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Oregon veterans face post-traumatic stress disorder, pgs. 6-7

In this issue...

**Oregon Sentinel**

**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER**

**OF THE**

**OREGON NATIONAL GUARD**

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**Afghanistan — ‘Get ready, here we come’**

900 Soldiers from the 41st Brigade to spend one year training the Afghan National Army

**Story by Kimberly Lippert, Oregon National Guard Public Affairs**

SALEM, Ore. — It was a familiar scene, Mom’s, Dad’s, husbands, wives and kids proudly looking on as their loved ones are mobilized for duty overseas.

“I’m so proud, but very sad, but he wouldn’t want it any other way, he’s ready to go,” said Elaine Clarke. Her son Ryan is one of 900 Soldiers with the 41st Brigade Combat Team going to Afghanistan in the largest single overseas deployment of Oregon Guard troops since World War II.

Thousands gathered in the new Pavilion at the Oregon State Fairgrounds for the Mobilization Ceremony and transfer of authority on February 4. Governor Theodore Kulongoski, Congressman Peter DeFazio, Congresswoman Darlene Hooley, and Major General Raymond F. Rees offered words of encouragement as the unit prepared to leave for their mission abroad.

“None of us will deny you are undertaking a very dangerous mission. I salute your courage and your willingness to serve your state and your country,” said Gov. Ted Kulongoski.

The Soldiers are charged with the important task of training the Afghan National Army. They will be sent to Camp Shelby, Mississippi for three to four months of training before deploying to Afghanistan this summer.

**END OF AN ERA**

Above: A Soldier from F Troop, 82nd Cavalry stands in formation holding a pair of golden spurs that were awarded to the cavalry troopers for their combat service in Iraq.

The Order of the Spur is a tradition which dates back to knighthood, where the awarding of gilt spurs symbolized entry into the ranks — and fraternity — of mounted warriors. Soldiers in the United States military awarded spurs are known as “troopers”.

Right: Aleah (l.) and Johnathan (r.) Vanrenterghem wave flags to welcome home soldiers from F Troop, 82nd Cavalry during the demobilization ceremony at the Kliever Armony in North Portland on Jan. 20. The children are the niece and nephew of the unit’s commander, Capt. Eric Walstrom.

**F-Troop 82nd Cavalry demobilizes and deactivates in a bitter-sweet ceremony**

PORTLAND, Ore. — The members of F Troop 82nd Cavalry were greeted by thunderous applause from hundreds of family and friends packed into the Kliever Armory during the unit’s official demobilization ceremony on Jan. 20, 2006.

But the joy felt by many in the room was tempered with the knowledge that during the same ceremony, F Troop would be inactivated as part of the Army’s Transformation program. Moreover, the unit’s soldiers were aware that one of their brothers, Sgt. Kevin D. Davis, originally deployed with F-Troop, lost his life during the unit’s year-long deployment in Iraq. Taken together, the day would be filled with mixed emotions.

“The soldiers made their contributions to their nation and to the people of Iraq,” said F Troop Commander, Capt. Eric Walstrom. “They should be proud of their service, and will always be remembered for what they accomplished.”

According to 1st Sgt. Terry Miller, F Troop First Sergeant, of the 94 members of the unit, 74 Soldiers attended the ceremony held in north Portland. Five Soldiers remained in Iraq as part of the unit’s advance team, and one was on medical hold at Fort Bliss, Texas. The remainder of the unit’s members were sent home because of various medical issues.

Several speakers met with the soldiers before the ceremony began, each providing information on employment, legal issues, and life skills. Ron Kincaid, a Veterans’ Benefits Counselor with the Oregon Department of Veteran’s Affairs’ Veteran’s Service Office was on hand to answer questions soldiers had about financial or health & welfare services provided by the ODVA.

“The ODVA is here to help these veterans,” Kincaid said. “We want them to know what kinds of services are available to them.”

Oregon Governor Theodore Kulongoski, Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, the Adjutant General of the Oregon Na-
The Oregon Sentinel

Tell us what you think!

Address your comments, feedback and ideas to:

The Oregon Sentinel
Add: Editor
c/o State Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1650, Salem, OR 97309
sentinel-editor@mil.state.or.us

DoD plan to purchase new weapons threatens National Guard

The tradeoff of reserve component personnel for weapons represents a false economy. The Guard can sustain combat and training demands readiness of six brigade combat teams for the cost of one active duty BCT.

The same time that DoD wants to cut funding for our personnel, we’re seeing a surge in our recruitment efforts here in Oregon. The Guard is uniquely situated to support the contiguous 48 states, the way we do that is by maintaining the right choice for crisis response, homeland defense readiness and when needed for federal missions.

It’s important to showing our continuing relevance is demonstrating our personnel readiness, and the way we do that is by maintaining the right choice for our Guard. We owe our thanks to the people who make the Guard strong.

Story by Guy Brinnell
Oregon National Guard Marketing Manager

As a member of the Army National Guard you have answered your nation’s Call to Duty. As a Recruiting Assistant you can be rewarded for helping to achieve STRENGTH FROM WITHIN. The current recruiting environment is the most challenging the Guard has faced in the history of the all-volunteer force. The Army National Guard is only as strong as it should be when we remain a fully-manned, flexible and vibrant force.

The Guard Recruiting Assistance Program (G-RAP) is designed to create a win-win situation for us: you provide quality people, you earn money or recognition, and the Guard benefits from these cuts occurring in FY 2008 alone. These issues are going to collide in Congress and between Washington and the states on the federal government – we’re seeing evidence of that already. The governors of fifty states as well as two territories have declared their opposition to the planned cuts. Seventy-five U.S. senators signed a letter urging the DoD to fund the Guard.

Those who support the National Guard need to know we remain a ready, relevant, and necessary force. Now is the time to recognize the Guard as the right choice for crisis response, homeland defense and when needed for federal missions.

Address your comments, feedback and ideas to:

The Oregon Sentinel
Add: Editor
C/O State Public Affairs Office
PO Box 1650
Salem, OR 97309
sentinel-editor@mil.state.or.us

Stories and photos from the field are gratefully accepted. We need your input to ensure better coverage.

Guard members and their families are encouraged to submit any articles meant to inform, educate or entertain readers of The Oregon Sentinel, including stories about interesting Guard personalities and unique unit training events, or any subject that are wide range. All letters must include the author’s name, address and phone number. All photos received will be deleted in print upon request, but all letters must be signed, and are subject to editing prior to publication.

For publication consideration and questions, please see your unit Public Affairs Representative, or contact the Director of Media Relations at any of the Oregon Sentinel staff members listed below.

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State Command Sergeant Major
Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas R. Moe

State Command Chief
Chief Master Sgt. Rodney R. Smith

Oregon Sentinel Publication Staff

Associate Editor/ Copy Editor
Kay F. Fristad
kay.f.fristad@mil.state.or.us

Editor in Chief/ Contributing Writer
Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy
nick.choy@or.ng.arny.mil

Contributing Editor/ Contributing Writer
Spec. April L. Dustin
april.dustin@or.ng.arny.mil

Audio/ Visual Contributing Photographer
Sgt. 1st Class Tom Hovis
tom.hovis@or.ng.arny.mil

Contributors
1156 Mobile Public Affairs Detachment
173rd Fighter Wing Public Affairs
Unit Public Affairs Representatives

G-RAP: Hometown heroes provide strength from within

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ESAR at a glance

The ESAR program is a referral bonus program administered by the Department of the Army. ESAR is similar to G-RAP with the following unique differences:

- Payment is $1,000, paid upon completion of BCT and AIT.
- Only Non-Prior Service referrals will be accepted.
- All Army National Guard soldiers are eligible, including ADSW, AGR and AGU. Military Officers, Warrant Officers, Reservists, and members of the Recruiting and Retention Force.

You cannot combine ESAR with the G-RAP program. For application and to register and provide a referral, visit www.1800guard.com/esar.

1042nd Soldiers take first place during international competition

We did it. We didn’t think we could do this. We competed in a German Shoot- ing competition using their weapons, that none of our team had fired before.

There were four events consisting of the P6 pistol, G36 Rifle, the Uzi machine pistol, and a relay race involving push-ups, sit-ups and a 70-yard sandbag run for the fourth and final event.

There were 20 other three-man teams competing in the event, coming from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Air National Guard from the United States, Poland, Romania, and Scandinavia vied for top honors.

The range was Spc. Christopher Towar (right) who won first place in the pistol event. Me on the left, Sgt. 1st Class David Darrow and me on the right. Me in the middle, Sgt. Stephen Killough (center) took second in the machine pistol event. We placed 10th in the relay race, so we took 6th place.

Not bad for a National Guard team that has been categorized as non-combatants. And we made sure we reminded them of this fact.

Enjoy, Dave
National Defense Appropriations Act revises benefits for Guard and Reserves

Recent changes in the National Defense Appropriations Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2006 have introduced several revisions to benefits for members of the reserves, including the Developmental Education Loans (§684), Reenlistment Bonus (§630), and Medical and Dental Coverage (§701). These changes reflect the importance of retaining and retaining capable, experienced reservists.

Compensation

Basic Allowance for Housing ($610): Requires paying BAH (rather than BAH II) when reservists are ordered to active duty for more than 30 days (previously required the reservist to be ordered to active duty for 140 days or more to receive BAH).

Critical Skills Retention Bonus ($640): Expands the active duty critical skills retention bonus to include RC members. Allows payment for bonus at any time during obligated service, up to one year; Maximum life-time amount that can be paid to an RC member is $100,000.

Non-prior Service Enlistment and Affiliation Bonus ($631): Consolidates the Selected Reserve enlistment and affiliation bonuses under one authority; Increased the amount to $20,000 (was $10,000 for the enlistment bonus and $15,000 for the affiliation bonus).

Reenlistment Bonus ($630): Allows the bonus to be paid to a member who has up to 20 years of service and agrees to serve in the Selected Reserve (was 16 years).

Prior Service Enlistment Bonus ($633): Allows the bonus to be paid to a member who has up to 20 years of service and agrees to serve in the Selected Reserve (was 14 years); Eliminated prohibition on paying this bonus to a member who previously received an enlistment or reenlistment bonus.

Selected Reserve Officer Accession/Affiliation Bonus ($634): Increased the maximum bonus amount to $100,000 (was $60,000); Eliminated prohibition on paying this bonus to a member previously received an enlistment or reenlistment bonus.

Selected Special Pay for Reserve Selected Reserve Officers Assigned to High Priority Units ($632): Increases amount to $50 per drill (was $10 per drill); Expands authority to include officers (previously only enlisted were eligible).

Loan Repayment Program for Chaplains in the Selected Reserve ($684): Allows repayment of education loans of up to $20,000 for each three years of obligated service as a chaplain in the Selected Reserve.

Foreign Language Proficiency Pay ($639): Increases amount that can be paid an RC member to $12,000 per year (was $6,000); Changes incentive to a bonus for all members

Rate of Pay While Attending Service Academy Prep School ($663): Now allows RC members attending military service academy preparatory schools to be paid at the rate of $452/month for self and $452/month for self and family.

Incentive Pay for Transferring Between Armed Forces ($645): $2,500 bonus for agreeing to transfer from a regular or reserve component of one armed force to a regular or reserve component of another armed force.

Incentive Pay for Selected Reserve Members ($638): Allows Sec Army to conduct a pilot program to pay a bonus of up to $1,000 to a member who refers an individual to a recruiter and the individual subsequently enlists in the Reserve (was only for RC members).

Additional Recruiting Incentives ($681): Authorizes Sec Army to develop up to four recruiting incentive programs that are not specifically authorized in law.

Income Replacement for RC Members ($614): Require the Service to pay the difference between: a reservist’s regular military compensation (basic pay, allowances, and tax advantage of allowable deductions or incentive pay, and other offsetting payments) and the reservist’s average monthly earned income for the 12 months preceding the reservist’s mobilization.

Incentives to members not to lose $3,000 per month if the monthly income difference is $5 or less. The member must have been involuntarily ordered to active duty; and completes 18 consecutive months of active duty, or; completes 24 months of active duty during the previous 60 months, or; is involuntarily mobilized for 180 days or more within six months of separation from a previous involuntary ordnance of active duty of more than 180 days. Payments to begin August 2006.

Medical Benefits

TRICARE Reserve Select ($701): Allows TRS benefit to be suspended during periods of active duty and then resume with any additional period of TRS coverage to be added to the original coverage. Permits mobilized IR members one year to find a position in the Selected Reserve; Allows 90 days after the member’s release from active duty to elect to have TRS coverage for the member and dependents for six months after the death of a member enrolled in TRS; Clarifies that TRS includes space available card at military treatment facilities.

TRICARE Standard for All Selected Reserve Members ($702): Allows Selected Reserve members who are self employed, eligible unemployment recipients, or not eligible for an employer health plan to serve in the Selected Reserve; Permits mobilized IR members one year to find a position in the Selected Reserve; Allows 90 days after the member’s release from active duty to elect to have TRS coverage for the member and dependents for six months after the death of a member enrolled in TRS; Clarifies that TRS includes space available card at military treatment facilities.

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Medical and Dental Assessment ($732): Requires annual medical and dental assessment and periodic physical exam (as prescribed by SecDef) and that medical and dental readiness be documented annually.

Benefits/Quality of Life

Improved Administration of the President’s Mobilization Education Benefit ($540): Allows for retention of the benefit if there is a break in Selected Reserve service (not to exceed 90 days) provided the member remains in the IRR.

The difference between a manager and a leader: Individual’s state of mind

I was reading a magazine the other day and found an interesting article written by James Colvard on the subject of management and leadership. Colvard had some good points for current managers and leaders and for personnel whose goal it is to become a leader in the future. I would like to take this opportunity to share some of his insights and views. Although we may not agree with all he has to say on the subject, he does convey some good points.

We frequently assume management and leadership are the same concept. They are not. The two are associated, but there are fundamental differences. Management involves looking at inordinate or at times nonexistent information and making a decision. Leaders must have the courage to act and take the time to listen. They must be open to new data, but at some point they must take action based on the available information.

In his article James Colvard reveals his views on the differences between managing and leading. He makes the point that managers take care of what is required; a leader takes you to a new place. A manager deals with numbers and facts with the purpose of increasing efficiency. A manager is concerned with finding the facts; a leader makes decisions. A manager is concerned with the right things; a leader is concerned with doing the right thing.

A manager’s critical concern is efficiency—doing the right thing. A leader is focused on effectiveness, a manager focuses on effectiveness, a leader establishes principles. A manager sees and hears what is going on; a leader looks for differences. A manager evaluates resources required. Getting a bargain does not reflect effective leadership if it means losing the war. Good management is important, but good leadership is essential.

Developing managers and leaders in different stages of understanding requires facilitators, not prescriptively, but conceptually. Becoming a leader requires understanding oneself, recognizing one’s strengths and weaknesses, and adopting an appropriate leadership style.

James Colvard presented some significant thoughts on leadership. There is a difference between management and leadership. The following are my own views on enlisted service leadership and what I have learned from our senior leadership. Our leaders will always insist on the highest standards. They should promote enthusiasm and pride in work. Issues should be addressed and resolved and leaders should always strive to move their units forward. Leaders are only as good as the people they lead. A key point to leadership is having people willing to follow. People will only follow if trust and integrity are established and they believe in what you say. We must understand that much of us have a stake in the success of our unit and therefore we must do our best to help your unit succeed. When a single unit fails, we all have failed. We are a team and we have many moving parts. You must have a profound impact on those around you. The actions you display today will set the standard for the leaders of tomorrow. As you grow as a leader you will rely on leadership qualities learned from the leaders who in turn mentored you and your own unique leadership style. We function as a team, and we need leaders who are willing to work together to be effective leaders.

Being a leader has always been tough and always will be. One has to willingly subject oneself to public scrutiny and also the scrutiny of your troops. You must face critics who are often big on words, but seldom have the courage to place themselves in your place. But don’t get discouraged; you have 90 days to do your best and fact that you are doing your best. Accept constructive criticism from credible sources. Also remember that being a leader today is different than it was ten years ago. We are no longer a large force; we are a much smaller force taking the fight to wherever it happens to be. We are a team and we have many moving parts. You must face the challenges to face in the future. You are an integral part of the management team and leadership process; take that seriously and become a leader in your organization.
1042nd’s first female crew chief takes the challenge

The age

of 30, married with two children, you would think joining the military would be the last thing on Tracy Robison’s radar screen.

Then again, Sgt. Robison isn’t your average woman.

Robison wanted a challenge and a chance to serve, so shortly before the 9/11 terrorist attacks she enlisted in the Oregon Army National Guard. It would turn out to be a life-altering decision, and she has been breaking through barriers ever since.

“I joined the Oregon National Guard because it was a point in my life when I wanted to challenge myself,” Robison said. “And my children were older so they could better deal with the initial separation.”

“I didn’t realize I would be deployed every other year, but I’m still glad I can serve my country in any capacity.”

Robison—in her last deployment with the 1042nd Medical Company (Air Ambulance), which was sent to Afghanistan in July 2005. It would become her second deployment since joining the Oregon National Guard, and her first overseas. Her primary duty was as a mechanic on the UH-60 “Blackhawk” helicopters, with additional duty as a supply sergeant. But Robison had her sights set even higher, she wanted to become a crew chief.

“Being a crew chief has been my goal since the last deployment. I never wanted to be stuck in the rear again,” said Robison.

A crew chief’s duties include maintaining the aircraft, load and passenger security, fuel consumption calculation, airspace surveillance, clearing the aircraft of obstacles and operating the hoist for missions in which a medic needs to be lowered to help a patient.

While in theatre, Robison has been able to complete her flight hours to become a crew chief. With the help of her primary trainer, Staff Sgt. Mark Carter, and almost three weeks of training in Jalalabad, Robison now flies as the first female crew chief for the 1042nd Medical Company.

“I feel damn proud to be the first female crew chief—but let me say that I have broken no barrier, because none really existed,” said Robison.

“I just happen to be the first female that was a mechanic, showed promise and progressed. I have done nothing that the males haven’t done. My training is the same,” she added.

Robison says she was drawn to the excitement of the job.

“I love being in the aircraft and even more so I love being a part of the crew,” she said. “I have had the privilege of working with a lot of talented people over here and I’m proud to be a part of it all,” Robison added.

Pritt: “We are the right unit, at the right time, performing the right mission”

Continued from FRONT PAGE

“I believe we are the right unit at the right time, performing the right mission,” said Brig. Gen. Douglas Pritt, who will command Task Force Phoenix in Afghanistan.

For the hundreds of Soldiers preparing to leave friends and family behind, the ceremony was bittersweet – though it is tough to leave friends and family behind, the ceremony was awarded by Gen. Douglas Pritt with his Commander’s Coin of Excellence.

“I saw the look in the Mo’s family’s eyes and the expression on their faces when they so proudly walked up to accept the coins, and it was one of the most moving things I’ve ever experienced,” said Peggy Preisz, General Manager of Mo’s. “We are excited to have this opportunity to show our support of the soldiers and their families and thank them for everything they do to protect our state and nation,” said Preisz.

The 900 Oregon Soldiers of the 41st BCT will make up the largest group assembled under Task Force Phoenix in Afghanistan. They will also be joined by approximately 400 Soldiers from Oklahoma as well as smaller groups from Arkansas, Arizona, California, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, New York, Ohio, Puerto Rico, South Dakota, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and representatives from National Guard Bureau in Washington D.C.

Waiting at home when they return will be proud family members like Herb Waud, father of Spc. Julie Cavinee, 141st BSB, of Creswell, a Soldier who has been with the Oregon National Guard for 13 years. “I was in the military myself and support her 100 percent,” said Waud. “I’m proud of her.”
A group of Iraqi citizens approached several American soldiers who were providing security on the Al-Rasheed Bridge over the Tigris River in Baghdad.

The soldiers remained alert, watching for any suspicious activity, but as the Iraqis passed, they held up their ink-stained fingers, joyfully thanking the Soldiers for their right to vote.

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: Finding the calm after the storm

Story by Kimberly L. Lippert, Oregon National Guard Public Affairs

Photo by Maj. Arnold Strong, 42nd Brigade Combat Team, Public Affairs Officer

People have this fantasy that you can go to war and return to what you were before—that is unrealistic.

Dr. David Collier, Salem Veterans Center psychologist

PTSD

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

There are just a few terms used to describe the symptoms of what is now known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. While the names have changed the symptoms remain much the same – nightmares, flashbacks, emotional numbing, and isolation. These are the unplanned side effects of war many Soldiers experience.

“People have this fantasy that you can go to war and return to what you were before, that is unrealistic,” said Dr. David Collier, psychologist at the Salem Veterans Center. “We can’t make you like you were before.”

While statistics vary depending on the source, many believe up to 10 percent of returning veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan have PTSD. According to a recent study out of Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, 19 to 21 percent of troops who have returned from combat deployments meet criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression or anxiety. Of these, 15 to 27 percent of troops surveyed three to 12 months after their deployments had PTSD symptoms.

As a member of the Air Force Reserves who deployed to Iraq in 2003 and a Portland Veterans Administration psychologist specializing in the treatment of PTSD and substance abuse, Dr. Jim Sardo is on the front lines treating soldiers with PTSD both abroad and here at home.

“Statistically, the vast majority of people that deploy are going to be just fine. Most of them will have a period of readjustment for 6-12 months that includes irritability, increased vigilance, difficulty dealing with crowds, avoidance, lots of anger responses in traffic, for most folks this tapers off in 6-12 months,” said Dr. Sardo. “There is a small segment of veterans that will have symptoms persist over time.”

For those Soldiers, getting help is essential. Experts agree early intervention is an essential component of successful treatment. While psychologists hesitate to talk in terms of a "cure," with proper treatment it is possible for Soldiers suffering from PTSD to lead productive and fulfilling lives.

Symptoms

The first thing to establish is whether or not a Soldier may have PTSD. While a health professional needs to make the diagnosis, Soldiers and their family members can identify the symptoms. The symptoms fall into three main categories: Intrusion, Avoidance, and Hyper-arousal.

Intrusion, in people with PTSD, involves memories of trauma reoccurring unexpectedly, and “flashbacks” intruding in their thought processes. Vivid memories accompanied by painful emotions, take over the person’s attention. A person may even feel as if they are re-living the traumatic experience or seeing it in a nightmare. Avoidance is when a person may avoid any situation that may remind them of the traumatic event. Examples include crowds, driving, or even close relationships with loved ones. They may feel numb and have diminished emotions or feel like life is just a routine.

Hyper-arousal in PTSD can cause individuals to act as if they are constantly threatened by the trauma that caused their illness. They can become suddenly irritable or explosive. The constant feeling that danger is near causes exaggerated startle reactions.

Many people with PTSD attempt to rid themselves of painful memories and anxiety by abusing alcohol or drugs to “self-medicate.” An example may be drinking excessive amounts of alcohol to fall asleep at night.

As Dr. Sardo said, it’s normal to have many symptoms of PTSD immediately upon returning from a deployment, but if those symptoms persist or begin interfering with life it’s time for the Soldier to seek help. The good news for returning Soldiers is that they are more treatment options available than ever before.

Treatment

Some of the current and useful forms of treatment for PTSD include Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Exposure Therapy, Psychotherapy, and Medication.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy helps veterans reframe their thoughts in a more realistic matter and deal with the very real symptoms of PTSD.

“CBT helps give them the tools to deal with nightmares, hyper-vigilance, and learn how to think and behave in the here-and-now,” Sardo said. “We ask them to be in the presence of what they fear until the anxiety goes down.”

Exposure Therapy is relatively new treatment for PTSD involving careful, repeated, detailed imagining of the trauma (exposure) or progressive exposure to symptom “triggers” in a safe, controlled context to help the Soldier face and gain control over the fear so that he or she can be confronted with the memory or situation without extreme anxiety.

“With PTSD people retain the same level of intensity [to a trigger or memory] for years, exposure therapy helps them gain distance from those memories and increase tolerability of those memories,” explained Sardo. “We don’t use exposure therapy for everybody but for those who are ready, it can be very effective.”

Psychotherapy, in either a group context or an individual basis, involves a veteran discussing the traumatic event with a professional, and/or with fellow Soldiers. It helps the individual examine personal values and how the traumatic event affected them.

Medications can help alleviate many of the more severe symptoms of PTSD including nightmares and anxiety. Studies show that medications and behavioral treatments are most effective when done together; neither treatment alone is shown to be as effective.

Despite many effective treatments for PTSD, not everyone seeks help. A 2003 study in the New England Journal of Medicine found that up to 60% of U.S. veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan showing symptoms of PTSD were unlikely to seek help for fear of stigmatization or loss of career advancement opportunities. This still occurs even after the military has been working very hard to de-stigmatize mental health.

“The Oregon National Guard leadership from the top down believes in making sure mental health is talked about and normalized,” said Sardo. “The response by the Oregon National Guard has been phenomenal – they have been a model for how to do that.”

“After the return of one of our battalions, we recognized that our system was simply not adequate to address post deployment issues,” said Col. Mike Caldwell, deputy director of state affairs for the Oregon National Guard. “With that in mind, we set out to aggressively understand what resources were available and developed a system that could deliver those services to our returning veterans.”

In January of 2005 the Oregon National Guard established the Reintegration Team, which helps Soldiers adjust to civilian life upon return from deployment. The team has a live-person available 24 hours a day to assist Soldiers and Airmen with a variety of issues, including troubling emotional symptoms.

“I think this effort has provided us a better system to assist our Soldiers once they come home and just not assume that they will figure it out on their own,” said Caldwell.

The Oregon National Guard Reintegration Team will help Soldiers who may be suffering from PTSD connect with treatment providers. More information on the Reintegration Team is available at www.orng-vet.org or by phone at 1-888-688-2264.

Fortunately, there are various options for Sol
The first step to healing a “Soldier’s Heart” simply begins with talking to a friend.

“(It’s) the guys to your left and your right. They were there with me, they’ve seen it, they’ve felt it, they’ve lived it. They’re the ‘Blasted Brothers’ – who had already returned from deployment. This brotherhood creates a bond like no other.”

Sgt. 1st Class Vince Jacques of the 2-162 Inf. Bn. was injured in Iraq as a truck commander in a HMMWV that hit an improvised explosive device. He is now a member of the Oregon National Guard’s Reintegration Team, assisting Soldiers and families as they transition back from their post-deployment lives.

According to Jacques, it is important for Soldiers and families to realize that we are all in this together.

“It’s good for them to know that they are not alone, that there are so many people out there that want to help,” Jacques said.

But in order to understand why some Soldiers have a difficult time adjusting back into their lives at home, it helps to know what their lives were like during deployment.

“Before we went out over there, we all had this grand vision of what combat was going to be like, but until you’ve been there, you really wouldn’t understand,” said the Lieutenant. “It’s the immediate adrenaline rush, but for some time, it’s one of the worst experiences you could ever go through, especially when you lose yourself in the moment.

“The Lieutenant said the simplicity of life seemed to be the secret to making one year fly by. He also said he learned to survive on very little sleep, and when he did get to sleep, it was some of the worst sleep ever.

“You’re internal clock gets so messed up, you begin to wonder if you’re ever going to tick right again,” he said.

Most Soldiers begin to feel that if they can make it through the deployment, they can handle anything back home. At the same time, most may experience a host of things they probably never thought of.

“I found that I didn’t realize how much I didn’t appreciate just the little things that I took for granted,” the Lieutenant added.

But most Soldiers agree that going through combat as a bond — like no other.

“When I see these guys come in for help, there is this brotherhood,” Jacques said of the Reintegration Team. “When these guys come to talk to us, they don’t know they can trust us, because we are not just some talking head that hasn’t been anywhere. We were over there going through the same stuff together.”

The Reintegration Team is set up to give returning veterans straight-line communication to counselors and resources. According to Jacques, the Reintegration Team only adds more stress to Soldiers who need assistance right away.

With the transition of the Veterans’ Administration, you’ll spend hours a day on the phone, Jacques said. “It was extremely frustrating — it almost made a lot of us blow a good mind.”

Jacques said that the concept of brotherhood and the desire to take care of each other is the motivation behind the “Blasted Brothers” group. The group was started by a group of injured Soldiers, who named themselves the “Blasted Brothers” based off their HMMWV phone numbers and contacts for veterans resources, passing them on to other Soldiers who were looking for help. Jacques said he spent long lines nights and hours on the phone.

When the Oregon National Guard decided to develop a Reintegration Team, members of the “Blasted Brothers” — who had already started saying a prayer network to prepare for the return of their comrades — seemed like a natural choice to employ as full-time members of the team.

Before deployment, I had always heard about the brotherhood between combat veterans from previous wars,” the Lieutenant said.

According to the Lieutenant, the combat veteran brotherhood is not unit, service, or even conflict-oriented. It is also not specific to those who served side by side in battle. Most veterans who have experienced any kind of combat situation feel a camaraderie with other veterans who had blood, sweat and tears together in an austere environment, and their bond crosses boundaries of time and generations.

“I finally got to experience this when I met a Vietnam veteran, who at the time was a stranger to me, the Lieutenant said. “But because I was a combat vet, and he was a combat vet, we ended up talking for hours.”

“The whole time I’ve been back, I’ve been afraid about the things of the old times that I went through. I’ve learned now that there are things that I can’t get rid of, things I can’t let go — so I asked him about that. I asked him if he ever got away from it all, away from the pain. I never could get away, will all the pain ever go away (pause, tears) and he said ‘No’.

“After all these years, this Vietnam veteran is still dealing with the pain,” the Lieutenant continued. “By the end of our conversation I found myself hugging this man, because he is my brother.”

According to the Lieutenant, despite a great outpouring of support from both National Guard-sponsored assistance programs and community-sponsored assistance, the majority of the help veterans receive when they return from deployment is from their comrades in arms.

“If the guys to your left and your right who went through it with you, he said. “It goes back to that brotherhood. With these guys, I’ll rip off my arm and give it to them if they need it, because they were there with me, they’ve seen it, they’ve felt it, they’ve lived it with me, and that makes them my brother.”

“Dealing with family when you come home is a big adjustment compared to what we were doing over there,” Jacques said.

“Over there, everyone had a tremendous amount of responsibility and when you get home, you don’t have that anymore,” he added.

Jacques cited an example of a private who may return home from Iraq and goes back to working at Fred Meyer or goes to school.

“The kind of responsibility he used to have in combat is hard to find in the civilian world. Likewise, a squad leader in charge of thousands of dollars of equipment and responsible for others’ lives in combat must now transition back to normal life.

“It’s a tough transition,” Jacques said.

The Lieutenant returned home to a grateful community; and of course, his loving family. But a lot of Soldiers carry an unrealistic expectation of what home holds for them.

“There’s an expectation that we’re coming home to Nirvana, the Lieutenant said. “You get home and you’ve got money in your pocket, you don’t have to do anything at all for a few months. It’s like you’ve won the lottery.”

“You just came through a year of hell, and you feel like taking the next three months to do whatever the hell you want to do, because you’ve earned it,” he added.

“Two months after I got back, I couldn’t take not having anything to do,” the Lieutenant continued. “It drives you nuts. Sitting around talking to everyone about what it’s like over there, you get sick of talking about it. Then money starts running out and you start thinking about the bills. You’ve got to get back into the workforce, back into the routine you had before deployment … but now everything’s totally different. The normality of everyday life that we lived without for a year, while we were in Iraq, now becomes the monkey on your back.”

“So you try twice as hard to make up for the fact that you’ve been gone,” said the Lieutenant. “So now you’re trying harder to do what you think is expected of you back home, and you’re running yourself into the ground. The whole time you’re dealing with this transition, you’re still trying to deal with the stress and emotions of the loss of your friends and the (staff) you’ve seen over there.

“No one understands how much you’ve changed until you come home,” the Lieutenant said. “The biggest social challenge is crowds. Before I left, I could walk into a crowded and shake hands, make people laugh, I could talk to anyone. Now, even though it’s gotten a little better, when I’m in a crowd, I feel like get these people away from me, I’ve got to leave, I can’t,” he said.

“You talk to the other guys and how you all miss the simple combat life,” the Lieutenant said. “We came back looking for the peace and simplicity of what life used to be before we left, and you begin to realize there is nothing simple about your life back home.”

“I’m fortunate with my fiancé because she is incredibly supportive,” he continued. “She’ll just listen and won’t offer advice or try to diagnose what I’m saying or feeling. She’s just there to listen and share the pain with me.”

Dealing with losing one of your buddies is very difficult, according to Jacques. But he said the biggest challenge is for his “brothers” to live their lives to its fullest.

“We have an obligation to continue with our lives, get back on our feet, stay busy, be productive and don’t quit,” Jacques said. “If you quit, that’s just a drag on the other brothers. They’d want you to be better after they died. Any of us that were close to getting killed, it’s the single most thing a man can be is a sin to not go out and do something with your second chance.”

“No matter how you rationalize it, no matter how you deal with it, the pain is still there and it will always be there,” the Lieutenant said, as tears rolled down his cheeks.

“Whether it be something like drowning the pain and stress behind alcohol. (It’s) drinking (emotions), and makes it worse,” Jacques said. “If you’re doing it every night to get it to sleep, it only gets worse from there.”

“You start to wonder why you can’t sleep,” the Lieutenant said. “You don’t know if you are not sleeping because during the deployment you’ve just gotten used to it, or if you’re not sleeping because your head is messed up. So you drink two to three bottles of wine, or a case of beer each night just to fall asleep.”

The Lieutenant had a rude awakening one day. As he was taking out the weekly recycling, he counted 13 bottles of wine and a garbage bag full of empty beer bottles. His fiancé mentioned to him that she found herself sleeping a lot more, but he remained very supportive of him.

“You should have a problem,” said the Lieutenant. “It was starting to affect the people around me that I love.”

Jacques and the experts agree. The best thing in dealing with stress is for veterans to find something that makes them feel useful.

“Go out and be a part of something productive,” Jacques said. “Have things you like to do. Make sure you go to the dentist every six months or so. Start living as normal as you can.”

See Brotherhood on page 9

The term “Soldier’s Heart” was used in the 19th Century as one of the first models to explain physical and mental changes experienced by veterans returning from the Civil War.

Today, experts use terms such as Anxiety, Depression, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) to describe the effects of combat on Soldiers.

But, regardless of the terminology, combat has always had long-lasting affects that can take months - even years - to heal a “Soldier’s Heart.”
Wildcat Battalion — ‘First to Assemble’ — for the last time

SALEM, Ore. — Hundreds of Soldiers from the 1st Battalion 162nd Infantry assembled at the Salem Armys Auditorium on Jan. 7 to stand united behind their colors for one last time. The infantrymen stood together in formation as they watched the casing of their colors, a symbolic ceremony in which the battalion colors are rolled up and casing, signifying the official inactivation of the battalion.

“It’s a painful watching the colors go away,” said Staff Sgt. Karl Gatke, of B Company. The 1-162 Inf. Bn. was inactivated as part of the National Guard Bureau’s implementation of the Army Transformation plan, which includes reorganizing combined-arms units into modular, self-contained brigades. For the Oregon Army National Guard, transitioning the 41st Brigade from a separate infantry brigade to a combined-arms brigade combat team required many changes, including inactivating one of the infantry battalions.

“Today represents an important day for our battalion, the 41st Brigade Combat Team, and the Oregon Army National Guard,” said Battalion Commander Lt. Col. David Stuckey, during the ceremony. “Our deactivation and the casing of the battalion’s most memorable moments. He reminded the Soldiers they will continue to be a critical component to the Oregon National Guard no matter what guidon they serve under.

“It is you, Wildcats, that have made this battalion special and I ask you to continue in doing your job, continue our successful tradition, behind a different guidon,” said Stuckey. “Our guidon will be cas ed, but the success we’ve had has been accomplished by Soldiers and leaders doing their jobs. You as Soldiers are not being cased and, in my mind, adapting has been one of our battalion’s greatest attributes.”

Several new guidons will stand in front of the battalion’s six armory locations throughout the state. Three companies will remain infantry units. A Company, in Hillsboro, and C Company, in Gresham, will become part of 2nd Battalion 162nd Infantry. D Company, in St. Helens, will become part of 1st Battalion 186th Infantry. Two of the companies will transition into field artillery units. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, in Forest Grove, and B Company, in McMinnville, will become part of 2nd Battalion 218th Field Artillery. E Company, in Salem, will be totally inactivated and those Soldiers will be transferred to other units.

With the McMinnville armory will be handed over to 2-218th FA Bn., B Company Soldiers say they will carry their guidon and the lineage of 1-162 Inf. Bn. with them to Afghanistan as they deploy with the 41st BCT this summer.

“This is probably more painful for those of us that are deploying to Afghanistan, because we are watching the unit crumble around us while we carry on it’s lineage for another year in a combat zone,” said Gatke. “The lineage of the battalion will stay with us.”

The battalion’s inactivation has affected many Soldiers in the battalion. Lt. Jonathan Vanhorn, of HHC, said as Command Sgt. Major James Jungling, the Soldiers are adapting well. He said morale is high and when the Soldiers first find out about the inactivation, but they decided to show everyone how to go out strong.

“The did a fabulous job [at annual training] and everyone responded and was motivated during Katrina,” said Jungling. “They are doing their best to carry on and I’m very proud of them.”

Jungling said most Soldiers in the battalion are transitioning into 2-162 Inf. Bn. and 1-186 Inf. Bn. to continue their service as infantrymen. He said the other infantry battalions in the state have welcomed them.

Sgt. R.J. Lawrence, of B Company, plans to transfer to 2-162 Inf. Bn. He said, “It’s been hard because 1st Battalion has been my family. For my guys, we are all following each other. We’re sticking together, so even though we will be in another unit we will still be one big family.”

According to Stuckey, many Soldiers in the battalion plan to stay together. “Through this process I have learned that Soldiers facing changes will follow three things. One, they will try to maintain their MOS (military occupational specialty), their friends, or their leadership.”

Both Stuckey and Jungling noted the battalion’s non-commissioned officers have motivated during Katrina,” said Jungling. “This is heartbreaking for us, but it’s better for the state and National Guard to strengthen other units within the brigade. We have strong NCOs and great leaders that can take their experience and spread their knowledge to new Soldiers.”

Stuckey explained that although the inactivation of the battalion is frustrating and disheartening, he said it is an important part of the mission for the 41st BCT.

Bradley Beverley, of HHC, plans to transfer to the 2-218th FA Bn. He made special arrangements to take a break from his security duties at the Oregon Military Department to stand in the inactivation ceremony with his comrades at the inactivation ceremony.

“You’ve been doing this [infantry] for six years, so it’s time for me to try something new,” said Beverley. He somberly added, “But I’m not going to ‘try’ to be a ‘tryman’ [to become] an artilleryman.” (The light blue cord worn on the right shoulder of the Class A dress uniform which can only be worn by qualified infantry Soldiers.)

Lt. Jonathan Vanhorn, of HHC, said as a medics his duties will differ very little but he is ready to take on the new role of an artilleryman. “Soldiers now have a chance to look at the big picture and see what opportunities are available to them overall,” he said.

Although Soldiers and leaders in the 1-162 Inf. Bn. seemed to have mixed emotions about the inactivation of their battalion, they agreed that the Transformation changes provide more opportunities for Soldiers and units within the 41st BCT.

“This is a sad day and a happy day at the same time,” said Jungling. “This is heartbreaking for us, but it’s better for the state and National Guard to strengthen other units within the brigade. We have strong NCOs and great leaders that can take their experience and spread their knowledge to new Soldiers.”

“Some of them are taking on new challenges and exploring a new MOS,” said Jungling. “They may find different jobs that they like better or have more opportunity to move up in the ranks.”

Stuckey said some Soldiers are pursuing opportunities in field artillery. “I never thought that you could convince an infantryman [to become] an artilleryman,” he said, “but we’ve shown them that artillery can still be that step forward for the Oregon Guard.”
**TRANSFORMATION: A changing Army for changing times**

Stu Dy Spc, April L. Dusin, State Public Affairs Office

In accordance with the Army Transformation plan, National Guard Bureau announced on Jan. 9, 2006, that the Oregon Army National Guard would be reorganized and structured to start the transformation process, said Lt. Col. Donell McBride, transformation officer for Joint Force Headquarters.

“We are doing this because the Army has decided to transform their units and for us to maintain interoperability we must structure our forces in a like manner,” said McBride.

The transformation plan includes shrinking the divisional force structure down to brigade levels by reorganizing units into modular, combined-arms Brigade Combat Teams. Each transformed BCT will encompass everything it needs to be self-contained, with much of the equipment divided between divisional headquarters and subordinate brigades. The objective of this transformation is to increase the mobility, lethality, and self-sufficiency of each individual BCT, therefore increasing the overall effectiveness of the Army for today’s theater of operation.

“It gives the Army more flexibility to perform a variety of ever-changing missions,” said McBride.

McBride said while the Guard has always been a ready, reliable force capable of accomplishing a variety of missions, transforming the state according to the plans set forth by Dailey’s new manpower structure, the Oregon Army National Guard is now required to accomplish tasks in a manner that is consistent with the Guard’s newly authorized strength.

For more transformation changes, see the next issue of the Oregon Sentinel.

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**Brotherhood of soldiers an important resource**

Continued from PAGE 7

do, like hobbies.”

No one wants to be labeled as having a disorder or as being abnormal. What a lot of people don’t realize is that, according to experts, experiencing these symptoms makes people normal. The emotions and feelings veterans sometimes experience are normal reactions to abnormal situations. Soldiers don’t want to seek help for fear that it will jeopardize their military career. In some cases, they feel that they have to come home to, those who shared this traumatic experience. Some current soldiers also have family they have — and they can’t afford to lose that.

According to the Lieutenant, many Soldiers don’t want to be perceived as weak by their counterparts. Moreover, Western society frowns upon males who overtly display their emotions. Men are taught to be strong. Crying is a sign of weakness, and if you are a male, admitting that you are scared, worried, stressed out, or tired is a signal to the rest of society that you have failed.

Soldiers don’t seek help and don’t want to talk to anyone about it because it’s a macho thing,” he said. “We’ve got that attitude that we’re invincible.

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According to the Lieutenant, many Soldiers don’t want to be perceived as weak by their counterparts. Moreover, Western society frowns upon males who overtly display their emotions. Men are taught to be strong. Crying is a sign of weakness, and if you are a male, admitting that you are scared, worried, stressed out, or tired is a signal to the rest of society that you have failed.

Soldiers don’t seek help and don’t want to talk to anyone about it because it’s a macho thing,” he said. “We’ve got that attitude that we’re invincible.

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Van Natta temporarily replaces Elliott as Oregon ESGR chair

Retired 249th Engineer Battalion Command Sergeant Major, Bill Van Natta was named Executive Director for the Oregon Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) Program.

He will hold the position while Col. (Ret.) Brett Fowlkes is deployed with the 41st Brigade in Afghanistan. The unit is scheduled to return to Oregon sometime in June 2007.

Van Natta has been associated with the Oregon National Guard for more than 33 years, both as a former national guardman and as AGR. He has served with both the 41st BCT and the 82nd BDE, and for more than five years, has served as a volunteer with the Oregon ESGR program in various capacities.

If you need assistance with anything related to ESGR, feel free to contact Bill Van Natta at 503-932-2362, or via e-mail at: william.vannatt@ng.army.mil.

2005 tax exemptions for Guard members

The Department of Revenue website outlines 2005 Income Tax Legislation benefits that Oregon Guard members are eligible for. A few of these benefits include:

- Military members serving in a combat zone are not taxed by either the IRS or the State of Oregon.
- National Guard members deployed to a combat zone and serving in Afghanistan are not taxed by the IRS.
- Oregon National Guard members called to active duty serving in Oregon can receive the full amount due to their taxable income.
- Oregon is now connected to federal tax laws which allow Oregon National Guard members to claim the $1,500 in travel expenses from overnight trips. Guard members may file an amended return within three years, from the due date of the return to claim this deduction if you previously incorrectly claimed this expense as an addition on your Oregon return.
- Military members who change in duty status on Title 31. On Title 10 may sub- tract, from Oregon income, the military pay earned inside Oregon.
- Oregon members serving on Title 10 can exempt the first $3,000 income earned while working on duty inside Oregon.
- Military death benefits of up to $100,000 are now tax-free on state returns, as they are on federal.

For more information visit the Military FAQ at www.oregon.gov/DOOR/ESGR/ esgrfaq.html. You can also call the Oregon Department of Revenue at 503-378-4986 (Salem) or 1-800-356-4222.

Some military to soon see BAH changes on their LES statements

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Dec. 16, 2006) - Approximately 10,000 single service members who live off base and pay child support are likely to see a slight change in their military pay. The rules regarding the basic allowance for housing differential; an allotment for single members who pay child support; will change Dec. 31, according to Fowlkes, the Pentagon’s assistant director of military compensation, told the American Forces Press Service.

The change is one of the last parts of a series of phase-ins of the basic allowance for housing that began in 1998, he explained. The BAH system replaced the old variable housing allowance in 1998.

Under both the old law and the transition policies that have been in effect to imple- ment BAH, single members who pay child support get a BAH differential. After Dec. 31, however, only members who live in a housing quarter or whose child support is set to continue will receive the BAH differenti- al, the law states.

Members who live off base and pay child support will receive BAH at the “with dependents” rate. Previously, they received the BAH at the “without dependents” rate, plus the BAH differential.

This “with dependents” BAH rate varies widely based on pay grade and location, Fowlkes said, so affected service members may notice a slight increase in their pay and some, a slight decrease.

TAG’S Market Match set for April

The 2006 Adjutant General’s Combat Marksmanship Championship will be contested April 29-30 at Camp Rilea. The AG Match is open to all current Oregon Army and Air National Guard personnel. Contestants may enter as an individual or as a four-member team representing a company, battalion/flight-squadron shooters.

Additionally, SARTS is conducting monthly marksmanship training sessions at Camp Aptu. This training gives soldiers an opportunity to verify the battle sight zero on their assigned weapons. Dates for upcoming training and information regarding the AG Match are posted on the SARTS webpage: www.mil.state.or.us/SARTS.

Monthly small arms training for ORNG

The Small Arms Readiness Training Section will conduct basic rifle and pistol marksmanship training monthly throughout 2006.

These training sessions are open to all members of the Oregon National Guard and will provide opportunities to safely train with highly skilled instructors offering qual- ity instruction and a thorough understanding of the basic principles of marksmanship.

Check the SARTS webpage for location, dates, and additional information: www.mil.state.or.us/SARTS.

Although use of unit weapons is preferred, SARTS can provide a rifle or pistol to par- ticipating soldiers or airmen. Contact MSG Staff Chief Master Sgt. Daniel Haider: 1-800-309-7359, or via e-mail at: jeffarnst@us.army.mil.

Guardsmen invited to participate in Lincoln Marathon in May

The 2006 Lincoln Marathon will be held in Lincoln, Nebraska May 5 – 8. The marathon will be held in conjunction with the Lincoln County Fair.

If you would like to attend the marathon as either a participant or spectator, or are interested in the recruiting workshops, contact the NGB Marathon coordinator, Sgt. 1st Class John G. Murphy at 402-309-7359, or via e-mail at: jack.murphy1@ne.embry- army.mil.

Women Veteran’s Conference in March

All women who served in the military are invited to the upcoming Oregon Women Vet- erans Conference on March 23 at the Linn county Expo Center in Albany, Ore. Follow I-5 south to the Knox Butte/Fair grounds exit (J 234A). Registration begins at 8:00 a.m., with the event kicking off promptly at 9:00 a.m.

There is no cost to attend this seminar. A complimentary lunch will be provided to attendees. Reservations are requested by phone call 1-800-828-8801, ext. 2384/2385/2389 to register.

DoD requiring hands-free cell phone use

The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) now requires drivers to use hands-free cell phones when driving on official business, including on state vehicles at any military installation or base. Violators may be subject to a $50 fine.

Drivers who characterize these actions as either a participant or spectator, or are interested in the recruiting workshops, contact the NGB Marathon coordinator, Sgt. 1st Class John G. Murphy at 402-309-7359, or via e-mail at: jack.murphy1@ne.embry- army.mil.

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Relief from unwanted cell phone solicitation

Until today, cell phone numbers have been exempt from solicitation by telemarketers. To end this, a new computer program from calls by telemarketers, register with the FTC at http://www.rejectcallreg.org or call at 1-888-382-1222. Your phone number will remain on the registry for five years from the date you register.

Discussed dental of ferred to Guard members and families

As a special thank you to military members, Chief of Staff, located in Salem, will be giving a 30 percent discount at all dental hygiene services to military personnel and their families. Guard members and their dependents must show a military ID to take advantage of this special offer. The discounted services will begin March 1 and last through Dec. 31, 2006.

Cle Smil is located at 370 High Street NE, Salem Ore. For more information call 503-363-8885 or visit www.cleansmile.net.

List of precedence for Oregon State ribbons

To assist in those placing Oregon State Medals and Ribbons, the command staff has requested the Oregon Sentinel publish a list of the awarding program. They appear below in their order of precedence:

- Distinguished Service Award
- Meritorious Service Medal
- Commendation Medal
- 30 Year Medal
- Emergency Service Ribbon
- Superior Airman Award
- Superior Unit Citation
- Faithful Service Ribbon
- Recruiting Award

DoD encourages military spouses to complete survey

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Dec. 6, 2005) — Defense officials want to make sure that military spouses get the chance for them to take the time to complete the online 30-minute survey and get notices about it in the mail later.

The new Defense Department survey has gone live, and spouses of all military families are being asked to visit the survey site at directed at active-duty families and one for Guard and Reserve families.satisfied with military life are far less likely leave the military, he said.

Freedom Team Salute to honor employees

Freedom Team Salute recognizes and honors those who were awarded the “Call to Duty.” This includes all Army veterans and those who support today’s Soldiers: spouses, parents, Guard and Reserve Soldiers, their civilian employers.

Employers of National Guard and Reserve Soldiers may apply for ‘Call to Duty’ for their colleagues to answer the Call to Duty. FTS recognizes their support as well. The nomination process is simple, and those nominated receive a letter and certificate signed by the Secretary of the Army, the Chief of Staff of the Army, an official Army lapel pin, and Army decal. FTS has Hundreds of employers of Soldier veterans and supporters since the program’s launch in May 2005.

The FTS staff is currently processing more than 600,000 additional commendations. FTS Commendations are an especially appropriate way to recognize current and former Army veterans and retirees and those who support today’s Soldiers: spouses, parents, Guard and Reserve Soldiers, their civilian employers.

For more information, visit www.freedomteam.com.Apply.htm and, once they are members of the Marines’ Memorial Association, they can apply for one of these scholarships.

Theme parks extend discount program

Anheuser-Busch announced the “Here’s to the Heroes” program has been extended through 2006. The program provides a single day’s free admission to any one of the SeaWorld or Busch Gardens parks, Sesame Place, Adventure Island or Water Country USA for active duty, active reserve, Ready Reserve, National Guard, and to three of their direct dependents.

Service members can register online at discountprogram.com, attend a participating park, and show a Defense Department photo ID. Inactive, retired and retired reserve services members, their spouses and dependents are eligible for the program.

USAFF laws to better protect military members

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act (USERRA) laws has been extended through 2006 to better protect our military members.

The Department of Labor’s action is the last in a series of measures approved by the Senate to protect military members since World War II. USAFF protects discrimination against past and present members of the uniformed services and establishes reemployment rights for service members who want to return to the jobs they held prior to military service.

The new regulations, drafted in an easy-to-read, question-and-answer format, explain how USAFF protects against discrimination and retaliation because of military service; prevents service members from suffering disadvantages due to performance of their military obligations, and affords them ample time to report back to jobs following completion of their service obligations.

The USAFF regulations as well as a wealth of information for both the employer and the employee, can be found at: www.dol.gov/vets/programs/userra.

RAID pilots awarded for drug eradication efforts

Two pilots from the Oregon National Guard Reconnaissance and Interdiction Group won a National Marijuana Eradication Award. The pair flew hundreds of hours, which resulted in the seizure of 51,237 plants and 51 pounds of dry marijuana. The majority of the drug busts took place in Baker County, Malheur County, and Harney County.

As part of the RAID program the Oregon National Guard has three full-time pilots, three part-time pilots, and three full-time mechanics. The pilots, always accompanied by law enforcement officers, fly OH-58 Kiowas about 500-800 feet above ground. They have flown during peak season in the summer they fly 4-5 times a week logging anywhere between 120-150 hours.

The National Marijuana Eradication Award is given to individuals who show outstanding efforts in fighting the drug problem in the United States. Both ORNG pilots were recognized for their help in coordinating flights with various law enforcement and government agencies as well as the total number of flight hours they logged while assisting in drug busts.

Both pilots were awarded at the 2005 Marijuana Eradication Conference in Washington, D.C. on January 19, 2006. The RAID program has been in existence since 1991.
Combat Action Badge:
Small package carries heavy weight

LAKE OSWEGO, Ore. — To the Soldiers of the 82nd Rear Operations Center (ROC) the Combat Action Badge (CAB) is much more than a silver badge two inches in width consisting of an oak wreath, bayonet and grenade. It is their permission for the months of combat action seen in Iraq between July 2003 and their return home in April 2004.

On Jan. 7, a ceremony was held to honor the Soldiers of the 82 ROC. Forty-six members of the 82 ROC received the CAB for their support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Soldiers of the 82 ROC were the first Oregon Guard members to qualify for the badge, although they were not the first to receive it. Soldiers in other Oregon Guard units who have deployed more recently have already received CABs while still in theater.

Moe was instated May 2, 2005, one year after the 82 ROC returned from deployment. The badge is meant to recognize Soldiers for duties served as early as Sept. 18, 2001, who engage the enemy, but do not otherwise qualify for specific combat badges, such as the Combat Infantry Badge.

“It acknowledges that every Soldier is a warrior,” said State Command Sgt. Maj. Thomas Moe.

Col. Charles Yriarte, commanding officer of the 82nd ROC during its tour in Iraq, said his Soldiers went through many of the same experiences combat arms Soldiers endure, but were ineligible for any combat recognition.

“I was proud to take a group of professional Soldiers, reform them, and watch them excel in something they were not trained to do,” Yriarte said.

Normally a rear element and not a forward element, the 82 ROC faced a large deployment in their journey in February 2003, traveling first to Camp Virginia, Virginia. They continued their journey to the 82nd Tactical Logistical Support Area Anaconda near Balad, Iraq and were charged with transporting all troop movement equipment.

One of the first units into Iraq, the 82nd ROC was forced to build their base from scratch, as well as establish relationships with the local population.

LSA Anaconda was frequently shelled with mortars, as well as rockets. Enemy combatants were not the only foe. With temperatures reaching 142 degrees, frequent dust storms and lack of infrastructure incumbent with building a base from nothing, challenges were not in short supply.

Staff Sgt. Arroyo, intelligence section sergeant, recalled once seeing a thermom
er registering 120 degrees as early as nine in the morning.

After receiving the badge, Spec. Amy Swan, plans officer, expressed humbly that it is hard to compare herself to the Soldiers on the ground in combat arms, nor was she honored.

“It’s good to look back and see the accomplishments we made,” Swan said. “Especially the relationships with the Iraqis.”

Moe was proud of the Soldiers’ accomplishments. “The 82nd ROC was a good unit, is a good unit, and will continue to be a good unit,” said the State Sergeant Major. “This award is earned, not given.”

Oregon National Guard aviation unit returns home with honors, awards

Story by Kimberly L. Lippert
Oregon National Guard Public Affairs

SALEM, Ore. — Eight Soldiers of Alpha 249th Aviation Company arrived home on January 7 after more than year long deployment to Iraq, bringing with them a prestigious honor. A Company 249th The
drett Aviation, made up of four different de	achments from four states, was selected as Aviation Aviation Fixed Wing Unit of the Year for their outstanding efforts in theater.

“It’s the perfect end to the deployment,” said Maj. Devin Wickenhagen of A Co. 249th Avn. “I was pleased to get recognized for the hard work we’ve done over the last year.”

Friends, family and leaders of the Oregon National Guard welcomed them back at a demobilization ceremony January 16.

Col. George Lanning, commander of the Oregon National Guard, presented them with the Combat Action Badge.

“It’s a very intense period when deployed to Iraq, much more intense than being state
dside, we had many more missions and had a direct impact in Iraq,” said Wickenhagen.

Story by Spec. Nicholas Wood,
15th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment