doing a spectacular job in an environment that is very difficult."

Tonini said he could tell Families that the Kentucky Soldiers are succeeding at their mission, but the war in Afghanistan is going to require significantly greater attention in the near future.

With Kentucky Soldiers fighting on two fronts in support of the Global War on Terror and coming to the aid of the Commonwealth of Kentucky during natural disasters, Tonini said he is amazed that there never is a shortage of Kentucky troops willing to step up to the plate to defend America's freedoms.

"It's very heartwarming and a well-known thing around the state that Kentuckians are first to volunteer and the best in the fight once they get there," he said.

Tonini said the work of all the Soldiers and Airmen in the Kentucky Guard is appreciated -- those fighting in Afghanistan, Iraq and other places around the world, as well as the traditional Guardsmen here in the state.

"The Governor and members of



Sgt. Daniel Wallace

Company C, 201st Engineers
Oct. 31, 2008
Afghanistan

the legislature constantly tell me how much they appreciate the Soldiers and Airmen," he said.

For Tonini, his memories of his Afghanistan visit are bittersweet.

"One of my most poignant memories was presenting Sgt. Daniel Wallace with the Adjutant General's Coin," Tonini said.

Wallace, a native of Cynthiana, was serving as a gunner on an MRAP vehicle when he was killed Oct. 31.

"His parents told me how proud he was of the coin when he was home on 'R and R' shortly before he was killed," he said.

"That really brought home the

tragedy and made it even more poignant for me personally," he said.

Tonini laughed as he recalled presenting Wallace's brother Spc. Alex Wallace of the 940th Military Police Company based in Walton, Ky., with a coin after Alex told him how his Daniel joked that he was "one up" on his brother for coins.

"Sgt. Wallace was a fine Soldier who made the ultimate sacrifice for his nation," Tonini said.

The 201st Engineers deployed in March 2008 for Operation Iraqi Freedom and are scheduled to return to Kentucky in Spring 2009.



Photo submitted

Lt. Col. Mike Ferguson and Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini stand in front of the 201st Engineers Headquarters in Afghanistan.

DSC recipient chooses third Iraq deployment

By Staff Sgt. Jim Greenhill

National Guard Bureau

CAMP TAJI, Iraq – He served in Iraq twice before. He was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross for his actions as a squad leader here. He didn't have to come back.

But Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Nein is back, on his third deployment in Iraq, his fourth overseas this decade. The first was in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2001.

Only the Medal of Honor trumps the DSC among awards for valor in battle. Nein was the first Guardmember to receive the award and only the fourth servicemember during the Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The DSC was an upgrade from the Silver Star Medal that Nein was originally awarded for his actions as a squad leader with the Kentucky National Guard's 617th Military Police Company during a March 20, 2005, ambush.

Nein and the National Guard's Sgt. Leigh Ann Hester – the first woman awarded the Silver Star for direct combat action against an enemy – led a counterattack that saw 27 insurgents killed, seven captured and no deaths in their unit. Two Soldiers were wounded.

Nein still leads in Iraq, where he's now serving with the Kentucky National Guard's 223rd Military Police Company.

FIVE YEARS OF CHANGE

"I probably didn't have to be here this time, but I don't think that I would have missed it," Nein said. "I feel honored to be a part of this."

This time, he is a platoon sergeant providing escorts for the 18th Military Police Brigade's Iraqi Police



Photo by SSG Jim Greenhill/U.S. Army

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Nein, 39, with the Kentucky National Guard's 223rd Military Police Company, at Camp Taji, Iraq on Oct. 18, 2008. Nein was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions as a squad leader with the 617th Military Police Company during an ambush on March 20, 2005, during his second deployment. He is now serving on his third deployment. "I probably didn't have to be here this time, but I don't think that I would have missed it," Nein said. "We're helping transform the Iraqi police to be a more relevant force and a professional force."

Transitional Team.

Nein has seen five years of change firsthand. He first deployed here with the initial liberation force in 2003. He was back in 2005.

"I've seen a huge difference from 2005 to where we are now," he said. "I can remember thinking in 2005, looking back at 2003, how much different it was.

"That's what I don't think people see – the great life that we live in the United States. People look at that and think that it's always been that way. It wasn't. Forty, 50 years ago we were still fighting the civil rights

movement. We have fought for 232 years to get to where we're at. Yet in five years [Iraqis] have gone from a dictatorship to the ability to vote for who they want."

ESSENTIAL

Nein said the National Guard has played an essential role in Iraq's transformation. One example is his own unit's mission. "We're helping transform the Iraqi police to be a more relevant force and a more professional force," he said. "We're out there every day evaluating their leaders, evaluating their recruits,

evaluating their police stations to make sure that they're up to par so that we can hand this mission over to them and they can take control."

From Clark County, Ind., Nein enlisted in the National Guard in 1996. "I wanted to give something back to the people that have given me so much," he said.

Nein said the National Guard is unique because the Citizen-Soldier or -Airman who balances family, a civilian career and the Guard is unique.

"We've got Soldiers that just aren't Soldiers – this isn't all they've ever done," Nein said. "We might have guys that have been in the National Guard for 20 years and have three and four deployments and have a lot of world experience, but they also have other careers that they're able to expand on in the Guard."

When Nein looks at his own unit, he sees a microcosm of the Guard, a mosaic built from different life experiences and shared Soldier skills that gives the unit an ability to adapt to change.

"I see the best of the best," he said. "I see the typical U.S. citizen who stands up to come here and leaves – just like with an active duty Soldier – their homeland to come and make a better place in the world without a complaint."

Nein hopes other Soldiers will look at the day his unit was ambushed for lessons. "What did we do right?" he said. "Why were we able to survive something that we shouldn't have been able to survive?"

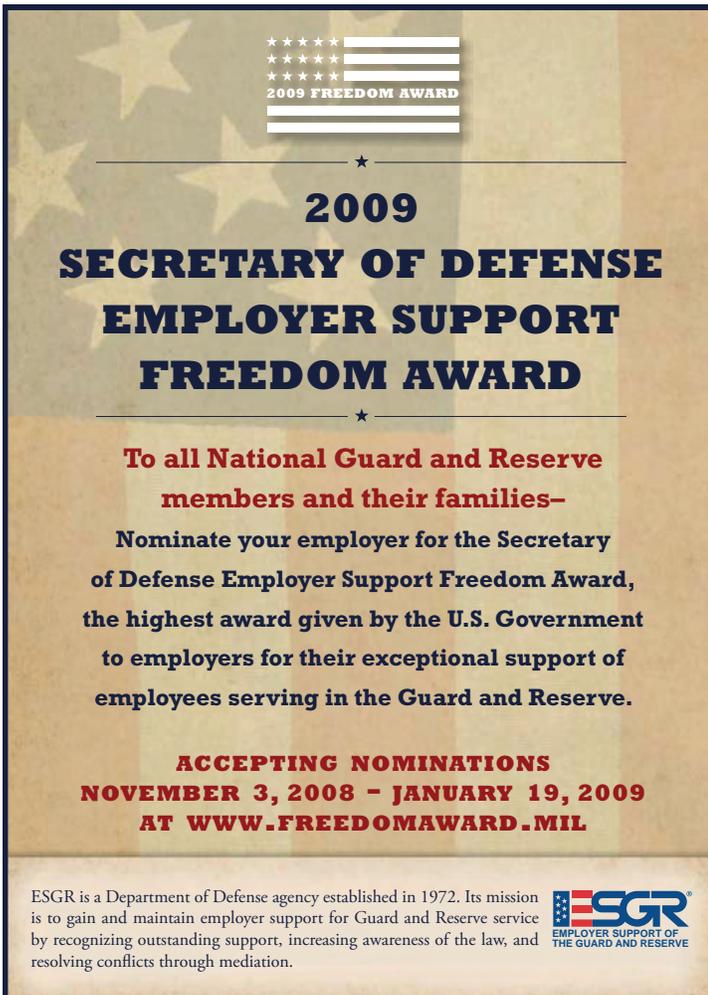
"I didn't make up any of the tactics that we used. We took everything that the Army taught and that Soldiers before me had used and we developed it and we implemented it from Day 1. Anytime that a TTP (technique, tactic and procedure) could have been better, we worked on it.

"It's not what I did that made the day go right. It's what the people before me did, that taught me and mentored me on battle tactics and TTPs and just doing the right thing each and every day. Because if you do that – the right training, the right leadership and the right equipment – there's nothing that we can't accomplish."

March 20, 2005, might have ended differently for Nein and his squad, who were outnumbered five to one. Every day he serves here, Nein still faces risk.

"This is my job," he said. "This is what I chose to do, and it's what I'll continue to strive to do. I love what I do."

– Staff Sgt. Jon Soucy of the National Guard Bureau contributed



2009 FREEDOM AWARD

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ESGR is a Department of Defense agency established in 1972. Its mission is to gain and maintain employer support for Guard and Reserve service by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law, and resolving conflicts through mediation.



CASTING CALL

The Bluegrass Guard staff is looking for interesting Soldiers and Airmen, retirees and Family Members for feature stories that may run on the pages of this magazine and other military publications.

Commanders, platoon sergeants, team leaders and even RSP recruits can nominate themselves or someone else for this project.

Call Staff Sgt. Gina Vaile-Nelson, editor, at 502-607-5091 or e-mail at: gina.vaile@us.army.mil to nominate.

INSIDE: Kentucky Special Forces Group leaps high in sky
Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tamm visits Ky.

WANTED

What do you want to see in this magazine?

Please e-mail Staff Sgt. Gina Vaile-Nelson at: gina.vaile@us.army.mil for suggestions.

Kentucky Soldier fights two wars

Arab-American fights terrorism and stereotypes in the same uniform

By Spc. Emily Slusher

133rd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

During his deployment to Iraq, Kentucky National Guard 2nd Lt. Andreas Hassan Shabaan Ali had two jobs. First, and most important, his duties as a Soldier defending his country.

Second, defending his Arabic and Muslim heritage, hopefully opening eyes of other Soldiers to better understand traditions and customs in the desert of Iraq.

"I believe that this is valuable to the Army mission more so now than ever," he said. "Iraq is in a point of transition. U.S. troops and Iraqi troops are fighting side-by-side every day. We employ Arabic interpreters to work with our units. There must be a basis partnership here that is simply not possible without true understanding."

Shabaan said his background as an Arab-American exposed his troops to his culture in a positive way.

"I am proud and honored to serve as a leader for these Soldiers," Shabaan said of his 3rd Platoon, 'Misfits,' of the Murray, Ky.-based 438th Military Police Company.

"I have had countless Soldiers tell me their viewpoint on Arabs and Islam was different before they met me, and that I have helped them thwart many stereotypes," he said.

For Shabaan, his life has been a journey of thwarting stereotypes and making the best for himself.

The son of a German mother and Egyptian father, Shabaan was born in Germany in 1981. After his parents divorce, he moved to the United States, with his mother who married a U.S. Soldier, and brother.

He grew up on military installations, spending most of his time learning to speak English.

"I recall the daily challenge of struggling to communicate with my peers," he said. "It seems ironic when I consider the fact my primary language is now English."

On July 4, 1999, Shabaan requested citizenship with the ultimate goal of joining the military and becoming a military police officer.



1st Lt. Jonathan Smith, 2nd Lt. Andreas Shabaanali and 2nd Lt. Brandon Edwards were deployed together with the 438th Military Police Company in Ramadi, Iraq for nine months. They did route clearance and returned home Nov. 9 to Murray, Ky.

He deployed in 2006 to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he conducted detainee operations. It was in Cuba where he earned his sergeant's stripes and was given more responsibility in his unit.

"This was my first try at leadership. I realized that I truly enjoy such a role," he said.

"Coming back from GITMO as an E-5 and going back to school was hard," Shabaan said.

"Most of the guys in the unit didn't, they jumped on other deployments or got out of the Guard altogether," he said. "I went back and decided to achieve a higher level of leadership."

Two years after returning to Murray State University, Shabaan received the gold bar rank of second lieutenant.

It was his father and step-father who instilled the work-ethic in him, and who were his role models.

"My step-dad was the greatest Soldier I have ever known," he said, adding that his father taught himself to speak English and has made a successful career for himself in New York,

You could say Shabaan has made himself a successful career in the Kentucky National Guard.

"There are NCOs in the 438th who knew me when I was a private," he said. "I feel that they have guided me. I am grateful to serve as a leader in the finest unit in the state."

Winter weather no match for activation of Guard

Gaither leads men during 1897's Martial Law

By Martha Martin and 1st Lt. Stephen Martin

Public Affairs Office

With snow falling hard on a bitterly cold Tuesday night in January 1897, Col. E.H. Gaither and members of E Company left Lexington on a train bound for Burgin, Ky. Once there, they sat and waited...and waited...for the raiders. The Governor's spies had told them the raiders were expected to act that night and Gaither's orders were simple: shoot to kill.

Edgar Hutchinson Gaither, commander of the Kentucky State Guard's Second Regiment, was born November 7, 1852 in Adair County, Ky. He was the son of Edgar Basil Gaither, a captain in the Mexican War, and grandson of Nathaniel Gaither, a Kentucky State Guard surgeon in the War of 1812. With a gaunt and formidable appearance, Gaither was a leading citizen of Harrodsburg, a well known attorney, and had military service in his blood. By the mid 1890's he was Col. Gaither of the Second Regiment of Kentucky and was close to the governor and the state adjutant general. For many years, he and Adjutant General Collier visited the companies all over the State for inspections.

In March 1896, the election for a state senator stirred up debate and hard feelings, which eventually led to threats and fears for one's safety in Frankfort. Gaither and Capt. C. W. Longmire, commander of E Company, were called in by the governor to "gather their men." The unit was assembled with each private in full battle rattle to include regulation overcoat, knapsack, haversack and forty-five rounds of ammunition each. They were headed to Frankfort and the fears and threats of aggression were abated as Kentucky Guardsmen were stationed around the Capitol, martial law in effect.

Leading up to that fateful Tuesday night, the governor's insiders were hard at work for several weeks gaining new information about the renegade raiders, a band of 200 men refusing to pay road

tolls. They had destroyed several toll gates in Mercer Country alone and showed no signs of stopping.

Gaither arrived at the armory in Lexington on a cold and snowy Tuesday afternoon. The anticipation of what was to come that evening had the armory in chaos. Squads were coming and going and messengers were constantly sent on missions for more clothing and equipment.

Later that night, thirty men fully equipped and carrying twenty rounds of ammunition each, boarded a special train headed for Burgin along with two news correspondents. They were met there by the sheriff and fifteen deputies. The plan was to let the raiders start their destruction. Then, Gaither would step out and order them to surrender. If they refused, the bugle would sound and the men would be ordered to shoot the raiders horses. If they still refused, the militia then had their orders to "shoot to kill."

For whatever reason, the marauders didn't show. Perhaps the winter of 1897 was just too cold for an organized crime. Or word of the plan had leaked. Regardless, Gaither stood ready to lead his men and the Kentucky State Guard stood ready to fight and protect the citizens of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

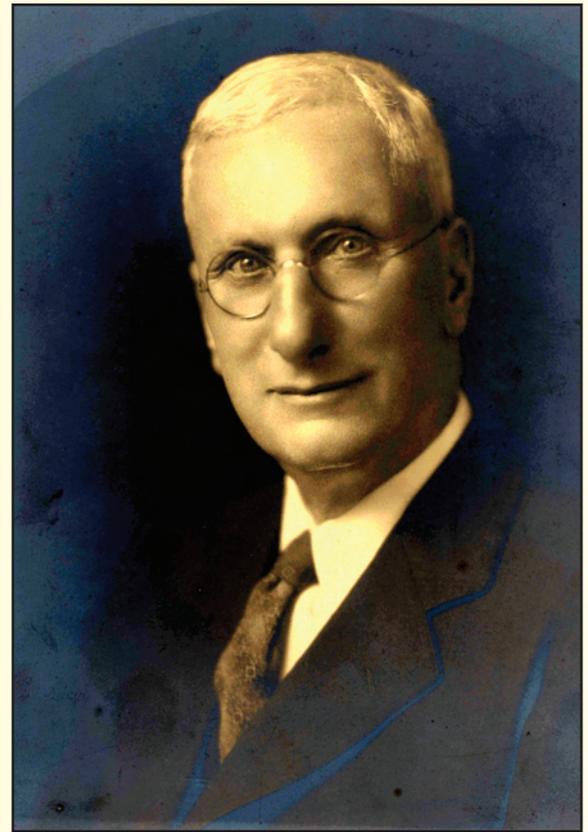


Photo courtesy of E.B. Gaither, grandson of E.H. Gaither

Col. E. H. Gaither, commander of the Kentucky State Guard's Second Regiment, stood ready to lead his men to a surprise defense against the renegade raiders trying to destroy the states



Photo courtesy of the Kentucky Historical Society

A Soldier and child sit on a donkey while other Soldiers from the Alpha Company, 3rd Regiment, Kentucky State Guard pose for a picture in 1898.

Air Guard ceremony



Col. Greg Nelson addresses members of the 123rd Airlift Wing after taking command of the unit Oct. 5 at the Air Guard Base in Louisville, Ky. He began his career as an enlisted Airman and has served for more than three decades.

123rd Airlift Wing builds on past success and looks to future

By Capt. Dale Greer
123rd Airlift Wing Public Affairs Officer

LOUISVILLE, Ky. -- The 123rd Airlift Wing's new commander hit the ground running Oct. 5 with a promise to seek additional missions, volunteer for more assignments and embrace a forward-leaning approach to all aspects of military and personal readiness.

Speaking to 1,100 members of the Kentucky Air Guard who had gathered on the base flightline for a wing change-of-command ceremony, Col. Greg Nelson said the U.S.

military and the National Guard “hold the responsibility for the security and defense of our freedoms.”

“I don’t believe Kentucky is that state that’s always there when you call,” he said. “I believe Kentucky is the state that picks up the phone and says, ‘You need help? We’re there.’”

“I believe Kentucky is the first out the door. You need to know that we’re not going to wait to be called. We’re going to go out and look for ways that we can support the citizens of the commonwealth, the United States and our

marks new era for base

allies abroad.

“I make this promise to each and every one of you: I promise that I will not let you down. I promise every day that I’m going to do the best, with the abilities I’m given, to do the right thing.”

Nelson also vowed to seek new missions for the wing’s Airmen despite cutbacks in many areas of the defense community. In 2006, for example, the Air Force downsized the wing’s flying capacity by reassigning four of its original 12 C-130 aircraft.

“I’m going to look for ways to put more aircraft back on this ramp, more buildings on this base, and more Airmen and officers in the Kentucky Air National Guard,” the 34-year military veteran said.

“Every bit of that success depends on what you all do every day. I want to thank you in advance, and if you’ll stick with me, I also promise that we’ll have fun.”

Brig. Gen. Michael Dornbush, the Kentucky Air Guard’s Chief of Staff, had high praise for Nelson during the ceremony, calling him a distinguished leader who earned a Bronze Star for his exceptional performance during deployments to CENTAF for Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom.

“It’s a pleasure to see Greg being given the opportunity for wing command,” Dornbush, who officiated the change-of-command ceremony, said. “I am confident he will maintain the great legacy of wing leadership.”

Dornbush also had high praise for the unit’s outgoing leader, Col. Mark Kraus, who has done “simply a superb job as commander of the 123rd Airlift Wing,” he said.

During Kraus’ four-year tenure, the wing scored three Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards, aced a grueling schedule of higher-headquarters inspections and successfully supported a challenging series of overseas deployments to Afghanistan, Europe and Puerto Rico while beefing up U.S. border security through Operation Jump Start and responding to natural disasters back home, including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Gustav.

Kraus earned his second Bronze Star in 2007 for exceptional performance as deputy commander of the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group in Afghanistan, where he expertly managed six flying squadrons responsible for providing close-air support, electronic attack, military airlift and aeromedical evacuation in an extreme combat-flying environment.

“Mark, the 123rd’s many accomplishments under your direction have brought worldwide credit and acclaim,” Dornbush said. “I salute you.”

Kraus used the occasion to express his gratitude to the

men and women of the Kentucky Air National Guard for their dedication to duty and excellence.

“I want to tell you how proud I am of you and the multitude of your accomplishments in the past four years,” he said.

“We have indeed walked the long road together. We have safely flown through combat deployments, we’ve weathered seasons of readiness and compliance inspections, and performed countless humanitarian and community-service missions. You have excelled at all and readied yourself for more.

“You modeled the highest attributes of the citizen-Airman of a nation at war. You answered the call of your community, state and nation. I am humbled to have had the opportunity to serve as your commander, and I count this time as a treasure to keep. You have my untiring gratitude and thanks for a job well done every step of the way.

“Finally, congratulations to Colonel Nelson on your new command. The men and women of this wing before you are individually the best -- the very best -- that America has to offer. And collectively, they are the best wing in the Air National Guard.

“After 34 years, as I step beyond the shield of this wing, I will encourage you to remember its motto, which has served well so many Kentucky Airmen in the past: Fortune Follows the Brave.”

Editor’s Note: Col. Mike Kraus has since been promoted to the rank of Brig. Gen.



Photo by Rank First Last/KYARNG or KyANG

Col. Mark Kraus bids farewell to the 123rd Airlift Wing during his comments Oct. 5 at the Air Guard Base in Louisville, Ky.

February Issue:



Photo by Capt. James Copas/KYARNG

Firefighters from the Quito, Ecuador Fire Department execute the front-leaning-rest while taking instruction from a Quito Fire Chief. Members of the Kentucky Air Guard's 123rd Special Tactics Squadron attended a subject-matter expert training exchange with the department under the Kentucky State Partnership Program with Ecuador. Read more about the SPP in February's Bluegrass Guard magazine!

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Kentucky NATIONAL GUARD
Unbridled Service



Kentucky Army and Air National Guardsmen, veterans, members of the Family Assistance Center and Kentucky lawmakers joined Lt. Gov. Dan Mongiardo Sept. 18 at the Capitol Rotunda for the signing of the Military Family and Community Covenant .

Lawmakers sign military covenant

Staff Report

Lt. Gov. Daniel Mongiardo joined Maj. Gen. Edward W. Tonini , Adjutant General of Kentucky, and other state officials in signing the first Kentucky National Guard Military Family and Community Covenant Sept. 18 at the Capitol Rotunda.

The Covenant, which outlines the commitment between the Commonwealth of Kentucky and the state's military community aims to provide better services to assist Citizen-Soldiers, veterans and their Families, support services to wounded warriors and to help Soldiers returning from deployments.

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100 Minuteman Parkway
Frankfort, KY 40601
phone: 502-607-5091/1898/1562/1556
fax: 502-607-1468
www.dma.ky.gov/publicaffairs