Medical aviation soldiers head for Iraq

**Governor honors troops as they depart for a year**

Story compiled by Oregon Sentinel staff

SALEM, Ore. — More than 110 soldiers from an Oregon Army National Guard aviation unit departed for Fort Sill, Okla., on Saturday, Jan. 31 from Salem. Many of the soldiers, members of Charlie Company, 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, have deployed before—some as many as four times.

“We’ve got a lot of experience here, and that is going to help out a great deal,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Matt Hill.

At their mobilization ceremony, Jan. 29, at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Salem, the soldiers of Charlie Co., 7th Bn., 158th Rgt. received a warm send-off.

“We are so proud of you,” said Maj. Gen. Daniel B. O’Hollaren, giving them valuable training for their active duty mission.”

Many of the soldiers on the deployment have supported search and rescue operations in Oregon, giving them valuable training for their active duty mission. “It’s extremely valuable because it puts them in a mission profile similar to a MEDEVAC mission,” said Maj. Mark Ulvin, acting state aviation officer. “In theater we respond to a MEDEVAC request which is similar to a request from a sheriff for search and rescue operations.”

See Families and friends on PAGE 7
Oregon celebrates 150 years of statehood

Happy Birthday, Oregon! On Feb. 14 Oregon will officially celebrate 150 years of statehood. Sixty-three Oregon counties have grown to 36 counties with approximately 3.8 million people. Oregon has a rich history of citizen-soldiers volunteering to protect our nation. From territorial days to the current war on terrorism, the Oregon Guard has had the privilege to serve the people of Oregon and the United States. Shortly after becoming a state the Civil War began and the First Regiment, Oregon Cavalry, comprised of all volunteers, served on active duty until June of 1866. Oregon was called to federal service during the 1917-1918 World War I as well as for duty on the border of Mexico to support the punitive expedition against the infamous Pancho Villa. Oregon also served heroically served during World War II in the South Pacific. What many people may not know is when Germany invaded Poland in 1939 President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared a limited national emergency authorizing an increase in National Guard manpower. Oregon was the first state to meet the goal with the 41st Infantry Division. More than 900 Oregon guardsmen answered the call in less than a week. They were ordered to active service in September 1940 and heroically fought in the South Pacific until Aug. 7, 1945. This was the largest call-up of Oregon guardsmen with more than 6,000 serving. Since that time, the Oregon National Guard has continued its proud tradition with both individual augmentees and unit deployments continuing to serve throughout the world.

In this sesquicentennial year, the Oregon Guard has deployed more troops than at any other time than World War II. The 116th Air Control Squadron, 142nd Civil Engineer Squadron, 142nd Security Forces Group, 142nd Medical Group, Team Charlie, 7th Bn., 158th Avn., Headquarters, 2nd Bn., 641 Avn., Detachment 1, 47th OSA and the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team totaling more than 3,600 Oregon Army and Air National Guard members who will serve on active federal service.

As The Adjutant General, I couldn’t be more proud to serve and represent the outstanding men and women of the Oregon National Guard who uphold both the United States Constitution and Oregon Constitutions. To all those that have served I salute you and thank you for your service. For those that stand ready today, be proud of your service and the organization you have chosen. It is one of great heritage. The people of the United States and of Oregon come together for anything better, citizen-soldiers and airmen living the motto “When Called To Serve, We Answer!” Thanks to each of the members of the Oregon Guard for being an integral part of our national and state history.

Happy 150th Birthday!

Oregon Guard allows members to 'belong to something bigger'

The Oregon National Guard has never been stronger. We are recruiting and retaining top-notch soldiers and airmen. We have been at war over seven years now. We continue to grow an all-volunteer force under these extreme conditions. When I get an opportunity to address your young soldiers and airmen, I always take the time to remember how proud I am of my decisions. I enlisted in the post-Vietnam era and military service was not as viewed as positively as it is now. Through hard work and diligence our Army and Air Force leadership found training-based force, and we have overcome that negative perception.

Now the citizen-soldier is viewed as one of the shining stars of our Nation, state and local communities. Our servicemen and women that enlist or extend, do so because of a need to belong to something bigger than themselves. They do so knowing that a combat deployment or response to a natural disaster is more than likely, and the training they will mobilize with the 3rd Battalion, 116th Cavalry (Armour) is next in line. They too will mobilize with the technical and tactical expertise of the volunteer force.

To date, roughly 70 percent of Oregon’s warrant officer corps is either currently deployed, has deployed, or is scheduled to deploy. The fact is, this percentage will increase. Warrant officers are integral to the success of the commander and our nation. The Oregon Army National Guard has had all the soldiers of an organization to accomplish the mission. However, more than not, the “Professional” knowledge how to put the “graze in the sky” to get the job done.

For deployment purposes, I have placed all warrant officers into three categories. Those who have never deployed into a combat theater; those who have combat experience but not assigned to the Oregon National Guard has continued its proud tradition with both individual augmentees and unit deployments continuing to serve throughout the world. For up to date warrant officer information, log onto the Oregon Knowledge Online – Ground Component – Command Chief Warrant Officer. The council of CW5s and CGs, minutes, working papers, issues and draft proposals are located there.

I would also like to take the time to welcome into the warrant officer corps, W1s Ray Talkington, W1s Michael C. Gill Ragasa, W2s Andrew Rhoden and CW2 Dick Thibodo who recently graduated from the Army’s Warrant Officer Candidate Course.

I also wish to like to wish the best of luck to WO Candidates Bill Lowe, Doug Hertzke, Nick Thompson, and Raphel Toler as they leave for WOCs within the next two months. Good luck and I look forward to your promotion as commissioned warrant officer.

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Field advertising is strictly prohibited in the Oregon Sentinel. Exclusively contracted advertising which benefit Oregon Guardians and their families is allowed. All advertising is to be submitted to the Command Chief Warrant Officer.

State Command Sgt. Maj.
Brunk W. Conley
State Command Sergeant Major
Oregon National Guard

Chief Warrant Officer
4 Michael Zagavy was promoted to top grade

Story by Sentinel Staff

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Zagavy was promoted to the top grade of chief warrant officer 5, in a ceremony officiated by The Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees Jan. 21, at the Anderson Readiness Center in Salem.

His wife and his son was present to see him receive his new rank. He follows in the footsteps of Chief Warrant Officer 5 John Powell, who is the State Command Chief Warrant Officer, and as such is a focal point for communication between the warrant officer level. His columns are found here, on the command page, of each issue of the Oregon Sentinel.
DoD opens center to help those with brain injuries

By Kim L. Lippet Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

The Oregon National Guard has partnered with the Portland Police Bureau to help soldiers interested in a career in law enforcement get a jump start on the process. On Saturday, July 10, more than 100 soldiers took the written exam for the Portland Police Bureau, which is the first step to becoming a police officer.

The joint effort between the agencies is targeted at the 3,500 Oregon soldiers with the 41st Brigade Combat Team who are scheduled to deploy to Iraq in May. Those who pass the written exam will be allowed to take psychological and medical evaluations when they return sometime in the spring of 2010. In the past, Guard members who were deployed after initiating the PBB’s hiring process would have to repeople after they returned home. This sometimes resulted in a delay of up to one year.

“This shows some creativity and imagination to try to get these people through part of the hiring process ahead of time,” said Portland Police Chief Rosie Sizer.

The organization has 30 vacancies to fill, she said. And like many law enforcement agencies across the state, the Portland Police Bureau is facing a shortage of qualified police officer candidates. “Many of our soldiers are drawn to a career in law enforcement because it fits with their military training, and offers them the personal opportunity to use those skills in the real world,” said Col. (Ret.) Scott McCrae, of the Oregon National Guard Reintegration Team. Each agency benefits, says Portland Police Bureau representative Maj. Ryan Lang. Portland Police officials are confident their recruiting efforts will help fill vacancies as they face continued retirements, even if soldiers aren’t available until next year or 2011. According to McCrae, roughly 35 percent of soldiers returning from deployments are unemployed or underemployed.

“During combat they’re working on an adrenaline high for about a year, and then they’d come home and some would find that running a forklift at the warehouse isn’t what they had in mind,” McCrae said. He adds that many soldiers are interested in a career in law enforcement because it fits well with what they have already done in the military.

Assistant Chief Brian Martinek said the bureau is committed to recruiting military personnel who have problem-solvers, community-oriented, communicative and have empathy and compassion — not just those who are tactically adept. The bureau will continue to strive to identify those skills through interviews and probationary evaluations, he said.

Oregon residents need to prepare for more than floods

By Jennifer Bailey Public Affairs Coordinator Oregon Emergency Management

It might seem like Oregon does not have many disasters. We usually hear about the yearly flood in the same old places. However, our state is very large and is divided by the Cascade mountain range into two distinct geographic areas, which suffer different types of disasters, many of which are not large enough for a Federal Declaration, but are certainly devastating to those affected.

If an event is not big and horrible, we won’t hear much about it on the news outside of the affected area. If it is not happening to us, we don’t spend much time thinking about it. This can lead to a false sense of security. We forget to plan.

When I encourage people to be prepared for an emergency, I am often told that all we have to worry about is the big one. “It’s the big one we don’t bother,” I disagree. Besides flooding being a very big deal, Oregon can and has suffered a wide variety of hazards, both natural and man-made.


Those storms reportedly produced an extreme long-duration wind event with hurricane-force wind gusts of up 129 mph at Bay City, Oregon. The storm also brought heavy rains and widespread record flooding throughout the region, particularly Vernonia, and was blamed for at least 18 deaths. That’s a big deal.

Oregon’s history reveals many short-term and a few long-term droughts. Long-term drought periods of more than one year can impact forest conditions and set the stage for potentially devastating wildfires.

And don’t forget the Spring Break Quake. Oregon is quite vulnerable to earthquakes (and tsunamis, which often accompany major seismic events) because of the state’s proximity to the Cascadia Subduction Zone jutting off the Pacific Coast.

Depending on the epicenter, areas receiving major damage from an 8.0 – 9.0 magnitude earthquake would include most of the counties in Western Oregon; the heavily populated metropolitan areas of Portland, Salem, and Eugene would certainly experience major damage.

Landslides also pose significant threat to many communities in Oregon. They threaten transportation corridors, fuel and energy conduits, and community facilities.

While not all landslides result in property damage, many landslides impact roads and other infrastructure, and can pose a serious life-safety hazard.

That’s just a few of the events that Oregon residents need to prepare for more than floods.

Oregon has even seen a tornado or two over the years.

By Jennifer Bailey, OEM

“National suicide lifeline open

National suicide Prevention Program of Oregon opens a 24-hour, toll-free suicide prevention service available to anyone in the military with suicidal crises. If you need help, please dial 1-800-273-TALK (8255). When prompted, press option 1 to connect to a VA staffed Crisis Center. Your call will be routed to the nearest Crisis Center in your area or you may call 1-800-923-HELP. The National Suicide Lifeline is 1-877-553-TEEN.

The Prevention Treatment and Outreach program is designed to serve National Guard members and their families. Outreach services are also provided to any servicemembers in the local community.

FEBRUARY 2009 Page 3
Rescue on the mountain:
Oregon National Guardsman instrumental in assisting with rescue of injured climber

Story and photos by Tech. Sgt. Jefferson J. Thompson
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs Office

Derek Mamoyac’s ordeal started at the afternoon of Oct. 12, 2008, as he made his way down the slopes of Mount Adams in heavy snow. He then lost his footing and tumbled down a steep slope.

“I fell and I tried to self arrest to break,” Mamoyac said. After falling what he estimates was perhaps 1,000 feet, Mamoyac took stock of his surroundings and was surprised that his injuries weren’t worse. He noted that his ankle was left at a bad angle, obviously broken. He knew he was in trouble.

His predicament sparked a five-day search by volunteer rescue crews who trekked into the wilderness hoping to find Mamoyac. His chances seemed to dwindle as the days wore on and night temperatures fell to 20 degrees.

By happenstance one of those volunteers is Oregon National Guard Soldier Pfc Jeh Oliver. The steady boyfriend of Mamoyac’s sister, Oliver came with the family to the site of the rescue operations “mostly to lend moral support” he said. Once there he found ample opportunity to lend not only support, but the expertise gained from his military training to the search effort.

“The first thing I did was go talk to the sheriff and said, ‘Hey, I’m Jeh Oliver and I’m with the National Guard Bravo Company two of the 162 out of Corvallis and I may have some skills you could use.’” Oliver quickly found himself a part of the search effort and ended up establishing a base camp on the slopes of Mount Adams.

“I took my experience from being in the infantry, using skills like dead reckoning from a map—skills I had from the Guard—and went to work,” he said.

Steve Mamoyac, father of the missing climber, expressed his deep appreciation for the help.

“It was gratifying to have him there, the way he just jumped into things and helped out,” the elder Mamoyac said. "He demonstrated his support for our family in our time of need. Knowing that there are those folks who are moral citizens who get the type of training that helped us out, well, we’re just extremely grateful to the Guard for that.”

On Oct. 17—six days after his fall—searchers found Mamoyac. He was suffering from frostbite, a broken and dislocated ankle, and dehydration.

He had descended all the way down the mountain crawling and dragging himself causing third degree frostbite burns on his legs and buttocks. After his carefully guarded stash of granola bars ran out, he ate ants, centipedes, a spider and berries.

After it was all over, and his son was safe, the elder Mamoyac wrote a note of thanks on Oliver’s behalf to The Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees (below). He thanked the Guard for not only for equipping Oliver, but all guardsmen who lead a hand in emergencies like this.

January 17, 2009 found Mamoyac at a milestone on his path to recovery. It was the first day he was able to support his own weight on his injured ankle. “Today’s a great day, we’ve been waiting for this day,” said Michael Gray, a physical therapist. He added that because of significant atrophy and the extent of the injuries Mamoyac is really learning to walk all over again.

As his father and the guardsmen turned-rescuer look on, Mamoyac takes one step after another toward a full recovery. At one point Oliver looks over at him and asks if he’s ready for a hike. Mamoyac who has garnished through most of the physical therapy session breaks into a grin and responds, “maybe this summer.”

On Dec. 20, as his son recovered from injuries sustained in a fall while climbing on Mount Adams, Steve Mamoyac wrote a letter to Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, Oregon National Guard’s Adjutant General, thanking the Oregon Guard for helping to save his son.

Dear Major General Rees,

I would like to acknowledge the outstanding contributions of Oregon Army National Guard soldier, Jeh Oliver, made during a recent event involving one of my close family members. Jeh is currently with Bravo Company 2nd of the 162nd Infantry. I firmly believe that Jeh’s participation in the National Guard was a primary contributing factor to his ability to contribute effectively in the subject event.

On October 12, 2008 my son, Derek Mamoyac, embarked on an ascent of Mount Adams in south central Washington State. During his descent he fell and slid approximately 1,000 feet, breaking and dislocating his ankle in the process. He spent the next five nights and six days alone on the mountain, exposed to the elements with virtually no food and little water, before being rescued by a canine search and rescue team on the afternoon of October 17. Search participants included approximately 18 volunteer search and rescue (SAR) organizations from Washington and Oregon, law enforcement officials, family members, and friends. While Derek’s survival has been characterized as miraculous it was only made possible through the generosity of the many volunteers that selflessly gave of their time, energy, and resources to assist a fellow human being and his family in a position of dire need. Jeh joined the rescue effort on October 14. Upon his arrival at the search base camp he immediately sought out the Yakima County Sheriff Incident Commander (IC) to introduce himself and offer assistance. He proceeded to work closely with IC and SAR support staff to develop a plan for searching area road networks. In addition to assuming a leadership role he also employed impressive map reading and navigational skills during a search of a specific geographic target area later that evening.

It quickly became apparent to me that Jeh possessed a suite of skills and personal attributes that would be directly applicable to virtually any SAR situation.

Evidently, the IC concurred with this assessment as demonstrated by his appointment of Jeh and his father, Anthony Oliver, as lead of the official search team of “Ranger F” on Oct. 16. In this official capacity, Jeh and the other members of Ranger F coordinated directly with the IC during the conduct of specific SAR operations. They maintained their own, fully self-sustained, satellite base camp throughout the week at a strategically-located location and communicated regularly with the IC via officially issued radio/ frequency. Jeh and the other members of Ranger F expended considerable time and energy in their search for my son. Their commitment, positive attitude, and tireless effort provided inspiration to myself and others and earned them immeasurable admiration, respect, and gratitude from all concerned.

The initiative and leadership qualities that Jeh consistently displayed throughout the week were complimented by his positive attitude, compassion, empathy, and sense of humor. The fact that he is in excellent physical condition also did not go unnoticed. He covered miles of rough terrain during that week.

I am cognizant of the fact that the Army National Guard gave Jeh many (if not all) of the aforementioned skills and personal attributes which Jeh so amply demonstrated during that critical week in October. I would therefore like to express my own, and thank, the National Guard for providing young men like Jeh with the training that directly benefits families in situations like ours.

Sincerely,

Steve Mamoyac
Disney offers free admission to theme parks

Story courtesy, National Guard Bureau
Public Affairs

As Disney Parks ask “What Will You Celebrate?” and invite guests to turn their personal milestones into magical family memories with their family and friends, “Disney’s Armed Forces Salute” at the Disneyland Resort in Southern California, Through June 12, 2009, each active or retired U.S. military personnel may purchase one complimentary three-day “Disney’s Armed Forces Salute” ticket with Park Hopper and Water Park Fun & More options. This ticket is valid for five days of admission into the four Walt Disney World theme parks, plus a total of five visits to a choice of a Disney water park, DisneyQuest Indoor Interactive Theme Park or certain other attractions. During this offer period, active or retired U.S. military personnel may also make a one-time purchase of an adult or child three-day “Disney’s Armed Forces Salute Companion” Park Hopper ticket for up to five family members (including spouse) or friends for the price of an adult 1-Day Park Hopper ticket. Disneyland Resort hotels are also offering special room rates for active or retired military personnel.

For information regarding “Disney’s Armed Forces Salute” at the Disneyland Resort, or to make reservations, military personnel may call (714) 786-2222. At Walt Disney World Resort in Florida: Through Dec. 23, 2009, each active or retired member of the U.S. military may obtain one complimentary five-day “Disney’s Armed Forces Salute” ticket with Park Hopper and Water Park Fun & More options. This ticket is valid for five days of admission into the four Walt Disney World theme parks, plus a total of five visits to a choice of a Disney water park, DisneyQuest Indoor Interactive Theme Park or certain other attractions. During this offer period, active or retired U.S. military personnel may also make a one-time purchase of up to a maximum of five 5-Day “Disney’s Armed Forces Salute Companion” (one theme park per day) for $99 per ticket, plus tax, for family members (including spouse) or friends. Although this ticket for family members and friends does not include either the Park Hopper or Water Park Fun & More options, this ticket can be upgraded to add either such option, or both, for an additional $25 per ticket. All tickets and options are non-transferable and must be used by Dec. 23, 2009.

Information about “Disney’s Armed Forces Salute” offer at Walt Disney World Resort is also available at www.disneyworld.com/military.

Scholarship available to children of military families

The Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) Scholarship Fund was established in 1948 to provide educational assistance for children of military families. It is based on one of the Association’s founding principals that “education is the cornerstone of a strong Democracy.” It is supported by donations and bequests from MOAA chapters, members, corporations, and others.

The Interest-Free Loan and Grant Program provides loans and grants to students (under age 24) whose military parent - officer or enlisted - died while in active service (Regular, Reserve or Guard) to our nation, for up to five years of undergraduate education at an accredited two or four-year college or university of their choice.

The Veterans Affairs Scholarship Program for families of military service members who have passed away and are a Base/Post Scholarship which provides a $1,000 grant to selected students attending two or four-year college or university.

For more information go to the website located at: http://moaa.org/serv/serv_education/index.htm.

ODVA offers zero-interest small business loan to vets

SALEM, Ore. — With the goal of helping veterans whose businesses suffered setbacks during their deployment, the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs (ODVA) is offering a zero-interest Small Business Repair Loan to help veterans get their businesses back on track.

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service reminds members of the military to take advantage of Free File, which allows taxpayers to prepare and e-file their federal income tax return online for free. Taxpayers who have an adjusted gross income of $56,000 or less in 2008 are eligible. Available only through www.irs.gov/efile/article/0,,id=118986,00.html.

WASHINGTON — There is something extra in everybody’s paycheck this year. Active-duty personnel drew an across-the-board 3.9 percent pay raise beginning Jan. 1. A sergeant with five years of service, for instance, can earn an increase in monthly base salary of about $88 dollars. A captain with nine years of service gets nearly $200 per month extra. The 2009 military pay tables can be found at: http://www.dfas.mil/militarypay/militarypaytables2009/ MilitaryPayTables.pdf. Pay raises aren't limited to military personnel, however. Civilian employees under both the General Schedule and National Security Personnel System pay plans are also receiving pay raises.

Many members of the U.S. Armed Forces are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The EITC is a refundable federal tax credit intended to offset taxes paid by working Americans, particularly workers with no earned income and thus no EITC. It is one of the most successful tax credit programs, helping lift millions of working Americans above the poverty level.

The Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2004 makes the EITC more generous for working families that live in the Taxpayer Assistance Zone Act of 2005 gives soldiers the option of treating excludable combat pay, but not the basic allowance for housing or basic allowance for subsistence, as earned income for purposes of the EITC. This could help military personnel avoid a situation in which the military pay exclusion leaves them with no earned income and thus no EITC. Under this provision, military personnel may opt to include all or none of their combat pay when calculating their EITC.

Earnings Income Credit available

“For this program is aimed at our Guards and Reserve veterans,” ODVA Director Jim Willis explained. “If they are business owners, who have a deployment – months away from their business – seriously affects the ability of their company to survive. We want to help these veterans recover their businesses when they get home so that they are employed and can employ others.”

The Small Business Repair Loan program offers a zero-percent interest rate and loans up to $20,000. Applicants must be an honorably discharged veterans, own 51 percent of their business, and the business must be located in the state where the veteran was deployed. The veteran must apply for this loan within one year of returning from deployment.

“The commitment of members of the Guard and Reserve is unquestionable,” Willis said. “We need to do all we can to support their families, leaving them at home, and giving them a hand-up to restore a business is the least we can do.”

For more information regarding the Small Business Repair Loan, please contact ODVA at (888) 673-8387 or (503) 373-2070.

IRS offers Free File to Service members home or abroad

Free File is available in English and Spanish. The program can be accessed from any computer that is connected to the Internet, making it especially convenient for service members stationed abroad. It can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Free File returns are transmitted using secure technologies. The IRS automatically extends the deadline for filing tax returns, paying taxes, filing claims for refunds and taking other actions related to federal income tax laws for those civilian personnel serving in a combat zone. The IRS also extends the deadline for those in the U.S. Armed Forces deployed overseas away from their permanent duty station in support of operations in a qualified hazardous duty area but who are outside that area.
Federal report concludes: Gulf War Illness is real

Story by
Tom Mann
Oregon Dept. of Veteran’s Affairs

A federal report released Nov. 17 concludes that Gulf War Illness is real and that roughly one in four of the 697,000 U.S. Veterans who served in the Persian Gulf War suffer from the illness.

According to the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans’ Illnesses, two chemicals cause Gulf War illness: the drug pyridostigmine bromide (PB pills) given to troops to protect against nerve gas, and pesticides that were widely used – and overused – to protect against sand flies and other pests.

The 452-page report compiled by a panel of scientific experts and veterans serving on the Committee confirms that, “scientific evidence leaves no question that Gulf War illness is a real condition with real causes and serious consequences for affected veterans.” In combination, these undiagnosed illnesses have been termed TBM syndrome. The report also notes a higher than average occurrence of Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), often referred to as “Lou Gehrig’s Disease.”

“This is a bittersweet victory, (because) this is what Gulf War veterans have been saying all along,” Committee member Anthony Hardie said. “Years were squandered by the federal government... trying to prove that anything could be wrong with Gulf War veterans.”

Several previous reports issued by the Institute of Medicine, an arm of the National Academy of Sciences, had concluded that there was little evidence to support Gulf War Syndrome. However, the Committee’s report concludes the previous reports were inappropriately constrained by the VA. According to the panel, the VA ordered the Institute to consider only limited human studies and not extensive animal research, thus skewing the earlier studies.

The Committee’s report, titled “Gulf War Illness and the Health of Gulf War Veterans” was officially presented to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James Peake. The report states that the illness comes as a result of multiple “biological alterations” affecting the brain and nervous system.

The report does not rule out other contributing factors, but notes there is no clear link between Gulf War Syndrome and oil well fires, depleted uranium or the anthrax vaccination. The suspect nerve agent pills and pesticides no longer are used in the military. To view the entire report, go to www.ognd.gov/ovva/gulfwar.shtml.

Guard contacting soldiers possibly exposed to toxic chemical

Story by
Maj. Michael S. Braibish
State Public Affairs Officer
Oregon National Guard

SALEM, Ore. -- The Oregon National Guard is reaching out to hundreds of soldiers, possibly exposed to a hazardous chemical during a deployment to Iraq in 2003.

Based on reports from the deployment, the ORNG believes more than 50 soldiers may have worked in an area with sodium dichromate, an anti-corrrosive agent that poses health risks.

Strict regulations and policies govern the use of the potentially carcinogenic chemical in the U.S., however, officials are concerned soldiers had exposure to mishandled sodium dichromate in the aftermath of initial U.S. operations.

Oregon’s 1st Battalion, 162nd Infantry sent more than 433 soldiers to the Middle East, with one company stationed in Saudi Arabia and two companies stationed in Kuwait, in March, 2003.

Some of the soldiers stationed in Kuwait entered Iraq to provide oil infrastructure coverage many light hours and done during day‐night hours and covered many oil infrastructure sites in Southern Iraq.

Though about fifty soldiers possibly had direct exposure, the ORNG wants all soldiers on the deployment to have awareness of the situation because they may have had incidental exposure when soldiers returned from their missions at Qarmat Ali.

“Soldiers of 1st Bn., 162nd Inf. were assigned personal security details throughout southern Iraq to Kellogg, Brown and Root or workers restor- ing the oil infrastructure for the nation of Iraq,” said Lt. Col. B.J. Prendergast, who deployed as the 1st Bn. 2nd Inf. executive officer. “This duty was done during day-light hours and covered many oil infrastructure sites in Southern Iraq.”

According to published senate reports, KBR employees and contractors were assigned as personal security for contractors working on the security mission as Indiana Senator Evan Bayh called for a more detailed review from the Department of the Army of what actually happened.

All potentially exposed veterans can receive a comprehensive Gulf War Registry examination at their nearest Veterans Administration medical center. Health care providers at VA hospitals are trained to respond to environmental health issues perform these exams.

According to ORNG officials, current and former soldiers of 1st Bn., 162nd Inf. should receive a letter this month.

For more information, soldiers should contact their chain of command or the project officer, Staff Sgt. Jerry Jepson at (503) 584-2296.

Photo courtesy, U.S. Navy Visual News Service
I don’t consider myself to be the best… I’m an example of what it takes to be one of the best.

— Staff Sgt. Noyce Merino

Noyce Merino is the first Guardsman to achieve the title and will represent the Army and the Army Guard at pre-eminent soldier events throughout 2009. "We couldn’t be prouder," said Lt. Gen. Clyde Vaughn, the director of the Army Guard. "What a huge event and something that our force will look at with so much pride, and across the components there’s an enormous spirit of competition. That’s what it’s all about." After first competing for the Montana Guard’s 163rd Cavalry Regiment NCO of the Year, Noyce Merino said he quickly learned he would face serious competitors from other Guard and active duty units. They were both difficult in their own way." Noyce Merino explained that the Guard’s competition was more physical with its 12-mile road march and land navigation events, while the Best Warrior competition challenged his marksmanship and ability to think under pressure. "We just feel fortunate," said Vaughn. "We’re fortunate to have all those soldiers – regardless of component – compete. Those are the best of the best. It’s a big moment for the Guard, and it’s also a big moment for the Army." In the coming year, he will leave his cattle ranch duties to his sister while he serves as a spokesman for the Army and Army Guard. "I could do any of this without my wife’s support and my sister’s support and the belief, faith and prayers from my family," Noyce Merino said. "Noyce Merino returned to Montana and joined the Guard after his release from active duty in 2007. That family owns a 21,000-acre cattle ranch. He also works as a shipping supervisor for United Parcel Service, and he praises that company for their support of his service. "Now that we have settled down on the ranch, we hope to start a family," he said. "Right now we are building the operation and developing a functioning [cattle] business." Noyce Merino was home-schooled and grew up on the ranch. "It’s what I knew and loved until I joined the Army," he said. His 2001 active-duty enlistment took him immediately to battlefields in Afghanistan. "I was in basic training when the 9/11 attacks happened," he said. "So right away I knew I was going into combat." He attended airborne school, was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division and deployed for six months. He returned home only to deploy to Iraq for eight months. After that, he re-enlisted in the 4th Infantry Division at Fort Hood, Texas. He returned again to Iraq with the 4th ID for an additional 12 months. "I’m very proud of my service," he said. On one patrol, Noyce Merino used his combat lifesaver skills to apply two tourniquets to a fellow soldier after a mortar attack in Baghdad. "He had extensive shrapnel wounds and arterial bleeding in both legs and was going in and out of consciousness," he said. The patrol transported the soldier to an aid station within nine minutes and was credited with saving his life. During the recent Best Warrior competition, Noyce Merino said he faced a similar medical scenario that required treating a wounded leg. "Those who had not been in that situation didn’t know what it was like to treat a casualty under fire," he said. Fortunately, the competition did not recall his combat stress from real-world events, he said. He explained that "Military One Source" provided him free sessions with a counselor after his deployments and following his active-duty service. "That really helped me," he said. He added that a "Best Warrior" is also one who knows when to treat himself. "I don’t consider myself to be the best," Noyce Merino said. "There are a lot of soldiers and sergeant’s right now who are deployed, who are serving, and their duty prevents them from competing." "I’m more of a representative of all NCOs and all soldiers in the Army. I’m an example of what it takes to be one of the best," he added.

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He noted that many of the SAR operations in Oregon give crews more experience with hoist operations than they might otherwise gain through programmed training. In addition to their experience with SAR in Oregon, many of the soldiers will rely on prior experience in theater. This will be a severe challenge for more than half of the soldiers. "I think we’re ready and everyone is ready to get started and get done," said Hill.

One of the soldiers deploying is Staff Sgt. Tracy Braeme, a crew chief who will deploy for a third time. "The potential of having a female crew is there, whether it will transpire, I don’t know," said Braeme. "It’s kind of exciting that there is that possibility because it’s a male-dominated army." The unit originally formed as the 1042nd Medical Company Air Ambulance in 1996 but adopted its new unit designation in September 2007. Their first deployment came in 2002 as the soldiers supported the Stabilization Force 7 rotation in Afghanistan. From May 2002 to September 2003 the 1042nd Med. Co. deployed to several operating locations in Afghanistan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. During the most recent deployment, from July 2005 to May 2006, the unit once again provided MEDEVAC support in Afghanistan for OEF. On previous deployments, the state retained some of the helicopters for domestic use. On this deployment, the soldiers will take all 12 of the Oregon Guard’s UH-60 Blackhawk.

To mitigate the impact of the aircraft leaving the state, one Blackhawk from Idaho will be deployed in Oregon through March. Two helicopters from Indiana will meet the need until the soldiers return. Oregon crews will fly these helicopters.

In addition to the airframes on loan from the other states, the Oregon Guard will continue to fly four OH-58 Kiowa observation helicopters and five CH-47 Chinook cargo helicopters that also have a role in SAR operations.

Photo by Kay Friskad

A UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter walks on the tarmac at McNary Field in Salem, Ore., Jan. 31 to be piloted to Fort Sill, Okla. The helicopter belongs to Charlie Company, 7-106 Aviation, which is deploying to Iraq for a year to provide aeromedical missions.

“Never give up; there are several females who wanted to fly, and they just gave up when it got a little too hard,” said Vasquez. “You have to keep pushing forward.” At 25-years-old, this will be the first deployment for Vasquez. “It’s a fun job,” she added. Vasquez will have experienced veterans by her side, including Sgt. Tracy Braeme, a crew chief who will deploy for a third time. “The potential of having a female crew is there, whether it will transpire, I don’t know,” said Braeme. “It’s kind of exciting that there is that possibility because it’s a male-dominated army.” The unit originally formed as the 1042nd Medical Company Air Ambulance in 1996 but adopted its new unit designation in September 2007. Their first deployment came in 2002 as the soldiers supported the Stabilization Force 7 rotation in Afghanistan. From May 2002 to September 2003 the 1042nd Med. Co. deployed to several operating locations in Afghanistan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia while supporting Operation Enduring Freedom. During the most recent deployment, from July 2005 to May 2006, the unit once again provided MEDEVAC support in Afghanistan for OEF. On previous deployments, the state retained some of the helicopters for domestic use. On this deployment, the soldiers will take all 12 of the Oregon Guard’s UH-60 Blackhawk.

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Families and friends gather to wish air crews well for deployment

Photo by Kay Friskad

Kelley Rush and her sons, Myles (right) and Kalton watch as her husband, Chief Warrant Officer 3 Grant Rush flies out of McNary Field in Salem, Jan. 31, for Fort Sill, Okla., for training prior to the unit’s deployment to Iraq. Rush, of Lyons, Ore., is a UH-60 Blackhawk pilot with Charlie Co., 7th Bn., 158th Avn.

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Montana Guard rancher ropes in Army’s top warrior title

Vasquez will have experienced veterans by her side, including Sgt. Tracy Braeme, a crew chief who will deploy for a third time. “The potential of having a female crew is there, whether it will transpire, I don’t know,” said Braeme. “It’s kind of exciting that there is that possibility because it’s a male-dominated army.”
Albany airman takes his work, life ‘To the Max’

By Jennifer Moody
Albany Democrat Herald
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Whether teaching, coaching or running, Max White is committed to seeing potential fulfilled.

He has a sign in his classroom at West Albany High School which reads: “If you don’t have time to do it right, you must have time to do it over.”

Whatever “it” may be, the 57-year-old math teacher is determined to make sure he always has the time to do it right. That goes for teaching, volunteering, keeping himself healthy and improving himself and the world around him in any way he can.

Sometimes, White gets public notice for doing it right, such as his promotion in August 2008 to chief master sergeant, the highest enlisted rank in the Air Force. The promotion makes White only the 166th individual ever to be promoted to that rank in the Oregon Air National Guard. But while he’s proud of his new rank, he says it doesn’t change his central mission.

“If I can help people fulfill their potential, that’s enough for me,” he said.

White’s promotion is an indication of his efforts to fulfill his own potential any way he can. Just spending last summer volunteering at a coastal camp for disabled children and training for certification in forest firefighting.

And instead of just teaching at West Albany, White keeps looking for new ways to reach out to his students. Had snowy weather not canceled school Friday, Dec. 19, White, who is Jewish, would have held a microphone at the high school’s winter assembly and belted out comedian Adam Sandler’s “The Chanukah Song” at the high school’s winter assembly and belted out comedian Adam Sandler’s “The Chanukah Song”

“It’s stepping a little out of my comfort zone, so students can see a different side of me,” he said.

White has taught algebra, geometry and other math classes at West Albany for the past 11 years. He decided to teach instead of just fighting.

He studied economics at Princeton University and law at the University of Virginia, but says it’s also how he relaxes — knowing he has worked as hard as he knows how to do it right.

“T’is a matter of focus and discipline,” he said, adding: “It’s about doing my best, and also staying a wholesom and proper example for others.”

Story by
Tech. Sgt. Nick Choy
Oregon Military Department
Public Affairs Office

The Oregon Air National Guard said goodbye to its former command chief master sergeant, and welcomed his replacement during separate ceremonies held at the Anderson Readiness Center in Salem, Jan. 11.

State Command Chief Master Sgt. Mark D. Russell, who has historically been a decision made “strictly out of patriotism,” he said, something he’d always wanted to do and figured he was running out of time to do it.

He is 34 when he got to boot camp — “All the other trainees were calling me ‘Grandpa’” — but took it with characteristic determination, continuing to make the all-Guard marathon team for which he’d qualified even before joining.

He now spends time teaching classes for the military and writing stories for its official publication, the Oregon Sentinel, in addition to his regular duties. The Oregon Air Guard has appreciated his service so much that, as part of a special waiver in order to give him this most recent promotion, for “exceptional service.”

The promotion is the first awarded unless the service member has three years of retainability, and White had just a little over two left before his 60th birthday and the end of his eligibility. But, officials in Washington, D.C., ultimately granted the extension that allowed the promotion.

White expects to continue giving the job his all. He’s an acknowledged perfectionist, but says it’s also how he relaxes — knowing he has worked as hard as he knows how to do it right.

“T’is a matter of focus and discipline,” he said, adding: “It’s about doing my best, and also staying a wholesome and proper example for others.”

Citizen-airman Max White teaches math to a group of students at West Albany High School. He was recently promoted to the highest enlisted grade that of chief master sergeant which required an age waiver from National Guard Bureau in Washington D.C. When White is not teaching he can be found managing human resources, for the fighter wing at Portland Air National Guard Base which is near Portland International Airport.

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The Oregon Air National Guard State Command Chief, before retiring from the bureau in 2008. As the command chief of the Oregon Air National Guard, Brig. Gen. Prunk will oversee the organization and training for more than 2,100 personnel throughout the state.

With the upcoming deployment of the Oregon Air National Guard’s 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team this year, the state will turn to the Oregon Air National Guard to support many of the emergency response needs that have historically been filled by Oregon the Army National Guard.