



# NORTH DAKOTA GUARDIAN

Volume 7, Issue 9

September 2014

## REUNITED

**957th Engineer Company Commemorates  
10-Year Anniversary of Iraq Mission**

### **SUICIDE AWARENESS**

**Enhanced Suicide Prevention  
Efforts During September**

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### **FUTURE LEADERS**

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for Completing OCS**

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Soldiers with the 81st Civil Support Team and Airmen with the 119th Wing recently completed a weeklong, multi-state training event held in Washington and Oregon. The unit worked jointly with Oregon, South Dakota and Washington National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to complete a series of training scenarios designed to test each team's ability to perform mission-essential functions in response to terroristic threats.



### 14 Warrior Tasks & Soldier Skills

Soldiers representing units throughout the North Dakota Army National Guard battled to earn the "Best Warrior" title during the state-level competition last month after distinguishing themselves as the top competitors within the Guard's major commands. During the competition at Camp Grafton, they contended with a range of events designed to gauge their competence and performances in Army tasks and evaluations.



### 16 UPARs: Telling Our Story

Three North Dakota unit public affairs representatives (UPARs) traveled to Ghana last month to host a State Partnership Program-sponsored workshop to assist the Ghana Armed Forces Directorate of Public Relations in training its own UPARs. UPARs are command-designated personnel who coordinate and function as a liaison between the unit, the unit commander and the public affairs office.

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# NORTH DAKOTA GUARDIAN

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## ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS

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Digital photos should be 300 dpi, if possible.

## On the Cover



Spc. Matthew Reule, former member of the 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge), stands upon a 250-foot float bridge, constructed by the unit, while awaiting military vehicle traffic.

Photo from North Dakota National Guard Archives

# GUARD POSTS

Dispatches from the N.D. Guard Family

## ETHICS — OUR PROFESSION

**I**n a Feb. 7 news article, U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel said, “Ethics and character are absolute values that we cannot take for granted. They must be constantly reinforced. It is the responsibility of all of us who ask for the trust and confidence of the American people to assure these values are imbued in all our people and we all live up to them. Ethics and character are the foundation of an institution and a society. They must be constantly emphasized at every level of command and in training, curriculum and all phases of Department of Defense, in both the officers and enlisted corps.”

### What are ethics?

Ethics are principles, or standards of behavior, that guide professionals to do what is right or good. Ethical leaders do the right thing for the right reasons, even when no one is watching. To determine what the right thing is, we look to our core values and must be able to reason ethically. There is no ethics calculator to aid us in making ethical decisions, so our ethical standards are continually being examined and challenged. It takes moral courage and a strong moral character to live every day according to one’s ethics.

### Why are ethics important?

As members of the military, we swear to support and defend the Constitution of the United States. The American people expect that we will do so ethically. This responsibility does not just rest with our senior leaders; the responsibility to live up to the trust placed in us lies with each one of us. It is up to the individual, as the organization is only as good as the individuals who are part of it. As members of the U.S. Armed Forces, we know it is important to conduct

ourselves according to our ethics, personally and professionally.

If a current or former military member commits a legal and/or ethical violation, the fact that the individual is in the military service usually is part of the headline. Why? Because of the high trust the American people have placed in us along with the created expectation that we will always conduct ourselves with highest level of morality. It is not always easy to recognize proper ethical conduct. Regardless of intent, any failures will reflect on the organization and impact the faith and trust placed in us.

### How can we be ethical leaders?

Each one of us is able to be an empowered, ethical leader. You must stand for something by examining your own values and belief systems and identifying your core values. Live your personal and professional core values, set examples and be a role model. Avoid cutting corners, taking advantage of that tempting opportunity or taking the easy way to get to your goal. Once the lines have been blurred, they become difficult to see at all. Even the best-intended members will make mistakes; we are not perfect. When you are unsure of the right thing, ask a trusted friend or colleague. If you are still unsure, feel free to contact me as your state ethics counselor. You can call me at 701-333-2019 or email me at michelle.i.hagel.mil@mail.mil.

To reach our vision as ethical leaders, we must set examples by living our values; modeling professional behavior; and coaching, mentoring and empowering our junior leaders. Doing so will keep the public’s trust, improve command climate and maintain good order and discipline. When there are failures in our organization, they do not only impact the public’s faith and trust in us, they impact the faith and trust we have with each other. If you see others committing ethical failures, get involved and say some-



MAJ. MICHELLE HAGEL

Judge Advocate General

thing. The misuse of government aircraft; improper relationships; abuse of alcohol; taking advantage of incentive opportunities for personal financial gain; and pornography, sexually explicit and demeaning materials in the work place are just a few examples of some military members’ recent failures. In most of these incidents, others were aware of the conduct and had an opportunity to stop it. Many of the more serious ethical violation cases in the military were brought forward by junior enlisted members.

We are all empowered to stop ethical and legal violations from within our ranks. Guardsmen have many resources for support: inspector general, state ethics counselor, judge advocate, chain of command or trusted mentors.

Pentagon Press Secretary Rear Adm. John Kirby gave reporters a shorthand definition Feb. 5 for what moral courage and moral character mean in the military. “That’s doing the right thing when nobody is looking,” he said. “That’s treating people the right way even when they can’t do anything for you. It’s about the basic ideas of strapping on this uniform every day. And it’s what, frankly, keeps a lot of us in.” ■

*Michelle Hagel*

# Landman Assumes Command of 188th Army Band

By Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen,  
Joint Force Headquarters

Family, friends and members of the North Dakota National Guard's 188th Army Band welcomed the unit's newest commander with a chorus of applause during a formal change-of-command ceremony Aug. 17 at the Armed Force Reserve Center in Fargo, North Dakota.

Warrant Officer James R. Landman accepted responsibility as commander and primary conductor for the band from 1st Sgt. Bradley Reed, who had served as acting commander since 2013. As commander of the 188th Army Band, Landman will oversee the unit's training requirements, determine personnel for the arrangement of music ensembles and serve as the concert band's primary conductor.

"This is a great day for our 188th Army Band, a unit that consistently engages with and entertains communities throughout North Dakota," said Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, North Dakota adjutant general. "Warrant Officer Landman will continue to enhance our Soldier-musicians' abilities and give our top-notch band more opportunities to connect with audiences wherever they perform. He is an incredible musician, an excellent Soldier and will be an effective, competent commander."

Landman enlisted into the 188th Army Band in February 2008, eventually earning the rank of sergeant. In June 2013, he was presented the Reserve Component Army Band Soldier of the Year award for his job accomplishments, leadership and artistic integrity as a trumpet instrumentalist. The award acknowledges Landman as the best enlisted Army band member across the entire National Guard and Army Reserve for 2012.

Prior to accepting the commander position for the 188th Army Band, Landman recently completed a 5-week course at Fort Rucker, Alabama, to become a member of the Army National Guard warrant officer corps. While there, he received a "Leadership Award" for "achieving and maintaining the highest standards" while attending the school, according to the award citation.

A graduate from North Dakota State University in Fargo, Landman holds a bachelor's degree in music education. In his civilian profession, he works full-time as the band director for Sheyenne High School in West Fargo.

"Being able to serve in the 188th Army Band in a different capacity and take command of Soldiers, who I see as family, it's powerful," Landman said. "This change in duty brings new opportunities to give back

to the unit and the North Dakota National Guard."

The official mission of the 188th Army Band is to provide music throughout the full spectrum of military operations and to instill in Soldiers the will to fight and win, to foster the support of citizens, to promote national interests at home and abroad and to entertain audiences. In successful completion and ongoing fulfillment of that mission, the band has continued to provide music to the citizens and Soldiers of North Dakota for 127 years.

The 188th Army Band recently has adopted a modularity concept, breaking its unit down into smaller music groups to support events across the state. Some of the ensembles the unit regularly assembles include two rock bands, a brass quintet, jazz combo and Dixieland combo. Many band members spend time outside of designated drill weekends and training events rehearsing on their own.

Some of the 188th Army Band's most recent events have included performances across the state in Bismarck, Stanley, Parshall and Minot, North Dakota, as part of the unit's annual training engagements. A brass quintet comprised of the band's Soldiers played at the Capitol Building Aug. 16 in Bismarck for North Dakota's 125th Celebration Party as well as an anniversary concert in Fargo in July. North Dakota will celebrate 125 years of statehood on Nov. 2, 2014.

In June, Soldiers from the 188th Army Band supported a Military Music Camp with the N.D. National Guard's Child and Youth Program. The 5-day curriculum for children musicians of military members was held at North Dakota State University in Fargo. ■



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kiel Skager, Joint Force Headquarters.  
Warrant Officer 1 James Landman accepts command of the N.D. National Guard's 188th Army Band during a change-of-command ceremony Aug. 17.

# N.D. Army Guard Honors Newest Leaders

By Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen,  
Joint Force Headquarters

The newest leaders in the North Dakota Army National Guard were welcomed into the organization's officer corps ranks during a formal graduation ceremony Aug. 16 at the 164th Regiment Regional Training Institute at the Camp Grafton Training Center near Devils Lake, North Dakota. Sixteen Soldiers of the 57th Officer Candidate School (OCS) class were presented diplomas for completing the intensive officer training program. Eleven graduates immediately accepted their commissions as second lieutenants in the Army National Guard.

"In joining the officer corps, always remember that you are expected to live the Army standards, to display the strongest character and to demonstrate the utmost integrity in all of your actions," said Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, North Dakota adjutant general, who addressed the graduates during the ceremony. "Our Soldiers are smarter, more educated and more motivated than ever. They expect and deserve energy, imagination, integrity and competence from their leaders; never let them down."

Sprynczynatyk later presented the graduates with their diplomas, while Col. Robert

Fode, commander of the N.D. National Guard's Army Component Command, administered the Oath of Office to the newest second lieutenants. Lt. Col. Bradley Brown, commander of the 164th Regional Training Institute's 2nd Modular Training Battalion, presided over the "Pinning Ceremony," where the new officers donned their gold-colored second lieutenant bars. The graduating officers were joined by family members and friends during the ceremony.

The 57th OCS class graduated after a majority of the Soldiers finished the final of a three-phase, 8-week accelerated, or "Fast Track," course at Camp Rapid, South Dakota. In addition to the Accelerated OCS course, Soldiers can attend a traditional course, which is spread out over 16-19 months during Guard training weekends with two additional 2-week training periods. Other sources of officer commissioning are available through the North Dakota's Reserve Officer Training Corps program with locations at the University of North Dakota, North Dakota State University, Minnesota State University Moorhead and Concordia College — Moorhead. ■



Photo by Mr. Jonathan Haugen, N.D. National Guard Visual Information

2nd Lt. Jenna Lee, of West Fargo, North Dakota, receives her new rank during a "Pinning Ceremony" Aug. 16 at the 164th Regiment Regional Training Institute at the Camp Grafton Training Center near Devils Lake, North Dakota. Lee was one of 11 Soldiers to accept a commission as a second lieutenant in the Army National Guard after completing the Officer Candidate School program.

## Camp Grafton Training Center's 57th OCS graduating class includes:

**\*Lionaldo J. Abinader,**  
Grand Forks, North Dakota

**\*Mark T. Buske,**  
West Fargo, North Dakota

**Eric D. Edwardson,**  
Grand Forks, North Dakota

**\*Andrew R. Groninger,**  
Anoka, Minnesota

**Ryan M. Hartl,**  
Devils Lake, North Dakota

**\*Eric P. Jungels,**  
Fargo, North Dakota

**\*Eric D. Kjeldergaard,**  
Grand Forks, North Dakota

**\*Jennifer R. Lahren,**  
Grand Forks, North Dakota

**\*Danielle M. Larva,**  
Brookston, Minnesota

**\*Jenna C. Lee,**  
West Fargo, North Dakota

**Kellie K. Lindberg,**  
Minot, North Dakota

**\*Ben D. McPherson,**  
Crookston, Minnesota

**\*Jacob N. Oster,**  
Williston, North Dakota

**Jessica J. Peterson,**  
Bismarck, North Dakota

**Danielle C. Sigloh,**  
Killdeer, North Dakota

**\*Charles R. Werner,**  
Upham, North Dakota

(\*) indicates acceptance of commission

# Stand Up to Suicide

## N.D. Guard Recognizes September as Suicide Prevention Month

*By Chief Warrant Officer 4 Shelly Sizer,  
Joint Force Headquarters*

The North Dakota National Guard will continue to observe September as Suicide Prevention Month by enhancing its resilience and suicide awareness efforts throughout the state. The N.D. National Guard planned several activities during the month of September to raise awareness about suicide prevention and to dispel myths about suicide.

• **It is a myth that most suicides occur with little or no warning.** While some do occur this way, most individuals thinking about suicide still show some warning signs of what they are feeling. Warning signs can be verbal or actions alone — some may be subtle and some more obvious.

• **It is a myth that a suicidal person clearly wants to die.** Most people are ambivalent about their intentions right up to the point of dying.

• **It is a myth that talking about suicide may give someone the idea to complete suicide.** By talking about suicide, you open a door for a person thinking about completing suicide to feel safe talking about their feelings. When talking to someone who is thinking about suicide, keep in mind the following: be prepared, listen without judging and be honest. Tell him or her that you will be there through the process of getting help, or until you can get them to a safe place or to person that will keep them safe.

• **It is a myth that only a professional can help someone who is suicidal.** Long-term care should be provided by a mental health professional, but anyone can know the warning signs and help someone who is experiencing suicidal thoughts to seek help.

• **It is a myth that treatment does not cut the risk of suicide.** Successful treatment of any underlying psychiatric disorder is very important and can reduce suicidal thoughts. The key is that the treatment is effective. If you or someone you know is in treatment and you are not seeing improvement, explore a new regiment of treatment. Effective mental health treatment is a partnership between the patient and the provider.



The N.D. National Guard is working to dispel myths and raise awareness during Suicide Prevention Month and beyond by encouraging all Guardsmen to consider participating in a number of events:

**On Sep. 10**, the N.D. National Guard hosted an Officer Professional Development/Noncommissioned Officer Development Program event in Bismarck, North Dakota, featuring guest speaker, Dr. Missy Henke, the medical director of Heartview Foundation, who spoke about suicide prevention and awareness.

**On Sep. 13**, the N.D. National Guard hosted its first Ask, Care, Escort – Suicide Intervention, or ACE-SI, training for trainers in Fargo, North Dakota, to help with its efforts to train Soldiers to recognize warning signs and intervene to help when necessary. This course was instructed by a certified trainer from our own ranks and equipped Soldiers from throughout the state to train junior leaders and first line supervisors in suicide intervention techniques, which included recognizing risk factors and warning signs.

**On Sep. 20**, Dr. Mary Bartlett will present to Soldiers and Airmen at the Raymond J. Bohn Armory in Bismarck, North

Dakota, to address suicide issues, prevention and warning signs. The presentation also will be broadcasted via Defense Connect Online (DCO). Dr. Bartlett is a licensed professional counselor and serves as an independent behavioral health consultant on resilience, risk reduction and suicide prevention.

**On Sep. 30, 2014**, there will be a Community Fit Fair at the Sertoma Community Club in Bismarck from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. The event, which is free to the public, will be a multi-faceted, total fitness, community event.

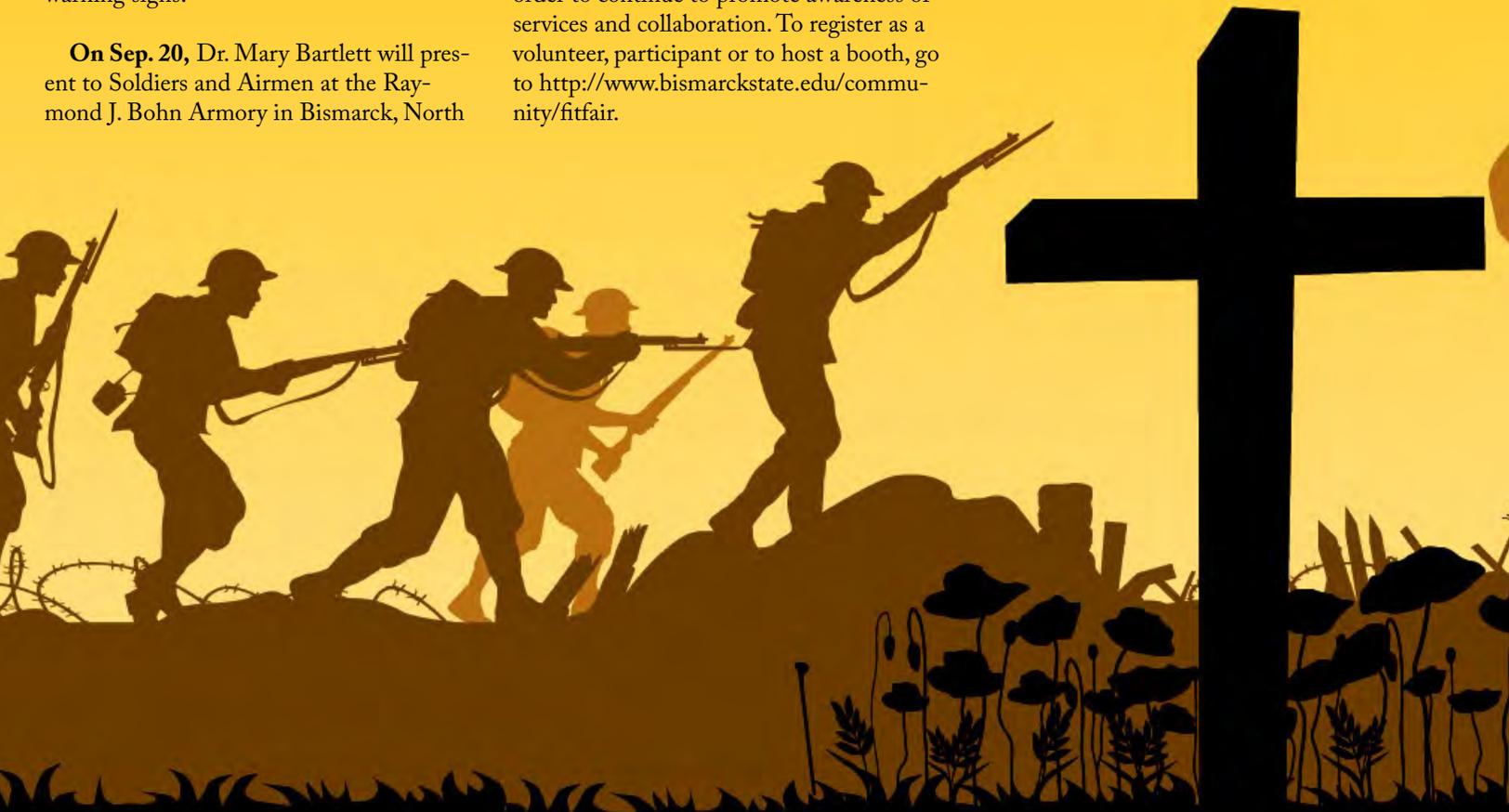
There will be a community Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) during which community members can test their fitness alongside service members using the Army standards that our Soldiers know well. Additionally, various community military and civilian resources will be invited to support the event to showcase their services to service members, families and community members.

These resources will also have an opportunity to network among themselves in order to continue to promote awareness of services and collaboration. To register as a volunteer, participant or to host a booth, go to <http://www.bismarckstate.edu/community/fitfair>.

Additionally, leaders across the organization are encouraged to conduct awareness activities within their commands for the remainder of the month. Units throughout the state will execute activities and events that build resiliency and promote awareness of suicide prevention and intervention, challenging and empowering service members to build resilience, and to act and intervene when necessary.

All of these activities complement the National Guard's ongoing awareness efforts conducted throughout the year. These efforts include Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) two-day workshops hosted by the state and the ACE and ACE-SI training conducted at the unit level.

The available training and activities contribute to N.D. National Guard's emphasis on strengthening the National Guard community by empowering its Soldiers and Airmen to increase their self-awareness and awareness of others by learning to recognize risk factors and warning signs, intervention techniques and prevention factors to prevent suicide and promote overall wellness. ■



# Journey from Engineer Unit Reunites 10 Y

By Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen,  
Joint Force Headquarters

There was a point early in her deployment to Iraq when Erin Demoe didn't think she would ever be going home. That anxiety-driven notion happened while waiting to call her mother who was back in North Dakota. Demoe had been standing in line at a phone bank for more than two hours. In front of her, a young man turned around and smiled, his lips cracked and skin reddened from the desert sun. Demoe would later say "he looked terrible," and it looked like he had been in Iraq "forever." Curious, she asked him how many days he had been serving "in country." The Soldier told Demoe he had been there for three weeks, a prospect that made her heart sink.

This was during the early days of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Demoe had just arrived in Iraq with her unit, the 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge), on May 7, 2003. The conditions for Soldiers serving there during the time were austere compared to the hardened facilities and technology that would be available for service members in the later years of the Global War on Terrorism. In the spring of 2003, it was critical that the North Dakota unit relied on one another and establish durable bonds.

"There were a lot of times that you thought, 'I can't get home.' And you couldn't contact anybody that you needed to," Demoe said. "We (the unit) really bonded with each other and relied on one another. But, there were just those days where you needed to know that everything was OK (back home), and you couldn't."

The 957th would return home, though, on the night of April 18, 2004, after 431 days of being away from family and friends. They entered active-duty service on Feb. 10, 2003, beginning with three months of pre-mobilization training in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. During the time there and in Iraq, they would share laughs and create memories, serve honorably and endure heartbreak. It's a story that's bookmarked by achievements, accolades, pride-in-country and tears. But, the chapters weren't finished being written in Iraq.

Fast-forward a decade. An epilogue also has been affixed to the 957th's legacy in the Global War on Terrorism. This summer, in August, about 120 of the 177 Soldiers who mobilized with the unit, along with their families, reunited in Bismarck, North Dakota. There, they shared their accounts of military life in the desert, caught up on the last decade's life moments and honored and remembered those who did not return, as well as those who have been lost since coming home.

## To Parts Unknown

The 957th's journey to Iraq — and back — began in Bismarck at the North Dakota National Guard's Raymond J. Bohn armory. After receiving an official alert notice on Jan. 15, 2003, for the

deployment, Soldiers with the unit were hurriedly packing green duffel bags and loading flatbed trucks to transport their gear to Fort Leonard Wood for pre-mobilization training. The group of Guardsmen's average age was 23 years old.

"It just seemed surreal," Demoe said about getting the call to mobilize. "We didn't get a whole lot of information up front, so there were a lot of rumors, of course, and a lot of us were thinking 'we're not really going.' I wasn't frightened or worried or anything. It just seemed like maybe we would only be gone for two months and just come back."

The unit was so young, in fact, that 45 Soldiers weren't even eligible for the deployment. Each of them was still finishing high school and only 17 years old. To round out the 957th, leadership acquired volunteers from Guard units throughout the state, all of whom had no experience as bridge crewmembers, the unit's military occupational specialty (MOS). Lt. Col. Davina French, the unit's commander, remembers organizing an MOS conversion course for the new Soldiers to prepare them to serve with the unit overseas. Veteran members of the 957th served as instructors during a sub-zero North Dakota January on a heated lake near Bismarck. The event served dual purposes for the unit: to train Soldiers and build camaraderie.

"So, there was team-building right from the get-go," French said. "And that's one of the things that we focused on. We said, 'let's get rid of the filler (volunteer) identity. You're in the 957th now. And you're on our team.'"

Retired Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Elkin, a platoon sergeant with the unit, remembers only having about a month to prepare at home before the 957th left for Fort Leonard Wood. He said the earlier deployments during the Global War on Terrorism had a more accelerated schedule compared to later years. Elkin would again mobilize to Iraq with the 191st Military Police Company in 2008 and to Kosovo for a peacekeeping mission in 2009.

"It (the time from the alert to mobilizing) was definitely more of a short fuse," Elkin said. "There've always been good people in the North Dakota Army National Guard, and it's been proven. You weren't worried about the people; it was mainly about training and being prepared."

## Over There

The unit was prepared for its bridging mission, but the Soldiers would discover that they would be tasked with an entirely new set of duties during the war fight. French said their endurance was tested and "adaptability became a key word for us." While most of the 957th's capabilities were in building portable bridges, the unit also

# From the Desert

## Years after Mission to Iraq

had a secondary mission in transportation. And transportation units were in high demand to bring essential supplies to friendly forces in the field. French actually gave a two-hour class on transportation to the Soldiers while in Fort Leonard Wood, “just in case.” Coincidentally, the commander had previously served in Desert Storm as a transportation officer and movement control specialist.

“We learned a lot at mob station, and I think we were very fortunate. We had a lot of good training that taught us how to use our vehicles (for transportation missions) way more than we did before we left Bismarck,” Demoe said. “We also had an advantage of being from the National Guard. So many people were able to bring their outside experiences to the missions we performed. We had people who were engineers ... people who were very familiar with loading trucks for long-haul missions and the things that we don’t learn as part of our bridging skills.”

The unit also had been fielded 45 brand new Oshkosh transportation trucks, which could haul large containerized cargo like those seen at shipping ports. With 20-foot beds for hauling food, water, concrete and most every other class of supply, the 957th was now a “force-multiplier” for the brigade they supported. While stationed in Kuwait, the Soldiers would cross the border into Iraq, convoy for 2-3 days at a time, offload supplies, convoy back and repeat, time

and time again. Demoe recalled when the unit once convoyed for 18 straight hours in one day.

“After being on the road for so long, you felt delirious and kind of ... crazy,” Demoe said. “During those times, too, we didn’t have real food. You tried to find as many MREs (meals ready-to-eat) as you could stand. There were just times when there were no comforts at all.”

### *Life Changes*

In just the first 90 days in Iraq, the 957th drove more than 550,000 accident-free miles during transportation missions. While being out on the road, the Soldiers got used to being without basic services. At night, they slept on vehicles, in vehicles or even on the shipping containers they carried. The initial push into Iraq offered units little compared to the contentment of being at home in a soft bed.

Later, though, the 957th would set up a base camp near Balad, Iraq. French said the Soldiers were assigned a 5-acre parcel in the middle of the desert with nothing on it to fortify themselves near what was then known as Logistics Support Area Anaconda. After drawing out a blueprint on a napkin for their new camp, French



Photo from North Dakota National Guard Archives

A Soldier with the 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge) looks on as another unit’s combat vehicle crosses the 250-foot float bridge that he and other 957th Soldiers constructed.



Photo from North Dakota National Guard Archives

Soldiers with the 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge) secure rope lines used for a float bridge overhead anchorage system.

enlisted the help of one of her Soldiers, who was an architect student, to get to work on creating the unit's new home. The Soldiers arranged their tents in a horseshoe with a gathering area in the center of the perimeter.

"The biggest change (during the deployment) was how the living conditions improved. Living conditions were huge for us," Elkin said. "We, more or less, created our own base camp with our own sewage and water system. We (started the mission) living in tents with no air conditioning."

Temperatures in Iraq blazed up to 150 degrees and the unit had just one freezer to keep water and supplies cool. In addition to running their transportation missions, the Soldiers would have to create force-protection defenses for their camp. To do that, the unit filled 15,000 sandbags over ten days to build three-foot barriers and deep mortar pits around each tent. Through exhausting work, the quality of life did improve. Camp upgrades were made by making supply deals with other units. One improvement was made by negotiating with some familiar faces living just next door over a sandy berm. The North Dakota Army National Guard's 142nd Engineer Company offered its services by pouring concrete for cement pads inside the 957th's tents. In return, the 957th used its trucks to haul supplies and equipment for the 142nd.

"They (the Soldiers) built this amazing place to stay," French said. "We had very creative people with us. I think that made us successful in building up the camp."

Soon, Soldiers would enjoy a unit-built Internet café and volleyball court. They engineered showering facilities, built bunk beds made out of loading pallets and constructed a shaded eating area

to hold unit gatherings. The crude amenities helped them further bond as a group.

"We just tried to stay busy and do a lot of social stuff. Towards the end, people got more creature comforts," Demoe said. "When you don't have any technology, it really gets back to the basics of really getting to know people and hanging out."

But, the enemy also was present on the dusty roads and dirty landscapes on which the Soldiers traveled. Transportation became one of the most dangerous missions in Iraq.

"The day we started convoys there were no (enemy) IEDs (improvised explosive devices). And, soon after, there were some that were pop can-size. And they would just flatten the tires on your vehicle," French said. "Then, a week later, it would be a 155 (mm projectile) shell, and it's taking out the axle. Then, it's two 155 (mm) shells and they're killing people."

On July 22, 2003, just three months after arriving in Iraq, Spc. Jon Fettig was killed by an IED during an enemy ambush on a unit convoy. Spc. Brandon Erickson, who also was in the vehicle, lost his right arm to a rocket-propelled grenade. It was just the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom. French said just over 150 U.S. Soldiers had been killed when Fettig lost his life; more than 4,800 would make the ultimate sacrifice in Iraq. And, tragically, about six months later, on Jan. 24, 2004, Staff Sgt. Kenneth Hendrickson and Sgt. Keith Smette also were killed-in-action during a convoy by an IED.

"We hadn't practiced writing letters to (notify families) back home. There was this invincible feeling with that youth. So, it was a surprise," French said. "Getting to know your battle buddy took on a whole new meaning."



Photo by Staff Sgt. Eric W. Jensen, Joint Force Headquarters

Larry Fettig, left, visits with retired Spc. Brandon Erickson Aug. 2 during a reunion for Soldiers and families of the 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge) at Bismarck, North Dakota's historic Buckstop Junction. The unit commemorated the 10-year anniversary of its mobilization to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2003-04. Fettig's son, Spc. Jon Fettig, was killed in action during the deployment on July 22, 2003, following an improvised explosive device and rocket propelled grenade attack. Erickson was in Fettig's vehicle during the attack and lost part of his right arm.

Though shaken, the unit would persevere and take on new missions, including patrols on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. They also would assume their bridge-building mission, constructing a 250-foot bridge over the Euphrates in northern Iraq.

## Sealing Over Time

Ten years has created many changes for the Soldiers of the 957th, as well as their families. While once a young unit filled with college students, many of the Guardsmen have moved on to full-time careers and have created new beginnings with families of their own. Erickson is a picture-perfect example of resiliency after war. Now living in Sacramento, California, he eventually completed law school and is a deputy district attorney for El Dorado County. When he was told the 957th was having a 10-year reunion this summer, he jumped at the chance to reconnect with his brothers- and sisters-in-arms.

"It's been about five or six years since I've been back in North Dakota. It's been a great weekend," Erickson said during the reunion. "I've seen a lot of friends and family and it's been great to be a part of this. There're a lot of good memories, some sad memories, too. I think overall, it is stuff that's helpful for the soul, just to be together and share some good times."

Trevor Hendrickson lost his father, Staff Sgt. Kenneth Hendrickson, the year he graduated from high school. He only had talked to his dad on the phone a handful of times during the 957th's deployment. The reunion, for Trevor, was a way to learn more about his father's service and build upon his memory.

"There are no more memories to make with him, so I like to hear other people's memories (about my dad), because there are going to be no more stories for me," he said. "And it's nice, too, because some of the Soldiers are struggling with it. They just want to talk about it and I like to listen. It's not hard for me to hear those stories, but it might be difficult for the person to tell them."

Larry Fettig, Spc. Jon Fettig's father, continually has wanted to know more about the circumstances surrounding the day his son was killed. In ways, it's helped him to heal. When the 957th

returned from Iraq, the unit's senior noncommissioned officer, retired 1st Sgt. Kevin Remington, came to Larry's house to talk about what had happened. Remington saw the attack first-hand. He received the Silver Star Medal for extracting Fettig and Erickson from their destroyed vehicle while taking small-arms fire from enemy combatants.

"That helped me get some closure. It's not quite as raw every year, but it's still there," Fettig said. "It (sharing stories) helps fill in the blanks. It can in no way bring Jon back, but it helps you understand what all went on that day (when Jon was killed) and how brave all of them were."

While the 957th Soldiers met in Bismarck Aug. 1-3, 2014, the Guardsmen reconnected not only with one another, but also with the families of their fallen warriors. The unit also has lost members since it returned home. In those ten years, one Soldier succumbed to cancer and three more died by suicide. Their loved ones also came to meet with the extended 957th family. During the final day of the event, attendees gathered outside the Memorial to the Fallen in the Global War on Terrorism, which is a state landmark that honors North Dakota's service members who have been killed-in-action. Unit members and family spoke about the Soldiers they had lost, embraced one another and wiped away tears. French said the event created an environment for attendees to continue to work through their hardships, but also to establish relationships with others that they can rely on for support.

"Many people, over the years, have had their challenges with reintegration, back into their families and communities. For many, the stories that were shared (during the reunion) were uplifting," French said. "Some haven't talked about these things for years, and it was a free and safe place for them to talk. It brought out the best in people and reminded us why we still are so close to one another."

In war, the 957th relied on its camaraderie to conquer adversity and carry on through sometimes difficult days. Years later, those special bonds still are in place for the unit's Soldiers and their families. They intend to preserve that closeness well beyond the years to come. ■



Photo by Spc. Zachary Schuster, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

Derek Lennick, a former member of the 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge) embraces Tanya Olson at a memorial ceremony held Aug. 3 to remember the fallen Soldiers who served during the 957th's 2003-04 deployment. Tanya is the widow of Master Sgt. Daniel Olson, who died by suicide.

# COHESION AND COMPLEXITY

## UNIT PLACES EMPHASIS ON TEAMWORK DURING ELABORATE MISSIONS

Story and Photos by Sgt. Jennifer Joyce,  
116th Public Affairs Detachment



Sgt. Austyn Haider, a survey team member with the 81st Civil Support Team, conducts survey operations Aug. 18 in a school building used for training exercises near Tacoma, Washington.

Every North Dakota National Guard unit is unique. Each is established to provide specific capabilities and specially-trained to provide ready resources for state, national and international missions when called upon. While all Soldiers and Airmen are required to uphold the same set of standards and meet the same or similar training requirements, the differences and individuality among Soldiers and Airmen are pieces that attribute to a unit's cohesion. That bond is a part of what makes a unit successful in its missions, especially for one group of North Dakota Guardsmen, that serves as a unique and specialized asset for North Dakota.

The Bismarck, North Dakota-based 81st Civil Support Team (CST) is a unit comprised of 22 Soldiers and Airmen. Their mission, along with the three Airmen with the 119th Wing, is to work with first responders and incident commanders in the event of a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) threat. Because they serve as a resource for local and state communities, it is imperative that the entire unit remains trained and ready.

Recently, the 81st Civil Support Team (CST) and Air Guard counterparts completed a weeklong, multi-state training event,

which included four separate exercises held in Washington and Oregon. The unit worked jointly with Oregon, South Dakota and Washington National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to complete a series of markedly different training scenarios designed to test each team's ability to perform mission-essential functions in response to CBRN threats.

The 81st CST is required to complete at least one multi-state mission annually in addition to mandatory monthly training. This year's mission tested all of the unit's core functions, which include CBRN reconnaissance, survey and decontamination, operations and communications and medical and science operations.

"The main objective of conducting joint exercises with other CSTs is to improve our operational capability and foster relationships with first responders," said Sgt. 1st Class Phil Engmann, the unit's operations noncommissioned officer. "Joint exercises are a way for us to become familiar with other units' tactics, techniques and procedures to improve our joint operational efficiency."

This year, the involved CSTs assessed a biological threat in a Tacoma-area elementary school and a nuclear threat at Satsop, an unfinished nuclear power plant, which was never operational, near

Elma, Washington. They also responded to a simulated radiological threat in a remote area near Richland, Washington, and a classified threat at the Umatilla Army Depot in Oregon. Each threat was simulated, however, real isotopes were used to produce an identifiable, but relatively safe, amount of radiation in the remote area near Richland. In such instances, all participants (even those not participating in the exercise) must wear a watch-like wrist device, which measures radiation exposure. The device is then sent in for testing to ensure that nobody was exposed to an unsafe amount of radiation.

Each CST took turns serving as an observation element for a particular exercise during the week. This allowed teams to be evaluated by their peers and to compare methods that may not otherwise be considered. Additionally, it provided an opportunity for newer CST members to build and enhance working relationships with team members from other states.

“I was looking forward to this exercise for the learning experience,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Handegard, who recently joined the 81st CST as an information systems operator/analyst. “It’s a good opportunity to meet CST members from other states who serve in the same role as me and to see how they operate in their roles.”

Each state and territory has at least one CST with each team being comprised of 22 Army and Air National Guard members. The first ten CSTs were established in 2001 after President Bill Clinton announced in 1998 that the Department of Defense would — in an effort to address the threat of chemical and biological terrorism — assemble teams to support state and local authorities during weapons of mass destruction events.

North Dakota’s 81st CST was established in 2005. Eleven of the original 22 members continue to serve with the unit.

“The original 11 personnel help maintain a continuity of standards and practices that have led to our CST’s success,” Engmann said. “Also, at least six of the original personnel have held other positions on the team, which lends to the depth of knowledge and experience as a whole.”

Even the unit veterans, though, agree that the cumulative military training and experience among all team members contribute to the 81st CST’s continued excellence.

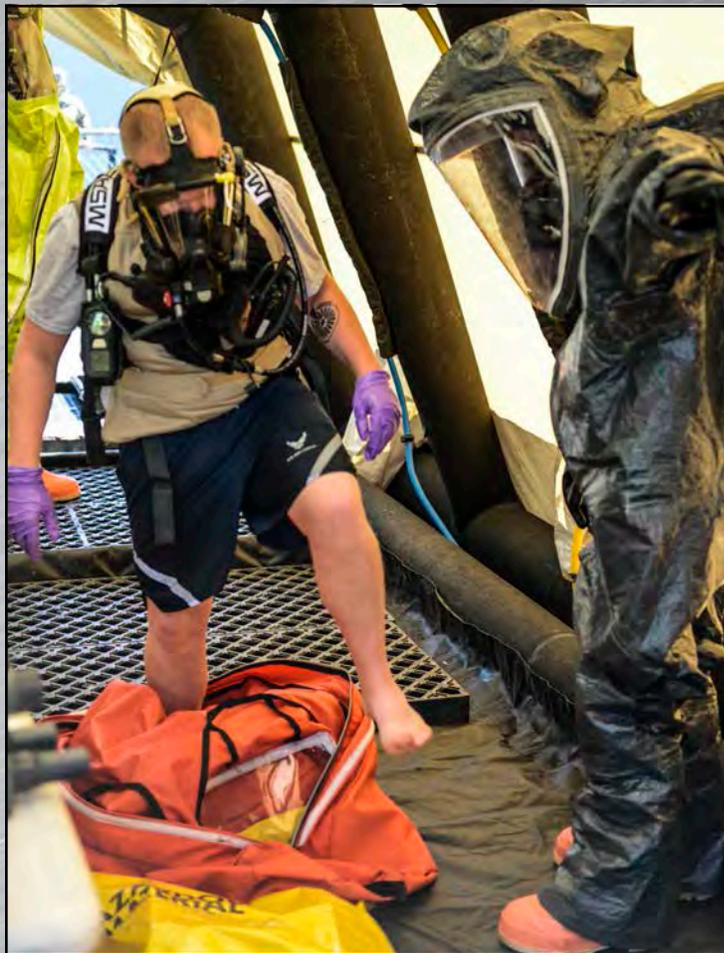
“Aside from each member’s tenure with the team, we all come from various military backgrounds and our combined experience really contributes to our effectiveness as a unit,” said Sgt. 1st Class Brian Messmer, information systems operator/analyst for the 81st CST. “Like many units, we have a mix of perspectives, personalities and traits among our group. Together, we form a very well-trained and cohesive unit. We form a family.”

81st CST Commander Lt. Col. Steven Hedrick is among the newest members of the unit. He said that, as a leader, he is anxious to learn from the unit and to share his experience as well.

“The team, collectively, has a ton of experience and education,” he said. “They are generous with their time and knowledge, and I learn something new from them every day. What I really hope to do is give the members of the team the freedom and encouragement to think about themselves and their mission in different ways and to let them be creative and confident in a complex, and sometimes dangerous, job.” ■



**Sgt. 1st Class Jesse Handegard, information systems operator/analyst with the 81st CST, conducts communications operations Aug. 22, during a training exercise at the Umatilla Army Depot in Oregon.**



**Tech. Sgt. Mike Carnahan, emergency management instructor with the 119th Wing, goes through a decontamination process Aug. 18 after conducting survey operations in a school building used for training exercises near Tacoma, Washington.**

# BEST WARRIOR

TOP N.D. SOLDIERS COMPETE FOR TITLE

By Spc. Cassandra Simonton,  
116th Public Affairs Detachment



Photo by Staff Sgt. Sara Marchus, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

**Spc. Javier Ortiz, of the 817th Engineer Company (Sapper), and his sponsor, Sgt. Ryan Lindberg, also with the 817th, run to the finish line during the Best Warrior Competition's mystery event, a five-mile road march. During the march, each Soldier carried about 25 pounds of personal gear, or "ruck," while stopping at various locations to complete a number of military challenges.**

The "Best Warriors" in the North Dakota Army National Guard were named last month after a three-day competition Aug. 22-24 tested the military skill and knowledge of 18 of the state's top Soldiers at Camp Grafton Training Center near Devils Lake, North Dakota.

Staff Sgt. Jason Dittus, of Bismarck, North Dakota, and a member of the 818th Engineer Company, was the winner of this year's state-level Best Warrior Competition (BWC) in the noncommissioned officer category. In the enlisted category, Spc. David Hathaway, of Mobridge, South Dakota, and a member of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 188th Air

Defense Artillery Regiment, took top honors.

Soldiers representing units throughout the N.D. Army National Guard battled to earn the "Best Warrior" title during the state-level competition after distinguishing themselves as the top competitors within the Guard's major commands. During the competition at Camp Grafton, they contended with a range of events designed to gauge their competence and performances in Army tasks and evaluations.

Command Sgt. Maj. Harley Schwind, the state command sergeant major for the N.D. National Guard, said the BWC allows Soldiers to compete against the best in the state and to

hone their skills in a competitive environment. He said this year's event was one of the highest-scoring competitions in recent years, with many Soldiers achieving more than 600 points on their evaluations through the event's scoring system, which allows a maximum score of 645.

"I saw more drive and determination in this year's competitors than I have in the past, which is evident by their high scores," Schwind said. "It's not just the individual Soldiers who win during this competition. Their units win as well. This instills pride in (the competitors) that they can take with them outside of the state and onto further competitions."

North Dakota's BWC presents an array of challenges for its competitors, beginning with a physical fitness test, and later, facing a board of sergeants major to test their knowledge on military topics. Soldiers then go on to qualify at Camp Grafton's firing range using M-16 rifles, and demonstrate their knowledge of "warrior tasks." These are skills that all Soldiers are required to review annually, such as using a Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System, or SINCGARS, and conducting building-clearing operations at Camp Grafton's Military Operations on Urban Terrain site.

"The competition tests a number of Soldier skills," said 68th Troop Command's Command Sgt. Maj. Guy Boschee. "Soldiers distinguish themselves in a variety of situations. They should come away from this with a better sense of who they are and what they can accomplish, as well as friendship and camaraderie amongst their fellow Soldiers."

Each Soldier is assigned a "sponsor" from their units to guide them through the tasks and to assist them in preparing for the competition. Sgt. Ryan Lindberg and Sgt. 1st Class D.J. Rohrich, both of the 817th Engineer Company (Sapper), sponsored two Soldiers from his unit. He was the winner of the state-level BWC in 2011. He later went on to win the regional and national competitions for the National Guard and qualified

to compete in the "All-Army" BWC.

"My mentor was a huge part of getting to where I was in the competition," he said. "Seeing what he did for me, I'm trying to do exactly the same thing for (my Soldiers). This competition is really about how hard you can push yourself to succeed. I like helping the other Soldiers, because they reflect upon your unit, as a whole. The (Soldiers) who are following after me and other noncommissioned officers will be the ones leading the units in the future."

The BWC culminated with a "mystery event," which was held Sunday morning. This year's event was a five-mile road march around Camp Grafton. Each Soldier had to carry about 25 pounds of personal gear while stopping at various locations to complete a number of military challenges. Some of the tasks included rope climbing, employing (dummy) hand grenades, a tire flip exercise and the medical task of treating an amputee.

"It felt good doing all the training and preparation, coming to the event and being able to perform well," Dittus said. "I had one event that I scored zero points in. It's just being able to brush that off and still being able to do your best ... just do what a Soldier does, to keep going at it and get the job done."

The winners of the state-level BWC now will go on to compete in the regional competition. If the North Dakota Soldiers take top honors during the regional competition, they can go on to compete in the All-Guard Competition with the best Guardsmen from across the nation.

Should the winners of the state-level BWC not be able to compete, the runners-up from this year's competition will take their place. This year, Staff Sgt. Travis Sand, of Devils Lake, North Dakota, and a member of the 191st Military Police Company, was the runner-up in the noncommissioned officer category. Spc. Javier Ortiz, of Fargo, North Dakota, and a member of the 817th Engineer Company (Sapper), took the runner-up position in the enlisted category. ■



Staff Sgt. Jason Dittus placed first in the noncommissioned officer category in the 2014 North Dakota National Guard Best Warrior Competition.



Spc. David Hathaway placed first in the enlisted category during the 2014 North Dakota National Guard Best Warrior Competition.



# REPRESENTING THE FORCE

## UPARs Share Insights from Ghana Mission

By N.D. National Guard Public Affairs Staff

“Somebody is going to try to tell our story. It ought to be us,” said Airman 1st Class JulieAnn Bischof, as she stood in front of 32 members of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) at Burma Camp in Accra, Ghana, last month.

Bischof, a personnel specialist for the North Dakota National Guard’s 119th Wing in Fargo, North Dakota, was one of three N.D. Guard members who traveled to Ghana to host a Unit Public Affairs Representative (UPAR) workshop. The State Partnership Program-sponsored workshop was designed to assist the

GAF’s Directorate of Public Relations in training UPARs who can assist in telling the GAF story.

A unit public affairs representative, or UPAR, is a command-designated Soldier who coordinates and functions as a liaison between a unit, a unit commander and the designated, supporting Public Affairs Office (PAO). UPARs serve closely with battalion commanders as lower-level subject matter experts on public affairs plans and policies on embedding media, engaging local media and coordinating media opportunities at the battalion level. UPARs

act as an extension of the PAO, and they assist by accomplishing internal command information objectives and external stakeholder communication goals.

This workshop was designed to introduce — more fully — the UPAR program concept and assist in the development and implementation of a UPAR program for the Ghanaian military.

Soldiers 2nd Lt. Eric Jungels, deputy public information officer for the North Dakota National Guard, and Sgt. Nicole Frohlich, domestic operations specialist for the Bismarck-based Joint Force



Contributed photo

From left, Solomon Ahinakwa and Blair Atorsu Stephen, members of the Ghanaian Armed Forces, discuss stakeholder communications with Airman 1st Class JulieAnn Bischof, personnel specialist for the 119th Wing, and Sgt. Nichole Frohlich, domestic operations specialist for Bismarck-based Joint Force Headquarters, Aug. 12 at Burma Camp in Accra, Ghana. Frohlich and Bischof visited Ghana to present information during a UPAR workshop.



Contributed photo

2nd Lt. Eric Jungels, Frohlich and Bischof, sat down for an interview with Ghanaian Armed Forces TV's Morning Delight host, Eunice Kaney, at Burma Camp in Accra, Ghana last month. The Soldiers took part in the video production training as one of the final components of a Unit Public Affairs Representative workshop.

Headquarters, co-facilitated the workshop with Bischof.

"It was, overall, a huge success," said Frohlich, who led a presentation on news writing at Burma Camp. "The workshop was very well-received by all who attended, as well as higher officials. Concepts of the North Dakota UPAR program were annotated by Ghanaian Armed Forces personnel with the intention of refining and implementing a program that will meet their communication goals and objectives."

Frohlich and Bischof are volunteer UPARs for their respective units in North Dakota. They provide support to the N.D. National Guard's PAO by providing timely information and photographs for news releases and N.D. Guardian magazine stories.

UPARs play a vital role in representing military units and sharing their units' stories with the outside world. Frohlich said it was an honor to visit Ghana and to shed light on the fact that all service

members have the ability to help communicate mission successes, operational challenges and the experiences of a military member.

"It really was such an incredible experience that I will be talking about for years to come," Frohlich said. "They will eventually have a great UPAR program in Ghana."

Jungels, who led discussions about social media and operational security, said the workshop was designed as a "hands-on" opportunity to develop and create a UPAR program that would meet the needs of the GAF and the GAF PAO.

"The first few days of the workshop allowed us, as facilitators, to share information and insights garnered through the North Dakota National Guard's UPAR program," he said. "Then, the workshop turned toward the goals and objectives of the GAF, and we spent time discussing how the GAF might build and begin refining the first UPAR program in Ghana."

Jungels said that, in the end, the three

N.D. National Guard members walked away with a number of new communication ideas.

"By replacing lecture with discussion, the workshop format gave us a chance to exchange ideas and make use of the vast amount of experience in the room," Jungels said. "Our UPAR program in North Dakota will also benefit from our time in Ghana."

Bischof, who has been a member of the Air National Guard for just two years, found her first expedition overseas to be very enriching. She said she was glad to share insights about her experience as a UPAR for the 119th Wing.

"Telling our story doesn't have to be difficult," Bischof said. "People want to know what we're up to. They're already listening. We just have to represent our units — and share." ■

*Sgt. Nichole Frohlich and Airman 1st Class JulieAnn Bischof contributed to this story.*

# GUARDIAN Snapshots

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Photo by Spc. Jessica Bilquist, 141st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade

Retired Sgt. 1st Class Kelly Elkin participates in the annual N.D. National Guard Human Resources Office Golf Tournament Aug. 28 in Bismarck, North Dakota.

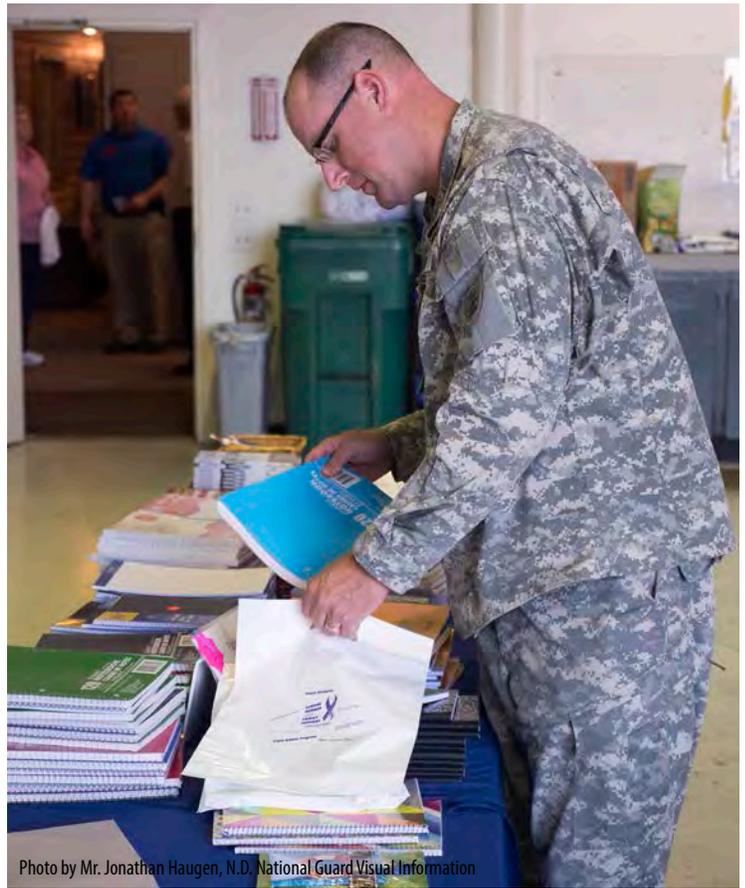


Photo by Mr. Jonathan Haugen, N.D. National Guard Visual Information

Maj. Mark Fischer receives free school supplies during the Bismarck Military Service Center open house held last month. Supplies were available for service members from all U.S. military branches.



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David Lipp, 119th Wing

Senior Master Sgt. Belinda Reep, of the 119th Medical Group, presents the United States flag to her grandfather Robert Schoenecker, who is a World War II U.S. Navy veteran, during her retirement ceremony Aug. 28 at the North Dakota Air National Guard Base in Fargo, North Dakota. Reep, who was presented the flag during the ceremony, gave it to her grandfather in honor of his service.

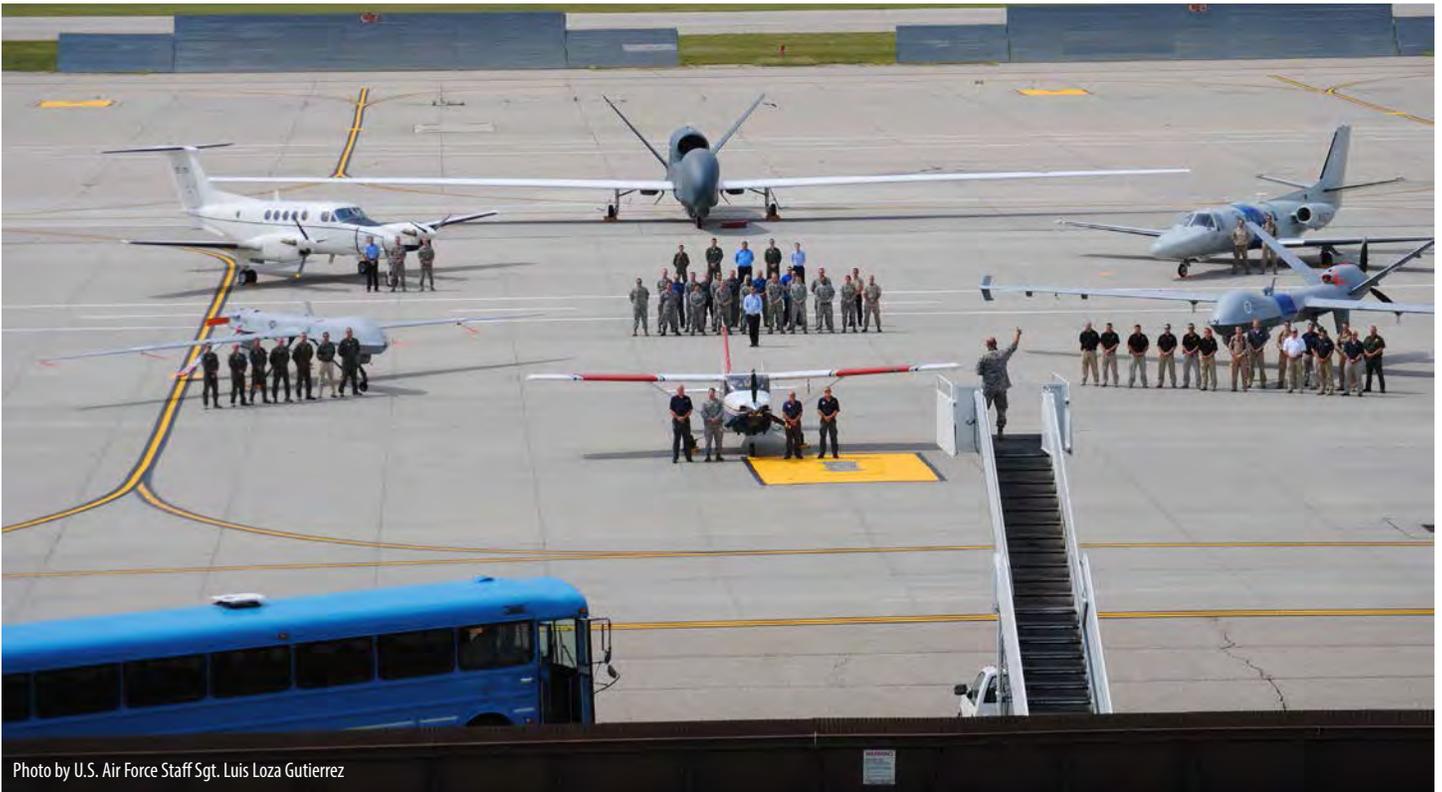


Photo by U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Luis Loza Gutierrez

Senior Master Sgt. David Lipp signals he got the right shot by giving a thumb's up to members of multiple federal organizations posing for a group photo featuring both manned and unmanned aircraft from their respective organizations Aug. 20 of the flightline at Grand Forks Air Force Base. Lipp, of the N.D. Air National Guard's 119th Wing, was asked to take the group photo as a way of commemorating the historic achievement of the first ever Unmanned Aircraft Systems Airspace Integration Joint Test in August.



Photo by Chief Warrant Officer 4 Kiel Skager, Joint Force Headquarters

North Dakota Deputy Adjutant General Brig. Gen. Alan Dohrmann accepts a \$5,000 donation Aug. 7 from Bob and Paulette Heringer, of Bob's Fireworks, on behalf of the North Dakota Veterans Cemetery.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Brett Miller, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

Patricia Omlid is "pinned" with captain rank by her mother, Marcia, during her promotion ceremony Aug. 8 at the Raymond J. Bohn Armory in Bismarck, North Dakota.



Photo by Spc. Zachary Schuster, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

Senior Airman Kaitlyn Resmen, of the 114th Civil Engineer Squadron, of South Dakota, and Senior Airman Alex Arsenault and Airman 1st Class Molly Sargent, of the 158th Civil Engineer Squadron, of Vermont, work with a GPS-enabled survey grader as part of a training exercise held last month at the North Dakota Air National Guard Base in Fargo, North Dakota. The exercise, which trained Airmen in tools used to make precise land measurements, was part of a multi-state training operation involving Airmen from North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont and Pennsylvania.



Photo by Sgt. Jennifer Joyce, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

A Bismarck, North Dakota-area student attempts a pedal cart obstacle course while wearing “fatal vision” goggles, which simulate alcohol impairment, Sep. 6 as part of the North Dakota Department of Transportation’s “Driving Skills for Life” event at the North Dakota National Guard’s Army Aviation Facility in Bismarck.



Photo by Sgt. Jennifer Joyce, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

Tracy Bridwell is “pinned” with lieutenant colonel rank by her son, Hauser, as her husband, Chief Warrant Officer 4 Travis Bridwell, looks on during her promotion ceremony Sep. 2 at the Raymond J. Bohn Armory in Bismarck, North Dakota.

## Share your photos!

Submit your photos to be considered for inclusion in the N.D. Guardian!

Email high-resolution photos to Sgt. Jennifer Joyce, N.D. Guardian editor, at [jennifer.m.joyce2.mil@mail.mil](mailto:jennifer.m.joyce2.mil@mail.mil).



## Engineer Unit Removed from Federal Alert Status

After having received an alert in June for a potential mobilization to Afghanistan, about 150 Soldiers learned they are no longer scheduled to serve overseas. The Dickinson-based 816th Engineer Company (Horizontal), which has a detachment in Mott, was removed from federal alert status upon notification from the Department of the Army.

"I am proud of all the hard work and effort of the Soldiers of the 816th Engineer Company in preparing for this overseas deployment," said Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, North Dakota adjutant general. "Their mission was cancelled when the Army determined their capabilities were no longer needed. We also thank their families and employers for their outstanding support during the unit's preparation process."

The Soldiers were provided with contacts and resources for dealing with potential issues that may have been created by the mission's cancellation. The information answered questions about healthcare eligibility, delayed college enrollment options and availability of assistance from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

While uncommon, this is not the first time that a North Dakota Army National Guard unit has been removed from alert status. In 2013, the Jamestown-based 817th Engineer Company (Sapper) was notified to prepare for a deployment to Afghanistan that was later cancelled. Similarly, the 835th Engineer Team (Asphalt) and 897th Engineer Team (Concrete), both units from Carrington, also were removed from alert status in 2011. The Bismarck-based 814th Medical Company (Area Support) was anticipated to mobi-

lize in 2006 and later removed from alert status. The unit was called up for active-duty service early this year.

The North Dakota National Guard continues to support missions at home and around the globe. About 30 Soldiers with the 814th Medical Company (Area Support) continue to serve in Afghanistan after nearly half of the unit returned to North Dakota early this month and last month. Another 40 Soldiers with the Bismarck-based Company C, 2nd Battalion, 285th Aviation Regiment are completing a yearlong international peacekeeping mission in Kosovo that began last October. Fifteen Airmen with the Minot-based 219th Security Forces Squadron have been serving in Southwest Asia since March in support of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM). ■

## Community Honors Soldiers Leaving for Yearlong Deployment

Family members, friends and supporters of the North Dakota Army National Guard's 231st Brigade Support Battalion Logistical Support Element (BSB LSE) filled the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Fargo, North Dakota, Sep. 7. They attended to send off 15 Soldiers with the



Photo by Sgt. Jennifer Joyce, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

**Sgt. 1st Class Nick Kane, of Horace, North Dakota, holds his daughter, Harper, during the 231st Brigade Support Battalion Logistical Support Element send-off ceremony Sep. 8 at the Armed Forces Reserve Center in Fargo, North Dakota. Kane is one of 15 Soldiers leaving for a yearlong logistical support mission overseas.**

unit, who will be leaving for a yearlong logistical support mission.

"This mission is important to the safety and security of our nation, and the members of the 231st Brigade Support Battalion are up to the task of completing this mission with great skill and success," said Gov. Jack Dalrymple, who spoke at the event. "Today, we honor these heroes as they prepare to deploy and vow to support them and their families throughout this deployment and when they return home. We are proud of these patriots and grateful for their selfless and courageous service to our state and nation."

The Soldiers will provide logistical support to units in the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) area of responsibility, where they will manage supply, maintenance, transportation and cargo movement activities.

"This is an important mission for the North Dakota National Guard in that CENTCOM is dedicated to bringing peace and stability to a region of the world that still is unstable," said Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, North Dakota adjutant general. "CENTCOM's role and the 231st BSB LSE's support of that role are of significant importance to the safety and security of our nation. We know our National Guard Soldiers will succeed in

providing critical logistical support over the next year."

CENTCOM is one of nine unified commands in the U.S. military. Its area of responsibility covers the "central" area of the globe and consists of 20 countries: Afghanistan, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, United Arab Emirates, Uzbekistan and Yemen.

In preparation for their mission overseas, the Soldiers have completed a number of pre-certification trainings and tests. This will be the first deployment for the 231st BSB LSE, which will be replacing an active-duty Navy unit in CENTCOM's area of responsibility.

Capt. Nicolette Daschendorf, of Bismarck, North Dakota, commands the unit and 1st Sgt. Kevin Magstadt, of Bismarck, is the senior enlisted leader. The unit is headquartered in Fargo, although the deploying Soldiers hail from five North Dakota and Minnesota cities. Additionally, the deploying group includes a pair of brothers, Sgt. 1st Class Nick Kane, of Horace, and Sgt. Tom Kane, of Fargo. ■

# Chaplains' Corner:

## You're Never Alone When Tackling Life's Challenges

By Chaplain (Capt.) Yakob Makonnen,  
141st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade

One day, I received a call from a man about a stray animal. This particular North Dakotan was concerned about a cat that had been walking around his back yard, as he was convinced that the cat had mange. I looked up and down the block for this cat, but to no avail. After I left, I received a call from another resident who said the cat was

now standing around on her back patio. Well ... I was off again. When I arrived, I found the mangy-looking cat on her back patio. How do I catch it and what do I do with it on a Sunday night? I could have used one of those pet capture nooses, but instead I used (drumroll ...) hotdogs — baiting him into a kennel from the inside of the home through the patio door! After rescuing the cat, suggestions were given to me about what to do with the cat, one of which was that the cat should be put down.

As you and I are faced with new situations or challenges in life, there are always different perspectives on how we view that given situation (or what we should do next). For example, three professionals came across what is now known to be the Grand Canyon. Viewing the Grand Canyon, the painter said, "I'd love to paint this beautiful scene!" The photographer said, "Wow, this is a great time to take a powerful photo!" Then, the farmer shouted, "This would be a terrible place to lose a cow." We laugh at the farmer's response, but the reality is we all look at situations differently. Based on the circumstances, some of us will view a situation or challenge positively and some a bit more negatively.

Concerning the "challenge" of what to do with the cat ... I decided to pray. I said out loud, "Lord, help me to get this cat back where it belongs." When the vet opened the next day, the woman who works there once a week called me and said this was her cat that had run away from home six months ago in the winter! Later that day, the woman and her daughter brought a card to me thanking me for bringing the cat back. The card was designed, handwritten and colored by the elated little girl. I later realized that this cat was going house to house, and to each back door, trying to get back home. With God's help, I was very happy to take part in bringing this pet back to its rightful home.

So, how do you deal with life's challenges and joys? How do you process what to do next? What gives you perspective? As a person of faith, prayer is important for me in every situation that I face. I believe in a wonderful, creative and sustaining God who gives me perspective and helps me respond to all that I face each day. When I am presented with a dilemma, a concern or a positive life event, I pray for wisdom, strength and guidance. Prayer is fun, and it puts the pressure back on God to provide the best solution. I trust Him with the responsibility, and trust me when I say, "He can handle it."

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." — Philippians 4:6 ■



Contributed Photo

Chaplain Makonnen greets attendees July 20 during the 1st Battalion, 188th Air Defense Artillery Freedom Salute ceremony in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

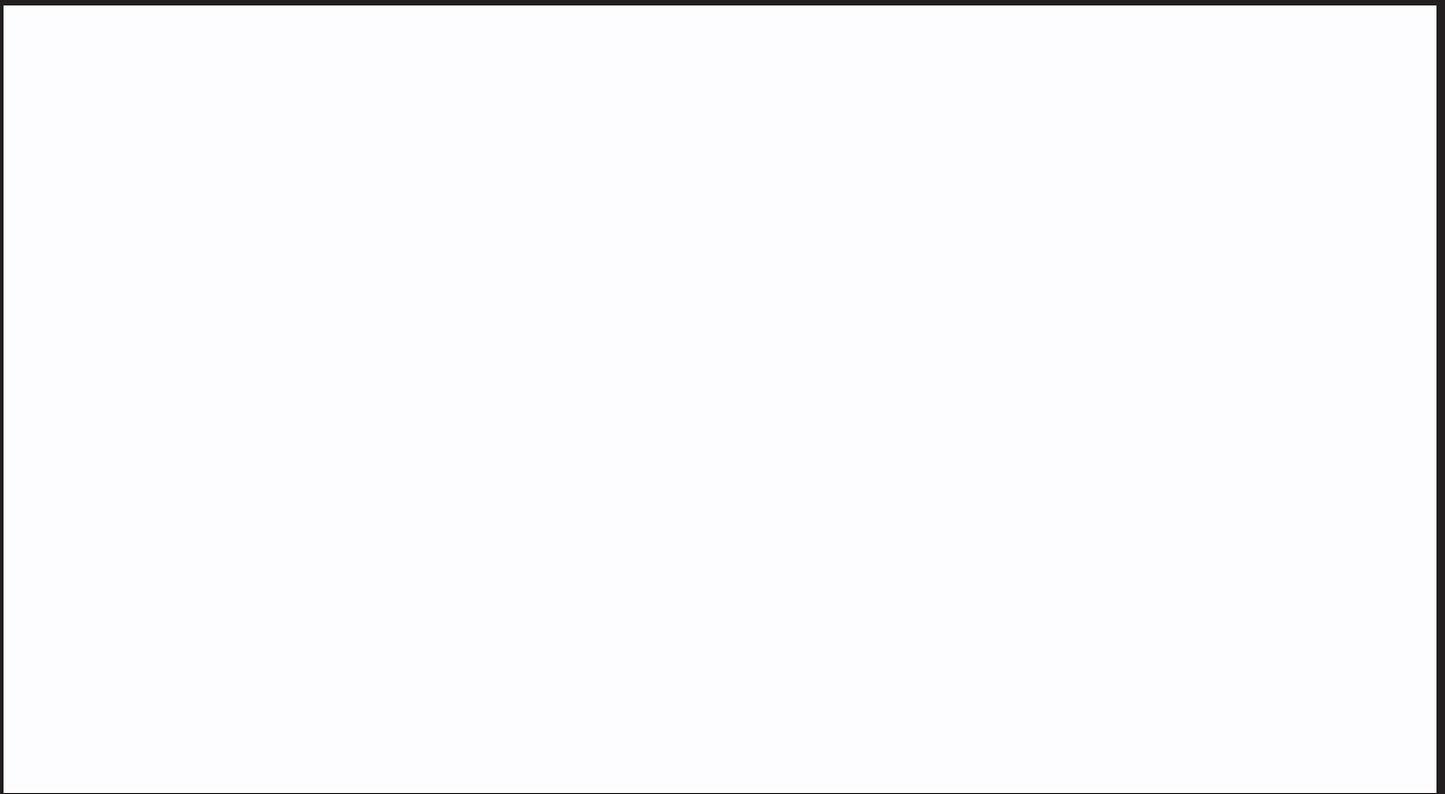


Photo from North Dakota National Guard Archives

**Soldiers with the 957th Engineer Company (Multi-Role Bridge) prepare a 250-foot float bridge used for vehicle traffic in Iraq during the unit's 2003-04 deployment.**