Oregon National Guard welcomes new Commander-in-Chief

Governor John Kitzhaber honored during inauguration ceremony at State Capitol in Salem

The trio from 3670th Maint. Co. will spend a year in Iraq helping calibrate equipment

Story by Sentinel Staff

SALEM, Ore.—Three Oregon National Guard Soldiers participated in a mobilization ceremony in the governor’s ceremonial office at the State Capitol in Salem, Ore., Feb. 9.

The three Soldiers are members of the 3670th Maintenance Company, headquartered at Camp Withycombe, in Clackamas, Ore.

They are deployed to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn, where they will assist in calibrating equipment used for armament, maintenance and electronic diagnostics for units and personnel in the deployed location. They are scheduled to return in February 2012.

The Soldiers are full-time members of Oregon’s Test Measurement and Diagnostic Equipment team, based at Withycombe.

There are seven such teams throughout the country, supported by the National Guard Bureau’s Regional Calibration Reimbursable Program.

“ar technical expertise is a high demand skill, both here and overseas in support of the mission,” said Lt. Col. Sean McGann, Commander, 821 Troop Command Battalion.

Three Soldiers honored during mobilization ceremony at Capitol

The trio from 3670th Maint. Co. will spend a year in Iraq helping calibrate equipment

Story by Sentinel Staff

SALEM, Ore.—Three Oregon National Guard Soldiers participated in a mobilization ceremony in the governor’s ceremonial office at the State Capitol in Salem, Ore., Feb. 9.

The three Soldiers are members of the 3670th Maintenance Company, headquartered at Camp Withycombe, in Clackamas, Ore.

They are deployed to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn, where they will assist in calibrating equipment used for armament, maintenance and electronic diagnostics for units and personnel in the deployed location. They are scheduled to return in February 2012.

The Soldiers are full-time members of Oregon’s Test Measurement and Diagnostic Equipment team, based at Withycombe.

Three such teams throughout the country, supported by the National Guard Bureau’s Regional Calibration Reimbursable Program.

“Their technical expertise is a high demand skill, both here and overseas in support of the mission,” said Lt. Col. Sean McGann, Commander, 821 Troop Command Battalion.
Resiliency the key to Airmen, Soldier readiness

After a few more rainy days it looks like spring has already begun. The calendar shows the days are getting longer. After a few more rainy days it looks like spring has already begun. The calendar shows the days are getting longer.

 COMMAND

Resiliency the key to Airmen, Soldier readiness

Within the next few months you will be hearing about the Army Leadership Development Strategy (ALDS) for the 21st Century. This is a comprehensive document that addresses leadership development in the Commission Officer, Commissioned Officer and Non Commissioned Officer Corps. A common statement of vision for the ALDS is "All Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers ( enlisted rank) will be prepared to assume the core leadership competencies required to perform their role in the 21st Century military environment." The State Command Chief Warrant Officers selected to implement the ALDS within the ARNG Warrant Officer Corps are from, Texas, Maine, Michigan, Ohio and Oregon. We will also have support for the ARNG Warrant Officer Policy Branch as well. This sub group has been given the following three tasks:

1. A draft vision of how the Army LDS can be implemented for the ARNG Warrant Officers (Warrant Officers). (Promotion requirements and timelines); and 3). A schedule of activities, policy changes required to implement the ALDS within an ARFORGEN construct.

In reading the ALDS for the first time Professional Military Education (PME) and civilian education requirements for the Warrant Officers. (Promotion requirements and timelines); and 3). A schedule of activities, policy changes required to implement the ALDS within an ARFORGEN construct. We are in the process of developing a plan that will prepare them for the complexities and challenges they will face in the future. The State Command Chief Warrant Officers selected to implement the ALDS within the ARNG Warrant Officer Corps are from, Texas, Maine, Michigan, Ohio and Oregon. We will also have support for the ARNG Warrant Officer Policy Branch as well. This sub group has been given the following three tasks:

1. A draft vision of how the Army LDS can be implemented for the ARNG Warrant Officers (Warrant Officers). (Promotion requirements and timelines); and 3). A schedule of activities, policy changes required to implement the ALDS within an ARFORGEN construct.

In reading the ALDS for the first time Professional Military Education (PME) and civilian education requirements for the Warrant Officers. (Promotion requirements and timelines); and 3). A schedule of activities, policy changes required to implement the ALDS within an ARFORGEN construct. We are in the process of developing a plan that will prepare them for the complexities and challenges they will face in the future.

As an organization, we are problem solvers, and our quick response to support the people of Oregon is the key to our success. Whether you have deployment experience or not we are one team, and we need to continue to work together to achieve the goals that you assignment. Iraq's success is truly a reflection of the individuals deployed over the past decade. The personal sacrifices our Oregon Guard Soldiers, Airmen, friends, families and employers have made are all part of this success.

As for those who have deployed to Afghanistan and elsewhere throughout the world, your contributions are also not going unnoticed. You have, and are continuing to make a difference every day. I am proud to be your Adjutant General.

I have just over 80 Oregon Airmen to the Middle East in support of an important Air Forces Central (CENTAF) mission. The Oregon Guard continues to lead from the front. As problem solvers, this is an additional tool for your resilience tool box. To all the soldiers and airmen in our organization, never forget you are the best that Oregon has to offer our nation. Always Ready! Always There!

Resiliency the key to Airmen, Soldier readiness

In early February, ORANG Command Chief Warrant Officer 5 Michael O. Dayton, Command Chief Warrant Officer, Oregon National Guard, and the Ohio National Guard Warrant Officer 5, Chief Warrant Officer 5, Chief Master Sgt. James Holahof, Operations Group, D.C. to participate in the initial writing of Joint Doctrine involving Department of Defense Collaborative Action Workshop. I wanted to share some of our key points with you and expose the new thinking and common voice in helping shape the joint doctrine. The Oregon Air Guard Chiefs instrumental in Air Force Resiliency and civilian education requirements for the Warrant Officers. (Promotion requirements and timelines); and 3). A schedule of activities, policy changes required to implement the ALDS within an ARFORGEN construct.

In reading the ALDS for the first time Professional Military Education (PME) and civilian education requirements for the Warrant Officers. (Promotion requirements and timelines); and 3). A schedule of activities, policy changes required to implement the ALDS within an ARFORGEN construct. We are in the process of developing a plan that will prepare them for the complexities and challenges they will face in the future.

As an organization, we are problem solvers, and our quick response to support the people of Oregon is the key to our success. Whether you have deployment experience or not we are one team, and we need to continue to work together to achieve the goals that you assignment. Iraq's success is truly a reflection of the individuals deployed over the past decade. The personal sacrifices our Oregon Guard Soldiers, Airmen, friends, families and employers have made are all part of this success.

As for those who have deployed to Afghanistan and elsewhere throughout the world, your contributions are also not going unnoticed. You have, and are continuing to make a difference every day. I am proud to be your Adjutant General.

I have just over 80 Oregon Airmen to the Middle East in support of an important Air Forces Central (CENTAF) mission.
Rees, Conley visit Oregon Guard in Iraq

Story by Kimberly L. Lippert
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Photos by Staff Sgt. Paul Caldwell
3-116 Cavalry Regiment Public Affairs


Both Oregon National Guard leaders met with the 3rd Battalion 116th Cavalry Regiment, and Alpha Company 641 Aviation Company over four days.

“The purpose of our visit was to see the Soldiers and reinforce how we are taking care of their families at home,” Conley said.

The 3-116 CAV has the convoy mission throughout the country, which take anywhere from one to five hours.

The Soldiers, driving in Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles (MRAP), escort supply trucks driven by contractors, Iraqis or third-country nationals.

The convoys take place day or night, and while the Soldiers don’t have the chance to interact with locals they often deliver bottles of water to the checkpoints.

“They are doing an amazing job,” Conley said. The 3-116 CAV is knocking it out of the ball park, as are the Alpha-641. I was particularly impressed with their pre combat checks and inspections.”

The Adjutant General also said he is proud of the work his soldiers are doing in Iraq.

“Our Oregon Citizen-Soldiers have shown their willingness to step up to the challenge placed before them,” Rees said. “Every Oregonian and American should be proud of these leaders.”

Both Rees and Conley talked with unit leadership about plans for the Soldiers’ employment when they return to Oregon.

The battalion is focused on helping troops with jobs at home, and has planned employment when they return to Oregon.

The battalion is focused on helping troops with jobs at home, and has planned employment when they return to Oregon.

Rees and Conley also met with Soldiers of Alpha Company, 641 Aviation—currently part of 1st Battalion, 140th Aviation, for a 400-day deployment at Balad Air Base.

The visit from Oregon’s leadership is a display of integrity, honesty, fairness and concern for the health and welfare of subordinates.”

View from the Chairman, Joint Chief of Staff: Fitness is often used interchangeably with the term “readiness.” Are you fit, are you ready? As I see it, readiness is all about being capable of being able to accomplish something you are called to do.

A unit of troops may be ready to load onto airframes and deploy to a distant land. How many troops are leaving behind families that are falling apart? How many are flagged for unresolved drug or alcohol issues.

How many are being loaded onto these aircraft while we in leadership remain oblivious to these problems that do not show on a readiness report? I, for one, want to know not only that a unit is ready but also that it is in a state of what I would call “total fitness.”

Total fitness is a state where mind and body are seen as one. It is a state where people, their families, and the organizations in which they serve are connected and thriving.

I see total fitness as a point of balance between readiness and well-being, where each of these two conditions are mutually supporting and in complete balance. A total force that has achieved total fitness is healthy, ready, and resilient; capable of meeting challenges and surviving threats. Achieving that begins with the way we treat our people.

Total force fitness is more than a physical fitness. It is the sum total of the many facets of individuals, their families, and the organizations to which they serve. It is not something someone achieves twice a year for a test. It is a state of being.

What is the Final Vision? Our vision is an ORANG team of balanced, healthy, self-confident Airmen and families whose resilience and total fitness enables them to thrive in an era of high op tempos and persistent conflict.

We will continuously strive to improve Airmen performance and readiness, by building their confidence to lead, courage to stand up for one’s beliefs and compassion to help others. Comprehensive Airman Fitness is about maximizing one’s potential.

Comprehensive Airman Fitness is not a program, but a long-term cultural approach to taking care of our people.

Big Air Force: Fitness more than physical
CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

On the other hand, a leader demonstrates leadership by example to include the display of integrity, honesty, fairness and concern for the health and welfare of subordinates.”

Story by Col. Jason Schwabel, Oregon Military Department

This is a new program in the State of Oregon which provides long-term assistance, resource referrals, and information to the Survivors of Fallen Soldiers. The Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) program provides Survivors a single point of contact for all issues and questions related to benefits, entitlements, and support services available to Survivors.

The SOS program also provides referrals for financial assistance resources, mental health counseling resources, and life skills education resources.

As this is an Army-sponsored program, all services provided by the SOS program are available at no-cost. This program serves Survivors of Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard Soldiers regardless of the Soldier’s duty status at the time of death (M-Day, Active, Veteran, and Retired).

There are two Survivor Outreach Services support coordinators here in Oregon. If you live in the Northern half of Oregon, contact Tim Maciejewski at (503) 309-3334 or via e-mail at tim.maciejewski@us.army.mil. You can also find the Oregon SOS Program on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/oregonsos.

New Army program helps Survivors

Story by Col. Jason Schwabel, Oregon Military Department

This is a new program in the State of Oregon which provides long-term assistance, resource referrals, and information to the Survivors of Fallen Soldiers. The Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) program provides Survivors a single point of contact for all issues and questions related to benefits, entitlements, and support services available to Survivors.

The SOS program also provides referrals for financial assistance resources, mental health counseling resources, and life skills education resources.

As this is an Army-sponsored program, all services provided by the SOS program are available at no-cost.

This program serves Survivors of Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard Soldiers regardless of the Soldier’s duty status at the time of death (M-Day, Active, Veteran, and Retired). There are two Survivor Outreach Services support coordinators here in Oregon. If you live in the Northern half of Oregon, contact Tim Maciejewski at (503) 309-3334 or via e-mail at tim.maciejewski@us.army.mil. You can also find the Oregon SOS Program on Facebook at http://www.facebook.com/oregonsos.

Name: Raymond F. Chandler III
Title: Sergeant Major of the Army
Job: Top advisor to Army Chief of Staff on all enlisted matters
Born: Whittier, Calif. Age: 48
Family: wife Jeanne; six adult children and stepchildren
Education: Bachelor’s degree in public administration, Upper Iowa University, 2009
MOS: Armor Crewman
Combat experience: Iraq, 2004-05, Command Sergeant Major, 1st Squadron, 7th Cavalry, 1st Cavalry Division.
Last assignment: Commandant, U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy.

Chandler was the first enlisted officer in that position and was promoted in 2009 while serving as the school’s command sergeant major.

Fomer Sgt. Maj. Academy Commandant named newest Sergeant Maj. of the Army

Oregon Commissary
Case-Lot Sales
April 15-17, 9am-5pm
Deschutes Fair & Expo Center, Redmond, Ore.
April 15-16, 9am-5pm
LaGrande Armory, LaGrande, Ore.
June 17-18, 9am-5pm
Jackson Armory, Portland, Ore.
During 20th anniversary of Gulf War, 206th ATMCT looks back at contributions, service

Story by Alisha Hamel,
Oregon Historical Outreach Foundation

Yes, it has been 20 years since Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and restarted the deployment process of Oregon National Guardsmen in support of conflicts that affect our nation.

The Oregon National Guard hadn’t called up any units in the 49 years since WWII, when the call came for the 206th Air Terminal Movement Control Detachment to activate to help the efforts to send the Iraqis back into Iraq and out of Kuwait.

The 206th ATMCT was a small unit of only 35 Soldiers whose mission was to control all movement onto and off of an airport during wartime, and this was the type of unit needed during the beginning of the deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia.

A “Raging Bull” message was sent out to all members of this unit to assemble and be prepared to deploy. 1st Lt. Denise Atkinson, married just four days prior to the deployment, said, “I had a captain’s position in line that I had to give up in order to deploy. I was married on August 23, called on August 24, activated on August 27, and was in Saudi Arabia on September 17, 1990.”

“When we left here the temperature was in the 70s, when we arrived there it was 120 degrees.” Sgt. Brian Knowles added. “I was dating Becky Dougan (an ROTC cadet in the 206th), she called me to say that she had just received a “Raging Bull” message. She was wondering why they would do that.” Brian joined the unit shortly afterward and deployed with his new sergeant girlfriend.

The 206th arrived in country shortly after the 82nd Airborne had arrived, and set up operations at the Dhahran Air Base. The 206th provided two primary, concurrent missions. The first mission was processing arriving and departing personnel to and from aircraft. The second was theatre distribution of critical Army cargo (code named “Desert Express”).


“The night the air war started, the jets were taking off one right after the other, and General Musharraf (a Saudi General) came to our office,” he said. I asked him what was going on, and he replied, “It would be a good idea to have all your people in MOPP gear by 10pm.” Then I knew something was going on.

Denise added, “I was working in the nearby ARCENT (Army Central Command) trailer and airplanes were taking off constantly, as compared to the one or two that normally took off at a time, in the months prior. We knew the war had started, so we stayed at the airbase the rest of the night. In the early morning, the aircraft came back and did a victory lap over the airfield.”

The 206th continued with their mission through the war. Brian Knowles tells one story:

“I was heading out to a L-1011 (a big, wide-bodied airplane), and as I was heading up the stairs the air raid alarm went off. I stepped inside, shut the door, and thought of what I should do. I took the public address system and said, ‘I would like to welcome you to Saudi Arabia…. MASK! MASK! MASK!’”

“All the Soldiers looked at me in amazement. Then I said this is not a drill as I put on my own mask. You could only see asses and elbows as they all got their masks on.”

Another story he told was about watching CNN in the back room of their trailer.

“They stopped the broadcast for a ‘Special Report’ so there was about 20 seconds of quiet, when all of a sudden the Patriots went off just across the airfield. 1st Lt. Darryl Wilson and I hit the floor, flat on the ground, face to face, and I stated, ‘Boy that is good reporting.’”

Sgt. Eric Schwarzkopf had a very interesting experience during Desert Storm. He had the same last name as the commanding general.

“I thought it might be possible that we might be related in some way. People kept asking me about our relationship,” he said.

“I got to meet him and talk to him so it was cool, but it got monotonous after a while. I actually ended up putting ‘Johnson’ on my nametag.”

Finally in May 1991, the 206th received orders to return home.

“I was more assertive, and I ended up getting fired from my job,” Schwarzkopf said.

“My personality changed, and I was not so tolerant. Before, I considered myself a Christian, after the deployment I kind of lost my faith,” he added.

Story and photo by Guy Britnell,
Recruiting and Retention Battalion Marketing Director

The Oregon National Guard’s Recruiting and Retention Battalion has been busy this school year, bringing its Physical Health and Adventure Training (PHAT) program to high schools across Oregon.

The PHAT program is comprised of several components, including a giant obstacle course, rock wall, pugil pit, football throw, basketball toss and HALO jumper. The system is designed to give a demanding workout, while at the same time providing an entertaining environment for students.

Sgt. Maj. Kevin Cutting, the Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion’s Command Sergeant Major, described the role of the PHAT system as both challenging and entertaining.

“We have designed the system to show students that physical exercise can be both challenging and entertaining. Students can get a good workout, while learning the importance of a regular physical fitness program at the same time.”

The system provides a turn-key operation for schools. The battalion’s Mobile Event Team provides the manpower to set-up and operate the system. The school need only provide adequate space for the event and students eager to participate. Due to the amount of requests received, the program is only available to high schools.

If you know of a school that may be interested in having the PHAT program, please contact Staff Sgt. Bryan Smith at bryan.k.smith1@us.army.mil or 503-819-2730.
Independent film sheds light on Afghanistan deployment

Shepherds of Helmand’ opens to packed house at Hollywood Theater in Portland in February

Story by Mike Allegre, Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs

In 2008 a 17-man all volunteer unit of the Oregon Army National Guard deployed to Afghanistan to train a battalion of the Afghan National Army. Their mission took them to the dangerous Helmand Province, center of the opium trade and a region notoriously known as the “Fallujah of Afghanistan.”

On Feb. 3, an audience of 450 people filled the Hollywood Theater in northeast Portland to view the premiere of Shepherds of Helmand, the story of these Soldiers and the training, enemy fire and death that can befal any combat unit.

Featuring interviews, film footage and photos of the men of Team Cobra, the documentary is directed by Portland filmmaker and military historian Gary Mortensen. His last documentary, the award winning This is War-Memories of Iraq, the story of Oregon’s 2nd Battalion 162nd Infantry, was awarded the Audience Award at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival.

In the film, Maj. Dominic Oto says they were sent to train the Afghan Army and then became targets.

The military has needed our Soldiers as translators, to talk ‘the ground truth’ using their words, their photos, their war,” Mortensen said.

“Those men were there to train Afghan Soldiers and help their army to be able to stand up on its own.

The world of their mission was revealed with the help of video from their hand-held cameras and helmet cam. While the footage was intended to be used for reviewing their training, it also showed a Soldier’s camaraderie with his unit, the landscape of Afghanistan and the cold hard facts of war.”

In the film, Maj. Dominic Oto said they were sent to train the Afghan Army and then became targets.

He described a conversation with a veteran Afghan Soldier named Najeboola who had been fighting since the Soviet War in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

“Najeboola said, ‘I have fought against the Russians in an eight-year war. And I’ve fought against the Taliban. And the past three years I’ve been fighting with Americans against the Taliban. So, tell me Captain, what will you tell me about war?’”

The film follows the deployment as the smallest unit is assigned a first-of-its-kind Counter Narcotics Infantry Kandak (Afghan version of a battalion) with the goal of interdicting the opium trade in the Helmand Province.

A handbook of seasoned veterans led a mostly raw, illiterate group of young teenage Afghan recruits. Communicating with and training their recruits took innovation.

Soon their patrol mission changed and the Kandak was ordered to occupy four small patrol bases along the Helmand River.

Almost all of the Oregon Soldiers had never been in a firefight prior to the deployment. On a tiny patrol base called Azad, north along the Helmand River, the Ongolans fought against daily attacks by determined Taliban fighters whose only mission was to overrun the base and kill the Americans.

The Taliban attacked the Oregon Soldiers’ small bases back to back over a three-month period. The film captures harrowing accounts of those hot, bloody days and features combat footage taken from the wall of patrol base. There were also moments they will never forget.

“July 15th was the first time that I shot someone,” Capt. Paul Dyer said.

One Soldier assigned to Team Cobra, Capt. Bruno de Solenli, was killed in action while riding in the top turret of a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle during a convoy to Kandahar.

Oto was driving the MRAP when the explosive device detonated. Capt. Maj. Jerry Glesmann was the first one on the scene. For 40 minutes he administered medical treatment to try and save de Solenli’s life.

“It was a gruesome scene and I tried, but he was gone. It’s a very tough thing to have to accept when it happens,” he said.

A month later, the team found themselves in the battle for Lashkar Gah fighting with their Afghan forces against a force of 2,000 Taliban. A year later, 19,000 Marines would be dropped into the same area.

Four of the Soldiers, Dyer, Glesmann, 1st Sgt. Dave Hagen and Sgt. 1st Class Mark Browning, along with de Solenli’s sister, Pia, attended the premiere and took questions from the crowd after the movie was shown.

Former Gov. Ted Kulongoski also attended and was loaded, along with the Oregon Guard’s senior leadership, for his support of Guardmembers.

“The military has needed our Soldiers since 9-11. They have answered the call and served with honor and distinction. They are the pride of Oregon and their service tells you about the outstanding citizen Soldiers they are,” Kulongoski said.

“Afganistan has been called the Forgotten War of this generation, but for the Soldiers serving there, it is anything but forgotten,” Mortensen said.

“Every day Americans, many of them Oregonians, patrol this desolate and forbidding country. Rarely do these stories get documented and almost never are they made into a documentary. For this we all owe a debt of gratitude to Benchmade Ken Chik of Ken Chik Bobcat Company for stepping forward to make this film a reality,” Mortensen added.

When the deployment was over, they would return as one of the most decorated units in Oregon Guard history.

Lasting impressions in a country full of contradictions

As we drove by the first houses of the village the first thing I noticed was color. Deep maroons and ochre splashed over the landscape of Afghanistan. The contrast to our own hunting and shooting sports.

No gunfire greeted us as we passed through the village. No hostile faces. No Low Intensity Urban Operations.

But more than anything I wanted to see; to view the land of a nation that held for more than nine years.

The Soviet occupation had last for more than nine years.

In 2008 a 17-man all volunteer unit of the Oregon Army National Guard deployed to Afghanistan to train a battalion of the Afghan National Army. Their mission took them to the dangerous Helmand Province, center of the opium trade and a region notoriously known as the “Fallujah of Afghanistan.”

On Feb. 3, an audience of 450 people filled the Hollywood Theater in northeast Portland to view the premiere of Shepherds of Helmand, the story of these Soldiers and the training, enemy fire and death that can befal any combat unit.

Featuring interviews, film footage and photos of the men of Team Cobra, the documentary is directed by Portland filmmaker and military historian Gary Mortensen. His last documentary, the award winning This is War-Memories of Iraq, the story of Oregon’s 2nd Battalion 162nd Infantry, was awarded the Audience Award at the 2008 Sundance Film Festival.

In the film, Maj. Dominic Oto says they were sent to train the Afghan Army and then became targets.

He described a conversation with a veteran Afghan Soldier named Najeboola who had been fighting since the Soviet War in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

“Najeboola said, ‘I have fought against the Russians in an eight-year war. And I’ve fought against the Taliban. And the past three years I’ve been fighting with Americans against the Taliban. So, tell me Captain, what will you tell me about war?”

The film follows the deployment as the smallest unit is assigned a first-of-its-kind Counter Narcotics Infantry Kandak (Afghan version of a battalion) with the goal of interdicting the opium trade in the Helmand Province.

A handbook of seasoned veterans led a mostly raw, illiterate group of young teenage Afghan recruits. Communicating with and training their recruits took innovation.

Soon their patrol mission changed and the Kandak was ordered to occupy four small patrol bases along the Helmand River.

Almost all of the Oregon Soldiers had never been in a firefight prior to the deployment. On a tiny patrol base called Azad, north along the Helmand River, the Ongolans fought against daily attacks by determined Taliban fighters whose only mission was to overrun the base and kill the Americans.

The Taliban attacked the Oregon Soldiers’ small bases back to back over a three-month period. The film captures harrowing accounts of those hot, bloody days and features combat footage taken from the wall of patrol base. There were also moments they will never forget.

“July 15th was the first time that I shot someone,” Capt. Paul Dyer said.

One Soldier assigned to Team Cobra, Capt. Bruno de Solenli, was killed in action while riding in the top turret of a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicle during a convoy to Kandahar.

Oto was driving the MRAP when the explosive device detonated. Capt. Maj. Jerry Glesmann was the first one on the scene. For 40 minutes he administered medical treatment to try and save de Solenli’s life.

“It was a gruesome scene and I tried, but he was gone. It’s a very tough thing to have to accept when it happens,” he said.

A month later, the team found themselves in the battle for Lashkar Gah fighting with their Afghan forces against a force of 2,000 Taliban. A year later, 19,000 Marines would be dropped into the same area.

Four of the Soldiers, Dyer, Glesmann, 1st Sgt. Dave Hagen and Sgt. 1st Class Mark Browning, along with de Solenli’s sister, Pia, attended the premiere and took questions from the crowd after the movie was shown.

Former Gov. Ted Kulongoski also attended and was loaded, along with the Oregon Guard’s senior leadership, for his support of Guardmembers.

“The military has needed our Soldiers since 9-11. They have answered the call and served with honor and distinction. They are the pride of Oregon and their service tells you about the outstanding citizen Soldiers they are,” Kulongoski said.

“Afganistan has been called the Forgotten War of this generation, but for the Soldiers serving there, it is anything but forgotten,” Mortensen said.

“Every day Americans, many of them Oregonians, patrol this desolate and forbidding country. Rarely do these stories get documented and almost never are they made into a documentary. For this we all owe a debt of gratitude to Benchmade Ken Chik of Ken Chik Bobcat Company for stepping forward to make this film a reality,” Mortensen added.

When the deployment was over, they would return as one of the most decorated units in Oregon Guard history.


To order Shepherds of Helmand on DVD, or to view the trailer for the movie, visit: www.shepherdsofhelmand.com.

Proceeds from the sale of the DVD will go to Honored American Veterans Afield (HAV) — a non-profit organization dedicated to the needs of the returning disabled veterans whose healing and reintegration into American life can be substantially enhanced by participation in hunting and shooting sports.

stone houses that seemed straight out of the Old Testament. Then, oddly out of place, I spied television satellite antennas on the roof of almost every home.

No gunfire greeted us as we passed through the village. No hostile faces. No sullen glances or hard stares. Instead, the village teemed with people going about their business. Women in long, black gowns with covered faces walked between homes; three men worked on a tractor that appeared to have been built sometime during the Kennedy Administration. Next to what appeared to be a market a group of men toiled to unload a semi-truck. Hardly anyone gave the MRAPs a second glance.

Except the children. They came down from the lanes and the houses and the street and converged near the road holding hands and staring up at the big trucks. There was no hostility there. There was instead a strange mixture of enthusiasm across their faces. The convoy slowed and with it the MRAP I was riding in began to leisurely navigate the road. There was potential danger here; going slow made the MRAP a target but there was no escaping the sensation, the vibe that this was - at that very moment - probably the last place in Iraq we would face an enemy.

I turned in my seat and peered through the glass at the village. The adults ignored us. It was as if we had become just another piece of the overall landscape like a stream or a canal or a line of power poles. They were, at best, disinterested.

As I peered past the adults I could see children, perhaps not as brave as other

See ENCOUNTER on NEXT PAGE
Story and photos by Spc. Anita Vandervolken

The Oregon Army National Guard's Army Aviation refuelers important in mission success

SALEM, Ore. -- A hiker is lost on a mountain. Ground rescue teams are called out for the search. The missing person is found but helicopter support is needed to pull the hiker out of an isolated area.

The Oregon Army National Guard's 2-641 Aviation is called in and the rescue is a success. Families are reunited and it is a happy ending.

When a scenarios ends like this, the overall success of the rescue has more to do than just the crew we see in the air. It all begins on the ground.

"Most people see the aircraft on the news," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Mark Braeme, of Sublimity, Ore., the aviation maintenance officer with Charlie Company, 7-158 Aviation. "It's all the guys in the background that really get the job done."

The Soldiers of 2-641 Aviation in Salem make sure the equipment is safe and ready for rescue missions, fire fighting and military support operations. It takes a lot of people to get the aircraft up and going, Braeme said.

Refuelers are a part of that group. The fuelers keep the aircraft supplied with fuel throughout the missions. They conduct two different refueling techniques, hot and cold, said Staff Sgt. Michael Paul, of Salem, an aviation fueler and noncommissioned officer-in-charge with Detachment 1, E Company, 7-158.

Soldiers of 2-641 Aviation, Oregon Army National Guard, Salem, Ore., conducted a "hot refueling" during Forward Arming and Refueling Point training at Army Aviation Support Facility 1, March 5. Hot refueling occurs at a stationary site, while only the pilots are left with the aircraft and the aircraft engines are reduced to idling.

"The days were long, the weather was wet and cold, but in the end we are much more confident in our ability to integrate efforts with other agencies in the state," said Staff Sgt. Sean Gallagher, 102nd CST Decontamination Team Member.

"The exercise had the additional component of testing the 102 CST’s capabilities to sustain operations for extended periods of time. The team operated continuously over twenty hours of continuous operation. The exercise was a success. Families are reunited and it is a happy ending."

"Most people see the aircraft on the news," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Mark Braeme, of Sublimity, Ore., the aviation maintenance officer with Charlie Company, 7-158 Aviation. "It’s all the guys in the background that really get the job done."

"The Solders are passionate about their jobs," said Powell. "Without them we would never have a mission complete," said Powell. "They are my success."
JAG on taxes: Be aware of allowances, deductions for Guard members

Story by Lt. Col. Marshall Wilde, Oregon Air National Guard Judge Advocate General

As tax time approaches, military members should be aware of a variety of special issues surrounding military service and taxation. These include issues of residency, filing deadlines, and special tax exemptions.

Some of these benefits are detailed below. You may consult IRS Publication 3, the Armed Forces’ Tax Guide for questions about federal taxes and the Oregon Department of Revenue website for issues of Oregon state taxes.

With the passage of new legislation on the federal level, issues of military residency have taken on a new importance. Generally speaking, you are a resident of the state you live in and must pay taxes there.

However, certain members of the military on active duty and their spouses may maintain residence in another state while serving away from home.

Typically, members will maintain residency in a state with no income tax. However, a few states with income taxes do tax military members residing outside the state. Be sure you are clear about your state of legal residence, as well as that of your spouse.

The tax filing deadline is April 18, 2011 this year. However, you may get an extension of six months by filing a Form 4868. However, it is important to remember that you will still owe interest on any amounts due and that the IRS will not pay interest on amounts it owes to you.

If you are serving in a combat zone on or before the deadline, you will receive an automatic extension for the length of your tour plus at least 180 days.

This extension applies to spouse and minor child tax returns as well, and interest will not be charged for any delinquencies, provided that the returns are filed within the extended deadline.

There are additional benefits for home buyers who were stationed overseas and for Oregon residents. If you were stationed overseas on active duty and purchased a home upon your return, you may qualify for the $8000 home-buyer’s credit, even if you didn’t purchase your home before April 30, 2010.

Military members stationed overseas after December 31, 2008 and before May 1, 2010 have until April 30, 2011 to purchase a home and still get the credit. If you are an Oregon resident, you have an exemption on your state taxes for any military income earned while you were out of the state, as well as $600 of military income (active, IDT or AGR) earned inside the state.

Drill pay is generally taxable, but may be partially exempt if you were away from home for three continuous weeks during the year.

It can be difficult to determine which income qualifies. Check your LES’s to count up the days if necessary. In sum, Congress and the Oregon State Legislature have provided some unique benefits for military members.

Through these benefits, they seek both to make compli-

ance with your tax obligations easier and to compensate you for serving your country. Take advantage of them and you may save yourself a significant amount of money.

Army Corps of Engineers builds infrastructure in Afghanistan

Story and photos by Lt. Col. Kenneth Safe, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Afghanistan

Building the infrastructure of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) is a primary objective of the Obama administration in Afghanistan. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is a key enabler in this objective and has gone from being one district countrywide to two districts in order to more effectively support this critical task.

Currently, the Corps has Afghanistan Engineer District - North (AED-N) based in Kabul and South (AED-S) based in Kandahar.

The Corps’ mission is to provide sustainable development projects for the Afghan people that employ them, build their skills, and promote the stability of Afghanistan.

Additionally, EAD-S is providing roads, airfields, power, and water systems. All this is done with fewer than 300 Corps of Engineers employees.

AED-N has a slightly larger fiscal year 2011 budget and more manpower. The construction is done mostly by Afghans through the COIN (counterinsurgency) initiative, a program that uses local contractors and suppliers for these projects to build capacity and support among the people.

As the ANA and ANP become more capable through trained forces and infrastructure, the need for U.S. combat troops and operations will substantially diminish, thereby meeting the intent of the Obama Administration.

This investment will allow for the expected reduction in coalition forces and U.S. costs by an anticipated $75 billion a year, according to the Obama administration from its third review in two years of U.S. policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Corps’ work being done by the Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Air Force Center for Engineering and the Environment, Regional Support Commands, provincial reconstruction teams, others is changing the dynamics of the security equation.

Insurgent forces are denied their traditional maneuver advantage as roads and airfields are constructed. The ANA is growing its strength by approximately 6,500 soldiers every month through 10 basic warrior training centers throughout the country.

Similarly, the ANP has approximately 9,000 seats filled at any one time, training new Uniformed, Border, and Civil Order Police.

The Corps of Engineers is designing and constructing new facilities to house and train them, and progress is measured in part by their fielding to strategic locations around the country.

Prior to the coalition forces’ support in Afghanistan, there were essentially no facilities for the ANA and the ANP. The facilities that were used for these purposes were either remnants left over from the Soviet occupation or makeshift temporary facilities. Today, there are new facilities all over the country.

The cost of building infrastructure is a small fraction of the overall cost the United States spends in Afghanistan and yet has an exponential benefit. The United States is spending more than $100 billion annually on infrastructure work being done by the Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers builds infrastructure in Afghanistan

Right: The training range complex for the Afghan National Army’s 207th Corps includes eight specialized ranges for weapons systems within the ANA Corps. The complex, constructed by the Afghanistan Engineer District-South, is one of five that will be constructed for the ANA throughout the country.
Global Assessment Tool useful to gauge resiliency, Soldiers say

Story by Kimberly L. Lippert
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

Nearly one million soldiers have now completed the Global Assessment Tool (GAT), a resource aimed at helping soldiers learn how to enhance their resiliency. The results help soldiers assess their core strengths and serve as a starting point through the Army’s Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program.

Multiple deployments and the extended campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan have taken a toll on soldiers’ mental health. A 2008 RAND survey showed up to 70 percent of soldiers are exposed to traumatic incidents in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Modern warfare is characterized by demanding missions, extreme climates, sleep deprivation, cultural dissonance, physical fatigue, prolonged separation from family and the ever-present threat of serious bodily injury or death,” wrote Brig. Gen. Rhonda Cornum, PhD, MD, director of what’s being called the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program, in Health News Digest.

Waiting for illness or injury to occur is not the way commanders in the U.S. Army approach high-risk actions, and it is not the way we should approach high psychological risk activities,” he added.

The GAT is a 105 question survey used to assess a soldier in “four dimensions of strength,” including emotional, social, spiritual and family. The online assessment is administered to recruits when they enter the Army and periodically throughout their military careers.

The assessment tool was developed by experts in psychology and psychiatry and is adapted from the basic principles developed by positive psychology pioneer Dr. Martin Seligman, who runs the University of Pennsylvania’s Positive Psychology Center.

“The program’s overall goal is to increase the number of the soldiers who grow through their combat experience and return home without serious mental health problems,” Army Reserve Maj. Michael Mathews, PhD, chief of psychology, with the Department of Behavioral Sciences and Leadership at the United States Military Academy at West Point, said in an interview with Health News Digest.

Results of the GAT are made available to the assessment and remain confidential.

More specialized training in different aspects of resilience (emotional, social, family or spiritual) are offered as an option to soldiers, depending on their score on the assessment.

Timothy Merritt, a captain with the Oregon Army National Guard’s 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team took the GAT.

“I think it’s a helpful tool,” said Merritt.

“Soldiers know there is help available whether they use it or not is up to them,” he added.

Army researchers will be studying the effectiveness of the program on soldiers’ resilience as well as the links among physiological, neurobiological and psychological resiliency factors.

Suicide prevention begins with recruiting new Soldiers, Army says

Story by Donna Miles
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3, 2011 — Troubled about rising suicide rates in the military’s reserve components, the top Army Reserve officer said yesterday he’d like recruiters to start identifying not only whether potential recruits qualify for military service, but also whether they’re joining for the right reasons.

Army Reserve Chief Lt. Gen. Jack C. Stultz said at a Defense Writers Group breakfast that he has deep concerns about the rising incidence of suicide within the ranks. In 2009, the Army Reserve suffered 35 suicides, and in 2010, that number rose to 50.

Suicide rates increased in the Army National Guard as well, although they dropped slightly among active-duty soldiers, from 162 in 2009 to 156 last year, Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli reported last month.

“Frankly, we are still trying to understand what is going on with the suicide issues,” Stultz told reporters yesterday.

One challenge, he said, is that most of the suicides within both the Army Reserve and Army National Guard occur when the soldier is in civilian, rather than military status.

And contrary to what one might expect, he added, most of the reserve-component soldiers who took their own lives had never deployed and were not about to deploy.

In fact, he said, some had not yet even attended basic training or started drilling with their reserve units.

Of those who committed suicide, Stultz said, contributing factors typically mirrored those among civilians who took their lives, including failed relationships, job losses and economic hardship.

“So I think the challenge for us, in our suicide prevention and what I have been telling my commanders is, to really going to have an impact on the rate of suicide in the Army Reserve, we have to get inside the soldier’s head in his civilian life — not in his military life,” Stultz said.

That, he said, starts the minute a potential Army Reserve candidate walks into a recruiter’s office.

“I think recruiters need to think more about being a counselor than a traditional recruiter,” Stultz said.

It’s great for recruiters to tick off disabilities that would make a candidate ineligible to join the military — legal convictions, drug issues, lack of a high school diploma, among them — the general said.

“But I think our recruiters need to start thinking about saying, ‘Why?’” when a potential recruit expresses interest in joining the military, he added. “Why do you want to join the Army Reserve?”

“What’s going on in your head that you want to join the Army Reserve?”

Older candidates or those who appear to be joining the Army Reserve to escape problems or make money should send up a red flag, he said.

The Army Reserve can’t solve their problems, Stultz said, and those soldiers ultimately will end up being problems for the Army Reserve.

In cases where recruiters don’t identify potential problems, Stultz said, it’s up to the Army reserve’s unit to do so, as quickly as possible after a new soldier joins in formation.

“When that soldier shows up for his drill, somebody needs to sit down with him and say, ‘Tell me about yourself,’” he said. In doing so, he told the group, unit leaders must look at the soldier’s life experiences and support network.

As part of its suicide prevention program, the Army Reserve has joined the active Army in working to take the stigma out of seeking mental health care.

In addition, Stultz said, the Army Reserve is putting increased emphasis on “buddy buddies” who check on each other and steer troubled soldiers to professional help.

But because Army reservists spend the vast majority of their time away from their units, Stultz called family members key to the Army Reserve’s suicide prevention efforts. “So part of our suicide prevention training has to include the family,” he said.

Concerned as he is about suicide within the Army Reserve, Stultz said, he believes it signals even greater problems for the United States as a whole.

Although the military reports current suicide statistics, the latest national statistics on suicide date back to 2007, he noted.

“What concerns me is if we are a mirror of society, what is going on in society?” he asked. “Are we going to look back three years from now and say, ‘Holy cow, what was going on in our nation in 2010 that we really didn’t realize because we were so focused on the military?’”

“I think we need to focus on this as a nation, not just as a military,” he said.

For more information on the U.S. Army’s Suicide Awareness Campaign, visit the Military One Source website at: www.militaryonesource.com.
Oregon Guard members of 1249 EN BN assist Afghanistan village

Story by
Staff Sgt. Anna Rutherford, Task Force Gridley Public Affairs

The proverb “Feed a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime,” is beginning to come true for a small village in Afghanistan thanks to the Soldiers of the 1249th Engineer Battalion, Task Force Gridley, Oregon Army National Guard and the Soldiers of 101st Airborne Division, Task Force Red Currahee.

Members of Task Force Gridley, with air assistance from 101st Airborne Division and security elements from 1-566th Infantry, 101st Airborne Division, Task Force Red Currahee, delivered humanitarian assistance and materials to build a dam in a small village in Paktika Province, Afghanistan.

On March 9, Soldiers from Task Forces Gridley and Red Currahee hiked into the mountains of a district in Paktika Province to intercept two large nets, which had been air-dropped into a small village.

The nets contained humanitarian assistance to provide food and supplies for the impoverished villagers, whose agriculture had been devastated by the recent rough winter weather. The other large net contained bags of concrete, which the village will use as the basis for a dam which will provide irrigation for their agricultural needs.

“It’s been a challenge to design this dam, but it’s going to be very rewarding to see it completed and useful,” said Capt. Raymond Jones of Task Force Gridley Civil Military Operations.

During the visit, Task Force Gridley medic, Sgt. First Class Jose Rodriguez, and Physician’s Assistant 1st Lt. Kenric Craver, were able to render first aid for minor injuries and illnesses. Soldiers also found time to hand out toys and candy for the village children, giving way to many smiling little faces.

Task Force Gridley Soldiers have been conducting various civil military operations throughout the province. The mission brought members of the 101st Airborne Division together with the 1249th Engineer Battalion, Oregon Army National Guard, working on infrastructure and sustainability projects throughout Paktika.

Task Force Gridley also has plans for other future projects within the village to continue agricultural sustainability and aid the village in refining water storage and usage.

“We expect the village to be completely successful,” Jones said. “It’s going to be a productive partnership, which should lead to a higher level of self-sustainment for this village.”

Oregon Guard program helps Soldiers find work, assistance

Story by Cory Grogan
Oregon Military Department Public Affairs

If you have recently returned from a deployment and you have used up all your leave, or you are looking for a job, or the tools to prepare for an interview, the Career Transition Assistance Program (CTAP) can help.

The CTAP and Yellow Ribbon programs offer assistance to Oregon National Guard veterans, and workshops offering employment opportunities and assistance are available to units across the Oregon National Guard and Oregon Air Guard.

The Combat Leader to Corporate Leader workshop held Sept. 13-16, 2010, is an example of how the program is working to serve its’ purpose. Officers representing various units from the Oregon Army National Guard gathered in the Embassy Suites hotel at Washington Square in Tigard for a program designed to prepare them for civilian employment.

Local employers included Safeway, FLIR Systems, Daimler Trucks, Strategy Connection LLC, Hewlett Packard, Remax, Nike, North West Renewable Energy Institute, and Intel Corp.

Employers provided resources on how to compose a resume and prepare for interviews while looking for future employees.

41 Infantry Brigade Combat Team Electronic Warfare Officer Capt. Sean Herring, who received a job through the program with Intel Corp., said he is thankful for the program because he does not think he would have applied at Intel otherwise.

“A lot of companies are interested in hiring veterans and don’t know how to get access to them, and a lot of veterans don’t understand why their military experience makes them desirable candidates. The program is a great way to create awareness on both sides,” Herring said.

Many businesses are looking to give back to service members, and doing things like dressing for success, preparing a professional resume, and attending CTAP job fairs through the Yellow Ribbon Program give guardsmen a great opportunity to find employment in a difficult job market, Marshall added.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program was implemented by the Secretary of Defense to establish a national combat veteran reintegration program to provide National Guard and Reserve members and their families sufficient information, services, referral, and proactive outreach opportunities throughout the entire deployment cycle.

Units interested in putting together a workshop through CTAP can contact Craig Snitker at 503-584-2393. Additional resources for employment, health care, reintegration and veteran services are available on the Fort Oregon webpage at www.fortoregon.org.

Retiree Service Office
Open Tuesdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.
(503) 584-2891 or 1-800-452-7500, ext. 2891
E-mail/ Web: ORRSGOR.nbg.army.mil www.orngretirees.info
US Mail: Retiree Service Office
PO Box 14350 Salem, OR 97309
Citizen-Soldiers of 2-162 Infantry honored with Presidential Unit Citation

Story by Spc. Cory Grogan, 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team
Public Affairs

CORVALLIS, Ore. (Jan. 10, 2011)—Almost seven years after an intense firefight during the Battle of Fallujah, in Iraq, 30 Soldiers of the Oregon Army National Guard were recognized with the Presidential Unit Citation, during a ceremony at the Corvallis Armory, Jan. 8.

Oregon Army National Guard Soldiers of 2nd Platoon, Bravo Company, 2nd Battalion, 162nd Infantry Regiment, of the 41st Infantry Brigade Combat Team, received the Presidential Unit Citation—one of the highest awards given to a military unit—for their heroic actions during the Battle of Fallujah, Nov. 3 to Nov. 24, 2004.

The Soldiers were attached to the U.S. Army’s 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry Regiment, with guidance from the 1st Regimental Combat Team, 1st Marine Division at the time.

The Soldiers from 2nd Platoon were selected to lead the way into the Jolan District of Northwest Fallujah during some of the heaviest fighting of the Iraq war.

Oregon Attorney General and former active duty Marine, John Kroger, also spoke at the event. He said he was impressed that a National Guard unit led the way with such competence and ability.

Bravo Co.’s participation in the battle was also documented in one chapter of John Bruning’s book, The Devil’s Sandbox. The book chronicled the 2-162 IN BN’s participation in the Iraq War.

Echoing his service, John Bruning’s book, The Devil’s Sandbox.

Mayor General Raymond F. Rees, The Adjutant General, Oregon, said he was never more proud to be a member of the Oregon Army National Guard, as he spoke to a large assembly of Soldiers, family, friends and the media.

“These are your hometown heroes,” Rees said.

“When our founding fathers wrote the Constitution and talked about defense of this nation, this is what they were talking about,” Oregon Rep. Kurt Schrader said in a statement into Congressional record, which was also read at the ceremony.

The statement said, “The unit’s rapid penetration deep into the city overwhelmed enemy positions, leading the way for further exploitation by the Marines.”

“The company carries a proud tradition, and as a unit, still have the best riflemen in the Army, said Sgt. Keith Dow.

“Good leadership is what we had and still have,” said Dow, who is still a member of 2nd Platoon.

“New Soldiers are being taught they need to live up to a standard that has been set.”

The 30 Soldiers who were honored in the ceremony will be allowed to wear the award for the rest of their life.

Other members of the platoon can wear the award only while serving as a member of the unit.

Cadet Matthew Zedwick, a former Staff Sgt. in 2nd Platoon, attributed the award to the battalion, and camaraderie. He said the award is recognition for a very deserving group.

“The Presidential Unit Citation is huge and this platoon is so deserving of the award,” Zedwick said. “I will never find a group with that kind of discipline. We sacrificed and it feels good to be honored.”

Schrader said nearly 9,000 citizen Soldiers were recognized with the Presidential Unit Citation at the Corvallis Armory, Jan. 8.

“Like many Nisei, I am humbled to receive this from the Senator. We are thankful to be honored like this. We were there to fight for our country and to show we were loyal Americans,” Yaguchi said.

“Good leadership is what we had and this platoon is so deserving of the award,” Zedwick said. “I will never find a group with that kind of discipline. We sacrificed and it feels good to be honored.”

The regiment was awarded seven Congressional Gold Medals for the heroic fight of the Iraq War. The Presidential Unit Citation is one of the highest awards given to a military unit.

He added that every one of them has repeatedly demonstrated their dedication to their country.

The Presidential Unit Citation shows the men from 2nd Platoon not only served, but did so to the highest military standard, he said.

Wyden honors Go For Broke’ veterans with Congressional Gold Medal

Story by Mike Allegra, Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs

MILWAUKIE, Ore. -- Late last year, the U.S. Congress voted to award Japanese American (Nisei) veterans from the 100th/442nd Infantry Regiment and Military Intelligence Service the highest civilian honor the government can present—the Congressional Gold Medal for their exemplary service during World War II.

A long trip to Washington D.C. to receive these medals from the President is arduous as most Nisei are over the age of 85.

Recognizing that, Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden has arranged to present leather bound copies of Congressional law and U.S. flags flown over the nation's capitol to Oregon Japanese American (Nisei) veterans. The president will bestow the Congressional Gold Medal to all Nisei veterans since December.

The regiment was awarded seven Presidential Unit Citations and 21 Congressional Medals of Honor among thousands of other collective and individual medals and citations while serving in France, Italy and Germany.

“The Nisei veterans who fought in the ‘Go For Broke’ regiment are the most decorated of all Nisei veterans since December.”

Originally from Ontario, Ore., Yaguchi served in the 232nd Combat Engineer Company in Europe.

That company was unique. Unlike the other units in the 442nd that were primarily run by white officers, the engineers took their orders from other Japanese Americans.

“One“I have been working hard to make sure we could put TRICARE Young Adult on a fast track,” said Navy Rear. Adm. Christine Hunter, the TRICARE deputy director.

“Fortunately for our beneficiaries concerned about health care coverage for their adult children, the law signed by the President includes opportunities for military families to elect this new premium-based plan retroactive to Jan. 1,” Hunter said.

“Beginning later this spring, qualified, unmarried dependents up to age 26 will be able to purchase TRICARE coverage on a month-to-month basis—as long as they are not eligible for their own employer-sponsored health coverage.”

This program has the potential to extend TRICARE coverage to several hundred thousand additional beneficiaries," Admiral Hunter said. “The premium allows us to provide this excellent benefit to our military families while responsibly addressing the impact of health care costs on the DOD budget.”

Initially, the benefit offered will be a premium-based TRICARE standard benefit.

Eligible family members who receive health care between now and the date the program is fully implemented may want to purchase TRAP retroactively and should save their receipts. Premiums will have to be paid back to Jan. 1, 2011, in order to obtain reimbursement.

Adults who are no longer eligible for TRICARE, but need health insurance coverage, may wish to explore the Continued Health Care Benefit Program (CHCBP) is a premium-based program offering temporary transitional health coverage for 18 to 36 months. Coverage must be purchased within 60 days of loss of TRICARE eligibility.

For more information on TRICARE Young Adult Program and CHCBP visit http://www.tricare.mil.
NOSTRA offers eye glasses to retirees

If you are retired military, and eligible for other medical services, you are authorized to receive up to three pairs of standard eyeglasses annually for a nominal fee.

If you are less than 50 miles from a military hospital or medical center, you may receive up to 10 pairs of glasses with standard prescription at no charge. From 51-100 miles, you may receive up to 5 pairs of glasses with standard prescription at no charge. If you are more than 100 miles from a medical center, you may receive up to 5 pairs of glasses with a small flat fee.

Send the following information to NOSTRA: One copy of your military ID card; A copy of your latest copy of DD Form 214 or DD Form 295 provided annually to all Guardsmen details years of qualifying service.

Guardians should check on 20-yr letter

Traditional Soldiers and Airmen of the National Guard become eligible to receive retired pay at age 60 after completing 20 years of qualifying service. Retirement point summaries are usually provided annually to the Guardians. Check on their availability.

Guardians who have completed their 20 good years but have not received their “20 Year Letter” should contact their unit for assistance. If you are 60 years of age, you MUST SUBMIT AN APPLICATION.

 flight training; apprenticeship training and correspondence courses.

All reservists and Guardsmen to have their time supporting emergencies called by their state governors credited to the time needed to qualify for educational benefits.

Providing one half of the national average for the program’s housing allowance to students enrolled in distance learning;

Pro-rating the housing allowance to exclude payments when students are not in class;

All retirees on active duty receive the stipend for books and supplies;

Allowing people eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, but participating in VA’s Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment program to use the eligible family members’ GI Bill’s housing allowance or VR&E’s subsistence allowance;

Permitting reimbursement for more than one “license and certification” test;

Reimbursing fees to take national admittance tests, such as SAT, ACT, GMAT and LSAT; and

Establishing a national cap of $17,500 annually for tuition and fees in a private or foreign school, not including contributions by educational institutions under the “Yellow Ribbon” program.

Subsidies provided annually to all Guardsmen details years of service.

‘Gray area’ retirees benefits now online

Oregon Guard retirees who have completed their 20 years of qualifying service but are yet 60 years of age are known as the “Gray Area” retirees.

Although you are not yet drawing retired pay, you still have a long list of benefits available to you and your spouse.

To see the list of the benefits you can enjoy right now, visit: https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/Reserve/soldierservices/retirement/graysarea.htm

You may also contact the Retiree Service Office at 503-584-2891 or via e-mail at: orso@or.ngb.army.mil.

Retirees need to update info with RSO

If you are retired from the Oregon Army or Air National Guard, it pays to keep your contact information updated. When you move, change phone numbers or even your e-mail address there are several offices to consider contacting, here are just a few:

1. The Retiree Service Office (RSO) provides the Sentinel your current mailing address so you can continue to receive your copies. To provide updates, contact the RSO at: (503) 584-2891, or via e-mail: orso@ or.ngb.army.mil.

2. The Defense Enrollment and Enrollment System (DEERS) can update your DEERS information at any of the locations in Oregon where ID cards are provided. For more information on TRICARE, contact TriWest at 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378).

3. To contact the Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS), call: 1-800-982-8459.

New legislation streamlines GI Bill

WASHINGTON, D.C. - To bring the educational benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill closer to more Veterans and Service Members, President Obama signed legislation Jan. 4, that streamlines the 18-month-old education program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

“Since the first GI Bill in 1944, this unique educational program has adapted to the needs of America’s Veterans, active-duty personnel, reservists and Guardians,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

Shinseki called for reforms, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is growing to ensure the men and women who serve this nation in uniform receive valuable education benefits from a grateful nation.

On behalf of Veterans and the many who support them, we are forever thankful the president for his support, as well as members of Congress and our Veterans service organization partners for helping make this bill a reality,” Shinseki added.

Among the provisions of the legislation are:

1. Paving for on-the-job training, some

ORNG Assn to hold conference in Salem

The Oregon National Guard Association will conduct its 84th Conference at the Salem Convention Center on April 16. Officers of the Oregon National Guard will gather together to consider the business of the Association, elect officers, and meet our Corporate Partners.

On Friday evening the leadership of the Oregon National Guard and the Oregon National Guard Association will celebrate with and recognize our Corporate Partners. Their support is essential to carry out the Association’s continued support of National Guard members and their families.

The conference will start at 7:00 a.m. A buffet breakfast will be served at 7:15 a.m. Call to order will be given at 9:00 a.m. As of this printing, Maj. Gen. Garry Duvall, the 142nd Fighter Wing’s commander, will conduct a private session with the conference attendees.

There will be a silent auction offered by the Auxiliary at 9:30 a.m. and the Conference registration and the Military Ball Info Table will be open at 10:00 a.m., with the call to order for the conference at 11:30 a.m.

We will present six $1,500 scholarships to veterans who have completed 20 good years but have not received their “20 Year Letter” should contact their unit for assistance. If you are 60 years of age, you MUST SUBMIT AN APPLICATION.

Applications for retired pay are usually submitted at age 58 or 59. All retirees should establish a “MyPay” account with Defense Finance and Accounting Service which allows for “on line” changes to your retired pay, including allotments. Post-9/11 GI Bill eligible family members who have completed at least 20 good years but have not received the “20 Year Letter” should contact their unit for assistance.

For more information on TRICARE, contact TriWest at 1-888-TRIWEST (874-9378).

WASHINGTON, D.C. - To bring the educational benefits of the Post-9/11 GI Bill closer to more Veterans and Service Members, President Obama signed legislation Jan. 4, that streamlines the 18-month-old education program administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

“Since the first GI Bill in 1944, this unique educational program has adapted to the needs of America’s Veterans, active-duty personnel, reservists and Guardians,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki.

Shinseki called for reforms, the Post-9/11 GI Bill is growing to ensure the men and women who serve this nation in uniform receive valuable education benefits from a grateful nation.

On behalf of Veterans and the many who support them, we are forever thankful the president for his support, as well as members of Congress and our Veterans service organization partners for helping make this bill a reality,” Shinseki added.

Among the provisions of the legislation are:

1. Paving for on-the-job training, some
ORANG’s 116th Air Control Squadron deploys to Middle East

Congressman David Wu (OR-District 1), Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber, Maj. Gen. Raymond F. Rees, Adjutant General, Oregon, and Brig. Gen. Steven Gregg, Commander of the Oregon Air National Guard, along with other city, local, government, and business officials, attended the ceremony.

Governor Kitzhaber thanked the Airmen for their service and sacrifice, and thanked their families for theirs.

"I want to share with your families, and your neighbors, and with the entire State of Oregon, that we are proud of your dedication and your willingness to put service above all else," he said.

The mobilization ceremony was the first large-scale stand up of Guard members since the Governor became the Oregon National Guard's Commander-in-Chief in mid-January.

Lt. Col. Gregor Leist, 116th ACS Commander, said the team is excited about their opportunity to participate in coalition efforts supporting Overseas Contingency Operations.

"It is a great opportunity to apply our extensive training during support of meaningful real-world operations," Leist said.

"We deeply appreciate the sacrifices our families and employers will make during our absence, and we look forward to returning to our families and getting back to work in our civilian careers after our overseas tour is completed."