



*The Louisiana
Citizen Soldier*

“Preserving Our Legacy”

VOL. 3 No. 1

OCTOBER 2002

*Louisiana’s
National
Guardsmen train
with soldiers
from the
Belizean Defence
Force and the
German Army
during AT 02.*

The official publication of the Louisiana National Guard



1088th Combat Engineer Battalion puts AVLB to use during AT

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 1, 102nd PAD

PEASON RIDGE – Combat engineers don’t worry about a bridge being out. They carry their own.

The Armored Vehicle Launched Bridge looks like a tank and works like a bridge bristling with machine guns. It can span a 50-foot crevasse, ford small rivers and creeks and provide a pathway for tanks, other equipment and troops to get over tank ditches and other obstructions.

“It’s a versatile piece of equipment,” said Spc. Eric Howard, 22, of Lafayette. Howard has been in the Louisiana Army National Guard for five years with Charlie Co. of the 1088th Combat Engineer Battalion in Napoleonville. The battalion is headquartered in Plaquemine.

The AVLB span folds into three sections and looks like the letter Z sitting on top of the track. Hydraulics extend the Z out into a straight line to span the stream, tank ditch or other obstacle.

Howard said he is studying physical education and psychology at UL Lafayette and wants to be a coach.

Private 1st Class Dustin Mabile, 20, of Napoleonville, also belongs to Charlie Co. in his hometown. He said the July training was his first AT.

“I got in the Guard partly for the college money and partly because I always wanted to do something in the military and learn some discipline and a good work ethic,” he said.



Private 1st Class Dustin Mabile of the 1088th Combat Engineer Battalion with an AVLB during AT 02.

Mabile said besides working on the AVLB, he has also received training on the company’s bulldozers, five-ton cargo trucks and heavy equipment maintenance trailers. “We do a lot of cross-training,” he said.

Mabile said he plans to start college in January studying criminal justice at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux.

108th Cav unit: a real family atmosphere

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 1, 102nd PAD

PEASON RIDGE – Being in an elite cavalry unit doesn’t mean you automatically “doggone” Stetson and spurs. You have to earn them.

Spc. Shelton Winn of the 108th Cav from Natchitoches, part of the 256th Louisiana Army National Guard, said he always wanted to be a tankerman and he always wanted to be in the Cav unit.

“I live in Dallas and there are some good National Guard units I could be they’re not the Cav,” Winn said. “I started out with the 108th when I lived in Louisiana that long drive because it’s the Cav. We’re like a family. A family that likes to kick ass.”

Like all of the other brigade units for AT 2002 at Fort Polk, the Cav made a lot of power and equipment because some troops trained in Germany earlier this year and they were worth of gunnery at the Fort Polk firing ranges.

“To earn the right to wear the spurs, you have to pass gunnery on the firing range or better, you have to excel at PT, and you have to qualify on the 9mm pistol,” Winn said. Stetson and spurs are part of the proud tradition of the cavalry in the Old West.

But instead of riding horses into battle, the modern Cav is mounted on M1 Abrams Fighting Vehicles, and in the Air Cav, Blackhawk helicopters.

Winn, 25, said he’s been in the Guard almost six years and drives 18-wheelers in civilian life. “We have a transportation section in the Cav too, along with mortar platoons, scouts. The Cav is like a self-contained unit because we’re usually out ahead of the other units.

Scouts do reconnaissance as the advance eyes and ears of the brigade and help blaze a trail for the main body of troops to follow, led by the Cav. “We punch a hole for everybody else to go through,” Winn said.

“We are the hunter-killers,” he said, patting the turret of his 120mm smooth bore main cannon. “This is the biggest, baddest, fastest and deadliest piece of armor on the battlefield, plus it’s quiet when we don’t want you to know we’re there and it has thermal sighting so we can see you at night.”

Winn said the M1A1 is “63 tons of destructive firepower. You don’t often see them in the air, but I got one airborne at NTC in the California desert last year, coming up over a berm. It was a real kick.”



Spec. Shelton Winn with the 108th Cav on his M1A1 Abrams tank.

He said that, governed down, the tank can do 45 mph, which is impressive for a piece of equipment that size, “but ungoverned, I won’t say exactly how fast, but let’s just say it’s interstate traffic speed.”



1088th Engineer Battalion digs at Fort Polk



B Co 1088th Land movers work diligently at the Pearson Ridge dig site, located at Fort Polk.

**By Staff Sgt. Shannon Kleinschmit
Det. 2, 102nd MPAD**

Fort Polk -- Mud and dust go hand in hand for the members of B Company, 1088th Engineer Battalion when working at the Dig Site located at Pearson Ridge, an area designated for engineer field operations at Fort Polk.

As land movers and track vehicles fill the air with the sound of revving engines and clacking tracks, Specialist Brandon Chenevert, a 19 year old 12B, Combat Engineer, drinks deeply from his issue canteen. Today, a fairly humid and overcast Friday has no effect on the joy the Chenevert expresses as he wipes his mouth and climbs into his Volcano. The Volcano, by appearance, is a very large pick-up truck on tracks with suspicious tube-like containers affixed to the cargo area of it's bed. The purpose of the Volcano, in short, is to deploy a hasty mine field.

Chenevert has been with the 1088th for two years. He says, "I kinda joined for the school, but now...well...it's just fun." Although he claims the Louisiana Army National Guard is just fun, Chenevert is a student at Baton Rouge, Community College. He presently resides in Livonia, Louisiana.

Mortarmen, medic lament: 'Give us coffee!'

**By Sgt. Destiny Smith
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD**

FORT POLK—After four days in the field, the only concerns the mortarmen and the medic had were the weather and the lack of coffee.

"We haven't had coffee since we've been out here!" several soldiers of the 156th Armor lamented. The civilian soldiers are stationed at Peason Ridge, over 20 miles from Fort Polk, for their annual training (AT) exercise.

The soldiers seemed eager to have company and attention as they continued with their training missions.

"I gave a first aid class to the unit yesterday," said Spec. Jeremiah Sherwin, a medic attached to the 156th. Sherwin is a Haughton native and a graduate of the Youth Challenge Program. When he is not training with the Guard, he is a student worker at LSU Medical Center in Shreveport, and he will attend Northwestern University in the fall to major in nursing.

Spec. Michael Flentge named his Forward Direction Control vehicle "Snack River Base." This odd name was suggested by Sgt. Jack Anderson, a check computer and fire direction center controller, after seeing a cartoon on the Internet.

Flentge is from Shreveport and he is a full-time student from Louisiana State University at Shreveport majoring in criminal justice. Anderson originates from Vivian and he is a deputy sheriff for Caddo

Parish.

Flentge said that his job is to receive calls from scouts and forward observers with grid coordinates. Flentge, in turn, gives info to the firing mortarmen and they lay down cover fire toward the area.

Anderson pointed in the direction of the mortar and explained its purpose.

"It can be used to target equipment and people," he said. "The good thing about the mortar rounds is that it can reach areas that other weapons cannot. The rounds can get behind hills and other dead space to neutralize targets."

The last four days in the field have been filled with common task training and military occupation specialty related training on the mortars. A few of the soldiers have gotten qualified on the vehicles in the past few days.

One of these soldiers was Private 1st Class Qualan Jefferson. He is a full-time student at Southern University at Shreveport majoring in radiology. He is also a Shreveport native.

"I am just enjoying training out here with my friends," he said.

For morale, welfare and recreation, these troops call home from cell phones, watch television and listen to the radio. Spec. Glenn Kimble has a transformer that can convert electricity out in the field.

"I give them the equipment to charge their cell phones, and they let me use

them," he said.

Kimble is originally from Niceville, Fla., but he moved down with his family to take care of inlaws. In the civilian world, Kimble is a security guard for Southern Research Company. His civilian job is similar to his job during AT because he does plenty of paperwork, pulls guard duty, carries a weapon, even though it is not the same weapon and he works in a high security area.

Spc. Christopher James, also from Shreveport, works for the Conco Food Service in the Information Technology department. He said that his civilian job is exactly like this one, but without the mortar tube and "these guys."

"The only difference is that I have to wear these clothes, and I cannot take a shower here," he joked.

Spec. Brad Elam of Monticello, Ark. joined the Guard because he is attending school in the state. He is studying Industrial Instrumentation and he can relate his job as a mortarman to his civilian job because he is always troubleshooting.

Spec. Richard Wolfe of Haughton is a full-time student at Louisiana Tech majoring in Pre-Med. He said, "the Guard helps me to be more organized as a civilian."

Aside from the constant rain and humidity, the bugs, lack of port-o-potties, lack of coffee and no showers, they seem optimistic. And their training goals are being met with excellence.



Bravo Co., 199th FSB, digs fighting positions

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

FORT POLK – Private 1st Class Paul Fleer of Alexandria works as a land surveyor in civilian life, but said he didn't need his Global Positioning System at Fort Polk to dig a fighting position.

"I'm usually working with a GPS and some other fairly sophisticated equipment, both in my civilian job and out here, but all I need right now is a pick and shovel," he said.

Fleer and fellow Private 1st Class Justin Perdue of Bravo Co., 199th Support Battalion hacked and spaded the red dirt under a thick carpet of pine needles to dig a shallow defensive position in the forest floor as part of annual training with the 256th Infantry Brigade of the Louisiana Army National Guard.

Perdue, a 6-footer from Rosepine, lay down and stretched himself out in the position to gauge



Private 1st Class Justin Perdue and Private 1st Class Paul Fleer, B Co. 199th FSB dig a fighting position

its length. It was almost long enough, but his boot heels stuck up out of the back of the trough.

Staff Sgt. Dustin Gallipeau of Pineville, the acting section sergeant and a full-time Guardsman at the North Fort Polk MATES, or maintenance

shop, walked over and offered some friendly advice.

"That position needs to be at least 18 inches deep, because if your heels are sticking up, they might get shot off," Gallipeau said.

"Perdue raised a pick ax high over his head and brought it down hard on a stubborn pine root the size of a man's forearm. "Deeper we go," he said, grinning at Gallipeau. "I sure don't want to get my heels shot off." He said he works at the South Fort Polk commissary full time. "My father was career Army, 20 years active duty," he said.

Fleer, who's been in the Guard 18 months, said he joined for the free college tuition "and to do something for my country as well as myself." He is studying criminal justice at LSU-Alexandria and said his Guard job in fire control systems repairs includes work on primary tank sights, Bradley TOW missile sights and howitzer sight leveling.

199th fuelers keep things rolling during AT' 02

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

FORT POLK -- Support troops know that without beans and bullets, a modern Army cannot fight the battle and win the war.

An important aspect of the support mission is the fuel that keeps everything from M1A1 tanks to Humvees rolling.

Spec. Cody James and Spec. Wyatt Gilmore-Loving of the 199th Support Battalion, headquartered in Alexandria, spent their annual training at Fort Polk making sure the fighting vehicles stayed in the fight.

James, 23, of Quitman, near Jonesboro, said he has been in the Army National Guard for four and a half years. "I got in so I could go to college, but I haven't gotten around to my schooling yet. I'm planning on it, though."

He said he has stayed busy in his construc-

tion job. "I build houses for a living," he said.

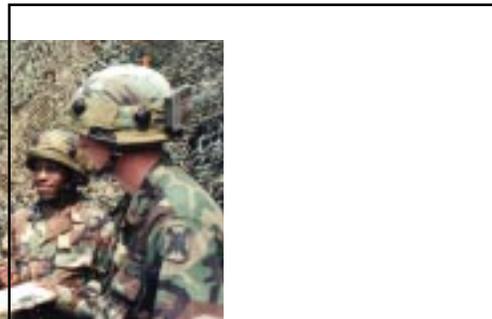
The petroleum specialist said he is part of a military family. His active duty brother, Sgt. Cullen James, is an editor at the Fort Polk post newspaper, he said.

As James pumped a Humvee full of diesel, Gilmore-Loving, 23, kept track of the gallons, got the ID number off the vehicle being serviced and talked about his marketing studies at Grambling State University, near Ruston.

He also mentioned the difference between the weather in Louisiana and in his native Washington State.

"I'm from Vancouver, Wash., and it's quite a change coming down here from what it was like there," he said.

"One thing that's the same is that there's a lot of rain, but besides that, the heat down here is hard to get used to for awhile," he said. Gilmore-



Master Sgt. John Sullivan, Det 1, 102nd Pad, with Spec. Wyatt Gilmore-Loving and Spec. Cody James fuelers with 199th FSB.

Loving said he came to Louisiana "because Grambling is the first school that called to accept me and I always wondered what it was like here. I enjoy Louisiana now. It's got a great Guard tradition."

199th SB soldiers receive awards

By Sgt. Kevin Cowan
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK – Under the camouflage netting used to hide the tactical operations center for the 199th Support Battalion, eight soldiers received awards Monday for their performance during this year's annual training.

The eight soldiers from various units within the 199th Support Battalion are Pvt. Casey Benton, Private 1st Class Albert Rogers, Spec. Wyatt Gilmore-Loving, Spec. Melissa Perkins, Spec. Martinique Swift, Cpl. John Fannin, Sgt. Kristian Jackson and Staff Sgt. Kenneth Boyd.

Brig. Gen. John Basilica, commander of the 256th presented each soldier with the Army Achievement Award.

These awards, sometimes called 'impact' awards, were given out to recognize the soldiers who had performed their duties beyond measure, and were given out during annual training to emphasize the job well done.

The 199th Support Battalion, headquartered in Alexandria, conducted training this year in support of the 256th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized) out of Lafayette. During this training, soldiers perform a wide range of duties from supply specialist and administrative specialist to signal support.

Last year, the 199th traveled to Fort Irwin, Calif. to support the 256th during their rotation at the National Training Center.



2/156th performs recovery on Bradleys

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 1, 102nd PAD

NORTHFORT POLK—Sgt. Benjy Gabriel was going to lift the skirt of a Bradley Fighting Vehicle, but thought better of it.

“That doesn’t sound too good, come to think of it,” Gabriel said while performing recovery operations after two weeks of annual training. “Another name for it is the armor plating. I’m lifting the armor plating.”

Gabriel, 27, or Rayne, and Spc. Billy May, 23, of Centerville circled the Bradley loosening large bolts that held the armor plating in place. “We have to lift it out of the way so we can clean underneath it,” May said.

They were among hundreds of 256th Infantry Brigade soldiers cleaning equipment, washing vehicles, doing maintenance and other recovery chores to wrap up annual training at this Vernon Parish Army post.

Gabriel, a Bradley commander and 10-year veteran of the Guard, is a land surveyor for the



Sgt. Benjy Gabriel and Spec. May performing Bradley Recovery maintenance.

C.H. Fenstermaker firm in civilian life.

He said he followed his brother into the National Guard and decided to make it a part-time career. “It’s a family tradition,” he said. Gabriel said he soon plans to resume criminal justice studies at UL Lafayette.

May, who’s been in the Guard five years, is a deputy sheriff in St. Mary Parish under Sheriff David Naquin. He and Gabriel, both of Bravo Co., 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry in New Iberia, finished

taking the bolts off the Bradley. “Ready to lift the skirt?” May asked.

“Armor plating,” Gabriel replied.

Nearby, Spec. Ray Luquette, 18, took care of shaking out damp, sandy sleeping bags and hanging them up to dry. The medic for the headquarters company of 2nd Battalion in Abbeville said he trained with the scout platoon from Detachment 1 of headquarters company in Jeanerette during annual training.

“We trained on an air assault obstacle course, did four night missions, zone reconnaissance and a lot of other stuff,” Luquette said. “It’s always fun to go with the scouts. They train hard and have a good time.”

“I always wanted to do some kind of military service, and the free college tuition was a nice bonus,” he said.

Luquette said he shares an apartment in Lafayette with his first cousin, Blake Luquette, an up-and-coming country and western singer. Spc. Luquette is studying industrial technology at UL Lafayette.

199th Mobile Kitchen Trailer crews serve hundreds in the field

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 1, 102nd PAD

FORT POLK – As often as not, the dining atmosphere during the annual training of the 256th Infantry Brigade has nothing to do with a mess hall on post. Instead, troops are fed al fresco, or out in the field.

One of the most efficient ways modern armies accomplish the task is with MKTs, or Mobile Kitchen Trailers that look like pop-up campers when they pull up to a feeding site.

In less than an hour, a four-soldier crew can have the MKT completely rigged up and ready to start cooking. “We have done it in half an hour from the time we get on site until we fire up the burners,” said Staff Sgt. Cynthia Williams, 39, a 22-year veteran of the Guard. “We don’t mess around.”

Williams and her team served nearly 800 meals a day during the July annual training period, half at breakfast and half at dinner, with troops issued a Meal Ready to Eat or Jimmy Dean meal for lunch.

Williams is a section sergeant at the Colfax armory, Det. 1 of the headquarters company of the 199th Forward Support Battalion, based in Alexandria. She also works full time in the food service industry.

Staff Sgt. Mae Smith, 42, a 15-year Guard veteran, is a Winnfield native who lives in Houston and works as a nursing assistant there. She said the MKT is a big improve-



ment over cooking at a mess facility, putting the food in serving containers and bringing it to the field, which is still done in certain situations.

“It’s a lot more sanitary and convenient for us to cook it right here on site and serve it to the soldiers fresh and hot,” she said.

Spec. Dwayne Harrison, 21, of the headquarters company of 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry in Lake Charles, said the cooks did a great job in the field during annual training. “They served consistently good meals day in and day out and stayed cheerful about it, which isn’t always easy in a field environment,” he said.

Harrison said he works with at-risk youth in civilian life at the Boys & Girls Village on U.S. 90 in Lake Charles. He also is studying business administration at McNeese State University.

A fellow 3rd Battalion soldier, Spc. Derrick Trotter, 27, has been in the Guard four years after serving three years on active duty as a cook here at Fort Polk. The Lake Charles resident, who works on an MKT in the field, said he also cooks for a living in civilian life, at the Delta Downs thoroughbred horseracing track.

Trotter and Private 1st Class Christopher Ducote, also of 3rd Battalion headquarters company in Lake Charles, were busy cleaning up after breakfast and getting ready to start preparing the evening meal.

Ducote, 19, said he’s been in the Guard two years and plans to soon start nursing school at McNeese.

BRADLEY TANK DRIVER BROODS OVER BROKEN FUEL PUMP

By Staff Sgt. Kleinschmit
Det. 2, 102nd MPAD

Fort Polk -- "I hate this thing sometimes, when it runs it's the greatest thing, but most of the time it just breaks down. It really gets on my nerves," says Adam Hussong, a 20 year old Specialist of B Company 3/156 Mechanized Infantry Battalion Louisiana National Guard.

As mechanics drain the fuel tank to repair a broken fuel pump, Adam drinks from his canteen atop his assigned Bradley.

It is about 95 degrees on Range 40 by 10 o'clock a.m. and for Adam, this will be his second annual training with the LAARNG. Adam dismounts the Bradley and grabs a toolbox from the ground.

"Well, I'd better be giving these guys a hand if I want to be rolling any time soon," Adam said.

Adam has been an 11M, Bradley Operator for just under three years, and presently works as a route manager for Interstate Batteries in his hometown of Oakdale, Louisiana.



Spec. Hussong awaits repairs in the cabin of his assigned Bradley.

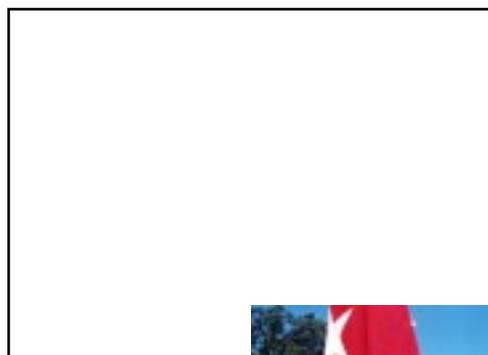
Expert Infantry Badges awarded to 9 LANG soldiers

By Staff Sgt. Shannon Kleinschmit
Det. 2/102nd MPAD, LANG

Fort Polk -- It is a hot and humid Thursday morning, as an even warmer breeze ruffles through the colors of the American Flag on the ceremony grounds of North Fort Polk. The ceremony's peak will award nine soldiers with the Expert Infantry Badge.

These soldiers represent various units within the Louisiana Army National Guard. Capt. Thomas Friloux, Commander of B Company, 3/156th Mechanized Infantry Battalion and Cadre Commander for the Expert Infantry Badge Course said, "the soldiers awarded the Expert Infantry Badge have demonstrated their expertise, technical competence, and tactical proficiency in the Infantry craft." Friloux attended the EIB course at Fort Polk in 1997 with the 2509th Infantry Brigade, under Active Duty Standards.

These nine soldiers receiving the EIB will be the first Louisiana Army National Guardsman to attend an EIB course given by the LANG in 15 years. Usually soldiers must attend the EIB courses at the availability of Active Duty vacan-



Nine soldiers from various units of the Louisiana National Guard receive their Expert Infantry Badges at North Fort Polk.

cies, which has given Guardsman and Reservists alike, a backseat to try to attain a very honored and accomplished award. Under the Command of Brig. Gen. John P. Basilica, of the 256th Infantry Brigade, this course is now available at the state level for Louisiana Army Guardsman. General Basilica said during the ceremony, "Without the work of Capt. Friloux, this would not have happened," at which time he awarded Friloux with the Brigade Coin.

Staff Sgt. Rufus Jones, age 29, of B Company, 3rd of the 156th Mechanized Infantry Battalion, served as the Cadre Non-Commissioned Officer-In-Charge, of the EIB course, and Captain Friloux's right hand man. Sergeant Jones says, "It's rewarding for us to offer the course and an honor for me to be chosen to help train these soldiers. We started out with nine candidates during phase two and ended with nine candidates, which says the cadre did an excellent job."

Jones, a resident of Pineville attended the EIB course under active duty standards in the same class as Friloux. Jones adds, "The standards for the EIB are no different for Guardsman as they are for active duty, the only difference is the time it takes to go through the course.

"In the guard, all the prerequisites are met on hills over a five month period and actual testing occurs in ten days during Annual Training whereas on active duty the prerequisites and full course testing occurs in two weeks. Five months prior to the EIB course here, there were 60 applicants. The nine that attended the ten day course did an excellent job," Friloux said.

Corporal considers team safety, comfort

By Staff Sgt. Shannon Kleinschmit
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

Fort Polk -- Sweat drips from the tip of his nose as he heaves a toolbox from an upper shelf, to the lower portion of his small workspace. In fact his face is covered with sweat, yet he furiously organizes containers and tightens straps in the small confines of the small metal cabin. There is no air conditioner in this vehicle, and you surely won't find an ashtray or a nifty little holder for your iced cappuccino. The vehicle is an M577 Armored Personnel Carrier fit for Medical Operations. On metal tracks designed for function ... not comfort.

Corporal Jeffrey Lejune, a 21 year old, from Church Point is a 91P/X-ray technician and 91W/Medic, has been awake since four-thirty in morning. By the time it's only 10 a.m. the humidity and 90 degree temperatures challenge Lejune as he carries out the tasks of insuring that all of his teams supplies are secure.

"It's not a very comfortable ride for the guy up top in the turret, so I'm just clearing the area plus you don't things flying around," he said.

Lejune manages a small store for custom audio installation during his regular working hours but says "I don't mind the change of pace, plus, the Guard will help me when I go to college." Another annual training exercise has kicked off for Lejune, who has been with C Company, 199th Forward Support Battalion for a little over four years.



Landreneau visits troops during Annual Training

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

FORT POLK – Maj. Gen. Bennett Landreneau’s “Huey” helicopter came throb-
bing over the tree-line right on time, the blade a
blur as the big green bird stirred up a swirl of
rust-colored dust and skittering pine needles
on Range 40 north of Pitkin.

The general and his entourage bounded
out of the craft in a bustle of briefcases and
black berets that quickly gave way to Kevlar
helmets to visit the troops of the 3rd Battalion,
156th Infantry doing Bradley Fighting Vehicle
training.



Maj. Gen. Bennett Landreneau got a briefing
from Lt. Col. Thomas Beron, current 3/156th
commander.

Sept. 11 on the minds of Guardsmen at Fort Polk

By Master Sgt. John Sullivan
and Spec. Erin Robicheaux
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK, La. — Wiping the sweat
from his face with a small cloth, Sgt. Rachard
Powell said he couldn’t help think about
Sept. 11.

Powell, 22, and a civilian construction
worker in his civilian job, is a member of the
Louisiana National Guard’s Co. B, 199th
Support Battalion from Alexandria. The
young sergeant and his unit are at this
sprawling Central Louisiana Army post for
their two weeks of annual training.

The training this year, though, has a
different ring to it. “I think it’s always there,”
Powell said. “You always are thinking about
what happened.”

On Sept. 11, 2001, two hijacked jetliners
hit and destroyed the World Trade Center
twin towers in New York.

A third hijacked airliner hit hit the
Pentagon while the passengers of a fourth
hijacked plane fought back and caused the

Lt. Col. Thomas Beron, battalion
commander, and battalion Command Sgt. Maj.
Tommy Caillier welcomed the state adjutant and
led a dusty convoy of Humvees to a lunch of
Meals Ready to Eat and a briefing under a
brace of lightning-struck slash pines.

Landreneau opened his MRE with a knife
and said, “Hey, I got Popeye’s fried chicken.”

Bradleys clattered by on a nearby trail
manned by helmeted gunners standing halfway
out of hatches wearing wide-lensed goggles
and Camel-Bak drinking water pouches.

Capt. Skip Toomey, battalion S-3, briefed
the general on the tri-pronged approach to
training, including deliberate attacks, movement
to contact and live fire exercises.

“We will also be doing a TOW missile
live fire, mortars and AT-4 tank killers with close
air support,” Toomey said.

Beron said he was on the ground with
about half of his usual force. “I’ve got 304 of
my 593 people here. Some went to Germany
earlier in the year, some are at school, so there’s
a lot to do for the people who are here,” he said.

“We are being aggressive while keeping
soldier safety in mind,” Beron said. He said the
troops were “doing everything dry first, getting
it right before they go w also working on plans to
space in Lake Charles.

In brief remarks, I

plane to crash in rural Pennsylvania.

A mechanic with the Guard, Powell said
that once the training got under way, he
would be looking at days that could stretch
anywhere from 18 to 20 hours. His job and
the job of his team is to fix broken vehicles.

“Normally, they will tow the vehicles to
us, but if they can’t be towed, then we will go
to the vehicle,” Rachard said.

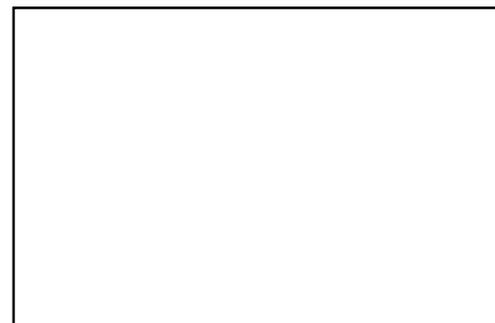
“Everything now is a little different,”
Powell said. “I think that is safe to say.”

Echoing his thoughts were Sgt.
Tawanda Coleman, a supervisor of a small
team that was digging fighting positions on
the edge of their area.

After taking her turn at digging, the
young mother of a 6-year-old girl, said she
had two years of active duty and had only
been in the Louisiana National Guard for
about a year.

“I feel very proud since 9-11 to be in
the Guard,” Coleman said. “I know that I am
doing something by being here.”

With her on the digging detail was Sgt.



Lt. Col. Thomas Beron, 3/156th
commander, and HHC 1st Sgt. Lumus discuss
the current mission during the general’s visit.

recruitment, retention and the work of liaison
officers in the Guard mission of emergency
preparedness during hurricane season.

“Our commitment to the governor is to
deploy liaison people within 30 minutes of
being called,” he said. Liaison officers work
with parish government, civil defense and
others.

“All of our liaisons need to be coordi-
nated on clear, specific missions,” he said.

Landreneau pulled aside Charlie Co. 1st
Sgt. Lumus St. Julien III, congratulated him on a
job well done with his troops from the Crowley
and Jennings areas, and gave him a handful of
“attaboy” commemorative coins to give to his
most outstanding soldiers.

Kendrick Humphrey, a veteran of four years
of active duty at Fort Hood, Texas, and in
South Korea.

This annual training exercise marks the
second year he’s been in the Louisiana
National Guard.

Humphrey said he has three relatives in
the active duty Army now: a brother at Fort
Riley, Kansas; and two cousins, one at Fort
Hood and the other at Fort Bragg, N.C.

“It’s always there,” Humphrey said of
Sept. 11. “You always think about it, espe-
cially if you are in uniform.”

Also taking a break from digging was
Spec. Jason Karamales, 22, a resident of
Leesville. He said he entered the Guard for its
educational benefits.

Karamales said that the events of Sept.
11 haven’t really changed his opinion of
military service.

“I think no matter what your opinion is,
what happened will always be there in the
back of your mind,” Rachard said.

“We all think about it.”

Engineers practice on new weapons systems

**By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD**

PEASON RIDGE – A suitcase that deploys 21 high-explosive mines that right themselves if they tip over. An office trash can that feels the vibrations of a tank coming and takes it out automatically through a pre-set missile.

These aren't new ideas dreamed up by the gadget-minded secret agent Q to give to James Bond in the 007 movies.

They are weapons systems now being used by the 1088th Combat Engineer Battalion of the Louisiana Army National Guard's 256th Infantry Brigade.

1st Lt. Chad Bordelon and 2nd Lt. Jeffery Adams helped train battalion troops on the systems during July in this training area north of Fort Polk.

The Modular Pack Mine System, or MOPMS, is pronounced "mop 'ems" by the troops, "because that's what it does, it mops up," said Bordelon. "It comes in what looks like a large suitcase, but this is a suitcase that packs a wallop instead of a change of clothes. It's a fast, easy way to deploy a minefield."

Bordelon, 32, had a special rapport with the enlisted soldiers. "That's because I was enlisted for 12 years, then I got out and decided to get back



1st Lt. Jeffrey Adams brief troops on use of the Hornet and Volcano system. (Blue suitcase is MPMS mine system).

in as an officer two years ago, so I went to OCS," he said. "I decided if I was going to go ahead and do my 20 years, I'd finish it up as an officer." He has a computer science degree from UL Lafayette.

Adams said the MOPMS deploys 17 anti-tank mines and four anti-personnel mines in an area 50 meters by 35 meters. "The mines have little fins on them, leaf springs they're called, that stand the mine up straight if it happens to land on its side," he said. "It's a pretty sophisticated device." The mines are deployed by remote control.

Adams said the mines will self-destruct after four hours unless they're re-armed for up to a 12-hour stretch.



Belizean Defense Forces train at Fort Polk

**By Staff Sgt. Shannon Kleinschmit
Det. 2, 102nd MPAD**

Fort Polk -- It is 10 a.m., Monday morning of July 8th. The air on Range 24 is hot, thick and humid. Agile fingers insert three rounds into the thirty round magazine before he looks down range at his fellow soldier check a target at the zero range. Second Lieutenant Ian Cunha is a 25 year old, Platoon Commander of the Belize Defense Forces' Echo Company, Light Infantry Unit. A resident of Belmopan,

Belize, the nations capital, he has served with the BDF for a little over four years. He says, "It is very exciting to train with the US Army. The training is good and motivating."

What training Ian refers to is the introduction to the new M16A4 that will be added to his unit's arsenal. Ian will return to Belize, with the new knowledge of the weapon and train others. Besides his nametape, Ian's left arm displays a Ranger tab, and a Special Forces patch. He comments on his training

Bordelon, who lives in Marksville, said the Hornet is a small, cylindrical "robot," about the size of R2-D2 in the Star Wars movies, that looks like an office trash can but feels and hears heavy armor through vibrations and sound.

"It can be programmed to a certain sensitivity so it doesn't go off when a Humvee passes," he said. "The Hornet automatically searches for, detects, recognizes, engages and destroys heavy armor, like tanks."

Adams said the tube sits on four splayed "feet" that feel the ground for the vibrations and evaluate the distance to the target. An armor-piercing projectile is then launched to destroy the objective. Adams, 22, a four-year veteran of the Guard, is studying mechanical engineering at LSU in Baton Rouge.

Staff Sgt. Jimmy Cernich, 27, said he works with the Volcano, an older weapons system that nonetheless does its deadly job well. The multiple tubes mounted on the back of a tracked vehicle look like a giant block of fireworks or a case of bottled soft drinks with the caps pointed up and launch mines "to deploy a hasty minefield," Cernich said.

The Prairieville native and platoon sergeant, 27, said he has been in the Guard four years and plans to make it a career.

plainly, "Fort Benning was good training, but training doesn't measure the quality of a leader."

Ian and his unit will be looking forward to two weeks of training before Ian will be reunited with his family at his home in Belmopan. He says, "My family wasn't to joyful when I first joined the BDF, but they're proud now." The Belize Forces arrived at Fort Polk on the 6th of July and will train until the 19th of July.

A Private's Impression

Fort Polk -- Private Fitzroy Dionicio, of the Belize Defense Forces, E Company, Light Infantry Unit, lays next to his fellow soldier, who is making adjustments on a newly introduced M16A4. He says, "It's hot here, just like Belize. I am excited to be here and am pleased with the training." Fitzroy is one of 37 BDF Soldiers who was chosen to attend the M16A4 introduction.

A resident of Dangria, Belize, Fitzroy is 31 years old and a father of three. "My wife and family are very pleased that I'm with the BDF. I've been with them for 11 years and will probably stay a longer."

As a communications and signal specialist for an infantry unit Fitzroy said, "I'm very impressed with the new M16A4, mainly ... it's new. Right now our most of our unit has the M16A2, but some of us still have to carry the of M16A1. It is a good thing for us to have this new weapon." The training has been conducted by LANG's Sgt. 1st Class Kris Comeaux, of HHC 2/156 Infantry Battalion. Fitzroy says, "Sergeant First Class Comeaux is a very good trainer, he is motivated and very helpful."

for publication are encouraged. Units or individuals who wish to submit articles to **The Louisiana Citizen Soldier** should mail submissions to:
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The Louisiana

Citizen Soldier

Vol. 1 No. 1

October 2002

This publication is an authorized publication of the Louisiana Army and Air National Guard. Its contents do not necessarily reflect the official views of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army or the Louisiana National Guard.

The Louisiana Citizen Soldier is published quarterly by the Louisiana National Guard Public Affairs Office and distributed without charge to members of the Louisiana National Guard.

The next issue of **The Louisiana Citizen Soldier** will be published in December 2000. Questions concerning content and articles



Medics deal with real world injuries, too

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2 102nd PAD

FORT POLK – The combat medics of Charlie Co., 199th Support Battalion in St. Martinville train hard on their specialty skills, but sometimes they have “real-world” injuries to deal with.

“We always keep the IV fluid bags handy because we never know when we’ll need to hook up a soldier who’s suffering a heat injury,” said Private 1st Class Josh Vidrine, 22, of Sulphur.

Vidrine said in the 95-degree summer heat and high humidity of Fort Polk, it is important for soldiers to remember to drink plenty of water all day long. “It should be a continuous process in this heat,” he said. “Just keep sipping.”

Vidrine said he graduated from Advanced Individual Training in May and is doing his first annual training, but is already employed as a medic



Private 1st Class. Samantha Robichaux and Private 1st Class Josh Vidrine medics from C. Co 199th FSB.

with Acadian Ambulance Service in Calcasieu Parish.

“I’m going to McNeese State University in the fall to do some physician assistant prerequisite

work, then I hope to get accepted at LSU-Shreveport in their PA program,” Vidrine said. “Part of the reason I joined the Guard is for the college benefits and to get in shape, but I also wanted to give something back to the community.”

He said besides dehydration, other common real world injuries are sprained ankles, insect bites and reactions to poison ivy or other plants.

Spec. Samantha Robichaux, 26, of Chauvin, got into the Guard in August 2000 after serving in the Navy, where she was a medical administrative technician.

“After getting off active duty, I had three more years to serve to fulfill my requirement, so I got into the National Guard,” she said. Robichaux said she is a full-time nursing student at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux.

“I start my clinical studies at a hospital next semester,” she said. “I’m still leaning my job out here I the field.”

Admin. specialist detours duties to for pressing issues

By Staff Sgt. Shannon Kleinschmit
Det. 2/102nd MPAD, LANG

Fort Polk -- It is an overcast Saturday morning outside the temporary headquarters for HHC 256th Infantry Brigade, S-1. Inside the building fluorescent lights overhead blare the bluish white glare as several soldiers shuffle what appears to be a chaos of paper work along a long wooden table.

Private 1st Class Kanika Dixon, a 22-year-old 71L, admin specialist, rubs the back of her neck, as if to relieve tension, “I’ve been doing alot of personnel file work, such as insurance work and death gratuity ... it’ not really my job

but there’s so much work within those areas that needs to be done my help is needed..”

Dixon says she joined the National Guard for the College benefits. She has one year left before completing her Bachelors Degree in Criminal Justice at the University of Louisiana, Lafayette. Dixon works for the Limited clothing stores in sales while living with her mother and sister. She says “When I went to basic training it broke my mothers heart, she’s supportive when I’m at but when ever I’m gone for an extended period of time, she’s not so supportive. I don’t mind leaving since I know it comes with the territory, plus this is my first annual training and I’m having some fun.”

Members of 2/156th ‘go home’ for Annual Training

By Master Sgt. John Sullivan
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK – For the members of the Louisiana National Guard’s 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry, coming to this Central Louisiana Army base was like coming home.

In fact, it was coming home for the members of the Louisiana National Guard’s 256th Infantry Brigade.

Lt. Col. Jacques Thibodeaux, commander of the 2nd Battalion, explained that the unit deployed to the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., in 2001. The year before that the unit was at Fort Hood, Texas.

“It’s good to be back on our home turf,” Thibodeaux said. “This is our home. We know where all the trails are and where all the little turns are. This is our home ground.”

Thibodeaux said his unit was getting back to the basics of soldiering this year during the two weeks of annual training.

The South Louisiana Guardsmen are tackling a series of exercises that lets them practice the art of mechanized warfare at the platoon level, hesaid.

“If we can’t maneuver at the platoon leverl, then we can’t maneuver at the company level and if our companies can’t maneuver, then we can’t operate as a battalion,” Thibodeaux said.

“What they are practicing out there is one of the single most important elements that a unit like ours can train on.”

The 2nd Battalion is a mechanized infantry battalion, which means its troops ride into battle onboard Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicles and then dismount their vehicles to fight as traditional infantrymen.

“This is the basics of mechanized warfare,” Thibodeaux said. “Shoot, move and communicate. If you can’t do those three things, then you don’t stand much of a chance.”

The training will culminate during the second week of training when the Guardsmen will take part in a platoon-size exercise.

“This year has been very good for the 2nd Battalion,” Thibodeaux said. “In addition to us being back on home turf, we have also qualified all 44 of our Bradley crews -- quite an accomplishment.”

The events of Sept. 11 have helped add a little more determination to the Guardsmen as they go about their day-to-day training, the lieutenant colonel said.

He said the members of the 2nd Battalion were called to active duty immediately after the terrorist attacks in New York City, Washington D.C. and Pennsylvania. The Guardsmen were part of the security teams that were deployed to airports across Louisiana as part of the nationwide effort to fight

terrorism.

Sitting near a large, refueling tanker, Spec. Jason McCurtis of Franklin, La., said his fellow Guardsmen seemed to be working a little harder and taking things a little more serious now.

“The training may not be as intense as it was last year when we were at the NTC,” McCurtis said. “But I think everyone is working just a little harder this year.”

The images of that date are still fresh in his mind, he said. “It’s there in my mind,” McCurtis said. “Sept. 11 is always there. I think I am a little more serious this year because of it.”

Taking a break at the maintenance truck, Spec. Eric Bown of Delcambre said no one talks about Sept. 11, but it’s always there.

“You put on the uniform and you think about what you might have to do to defend this country,” Bown said. “Yeah, it’s always right there.”

Thibodeaux said he has watched his troops training under the hot, Central Louisiana sun and has noticed a difference this year as opposed to other years.

“I think everyone out here is thinking about what happened on Sept. 11,” Thibodeaux said.

“I think people are taking the training a little more seriously and are bit more determined to be the very best because they know they may be called upon to defend this country.”



Belize troops train with 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

FORT POLK—Lt. Col Jacques Thibodeaux, commander of the 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry of the 256th Infantry Brigade, addressed 37 members of the Belize Defense Force as some of them prepared to fire an AT-4 anti-tank weapon.

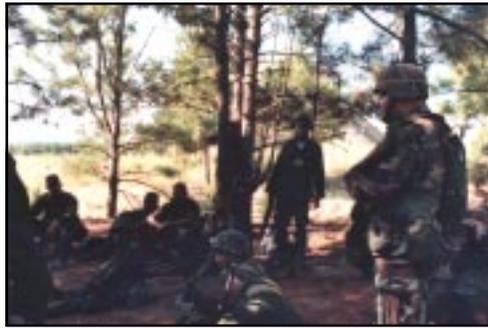
Thibodeaux noticed several of the soldiers had large grins on their faces as they addressed each other in their native tongue during July training at Fort Polk.

“Are any of you guys making fun of me or talking bad about me in Creole or Spanish?” Thibodeaux said.

“Not yet, sir,” answered one of the soldiers. The rest of the BDF troops broke into laughter, along with Thibodeaux.

“These guys are having a good time out here while they train hard, and that’s good,” the commander said. “That’s what we want them to do. This is a pilot program where a platoon of their guys come over here and a platoon of our guys, a mixture of Alpha, Bravo and Charlie companies, are training in Belize,” he said.

Master Sgt. Kevin Bliss of the 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry of the Texas National Guard, working



2/156th Commander Lt. Col. Jacques Thibodeaux talks with Belize troops preparing to fire the AT-4 antitank weapon.

as a trainer with the 2nd Battalion, showed the BDF troops the basics of firing the AT-4, then told the platoon to drink water in the 95-degree heat.

“Drink water!” the entire platoon shouted at once. Everyone upended a canteen.

Twenty-one 2nd Battalion soldiers went to Belize while the BDF troops are here, according to Command Sgt. Maj. Homer Stelly. “Our guys are focusing on light infantry training over there, while the BDF troops here are getting a mixture of weapons qualification, lane training and simulator training.”



2ND Battalion holds Family Day event

By Master Sgt. John A. Sullivan
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK—Russell Spencer had a chance to do something Saturday that most 10-year-olds can only dream about.

Russell had a chance to sit in the driver’s seat of a Bradley Infantry Fighting Vehicle. He had that opportunity Saturday during a combined family day-boss lift by the Louisiana National Guard’s 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry. His father is a member of the unit which is at Fort Polk for AT.

The 10-year-old and about 30 family members along with 46 members of the Youth Challenge Program from Carville, La., were brought to Fort Polk to watch the 2nd Battalion guardsmen practice their combat skills.

It’s more than just a chance to get out of the house for the family members, said Lt. Col. Jacques Thibodeaux, commander of the 2nd Battalion and a resident of Thibodaux.

“This is tremendous for our soldiers to see their families come out here and see what they do,” Thibodeaux said. “For the families, it clears up the mystery about what their loved ones do when they put on that uniform.”

He added that having the Youth Challenge Program cadets along for the trip was an added bonus for the soldiers of the 2nd Battalion.

“Maybe some of them will see the work that these soldiers are doing and maybe take that path that leads them here,” Thibodeaux said. “It might

help put them on the right path.”

Taking a long, winding road to one of the training sites, families and cadets had a chance to see the Bradley crews fire practice TOW missiles at targets more than 2,000 meters away. TOW is the premier anti-tank weapon used by the U.S. military and the abbreviation stands for Tube-fire, Optically-tracked, Wire-guided anti-tank missile.

Earlier in the day, one of the crews had a chance to fire a TOW with a live warhead. Thibodeaux said each practice round costs \$9,000 and a live TOW costs \$48,000.

“The last time the battalion had a chance to fire a live TOW round was six years ago,” Thibodeaux said. “This is a rush for the crews and it also lets our families know that their tax dollars are being spent wisely.”

Throughout the afternoon, families and cadets watched as practice TOW rounds were fired each with a distinctive blast and then the shrill whistle each missile made on its supersonic trip downrange.

One person watching the training was Joseph U. Gajan, chief executive officer and general manager of SLEMCO in Lafayette.

“It’s an eye-opening experience to come out here and see what these people do,” Gajan said. He said that he came after an invitation was sent to him by a former employee.

“I didn’t know everything that they did out here,” Gajan said. “I wish more people could come

2nd Lt. Ian Cunha, commander of the BDF platoon, said his troops were looking forward to being integrated into Bradley Fighting Vehicle units, forming assault teams and even setting up an ambush as Opposing Force troops.

“We’re going to be doing some force-on-force training, in the field and on the simulators,” Cunha said. “It’s not something we get to do very often. For some of the soldiers it’s the first time they’ve been to the United States, so everybody’s pretty excited and we are determined to train hard and do well.”

Thibodeaux said the BDF soldiers have impressed a lot of people. “They are sharp and highly motivated,” he said. “It’s obvious they have been well-trained in the basic soldiering skills.”

Thibodeaux told the 20 active-duty and 17 reserve BDF troops that he expected them to do well on the simulators. “People will be shooting at you and you’ll be shooting back at tanks, Bradleys and dismounted troops,” he said. “Another enjoyable part of the training is that it will all be air-conditioned.”

The platoon of BDF troops sounded off in unison: “Hoo-ah!”

out here and see how these young men train.”

He said that his company supports the Guard and Reserve and with Sept. 11 still fresh on everyone’s mind, that support is even more critical.

“We know that these people will leave their homes, jobs and families if called on to do so,” Gajan said. “I think everyone in the state can be proud of our National Guard. They are out here ready to defend us and this country. It really makes you proud to see them out here.”

Damien Gardner, a member of B Co., 2nd Battalion, from New Iberia, said seeing his mother, girlfriend and other relatives out there in the crowd was a great morale booster.

“It feels pretty good to see them,” said Private 1st Class Gardner. “I like the fact that they came out here to see what I do and what the rest of us do when we are at training.”

Pvt. Dalton Alexander, from Patterson, showed some YCP cadets the various weapons Bradleys carry. He stopped while letting the cadets handle the weapons and look inside the Bradley.

“I think it’s great to have people come out here and see what we do,” Alexander said. “I wish more people could see and then they would understand what we do on our weekends and our two weeks of annual training.”

For Russell though, the day meant being to sit in the driver’s seat of a 35-ton armored vehicle.

“This is so cool,” he said with a laugh. “This is really cool.”

Expert Infantryman Badge grads among the elite

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 1, 102nd PAD

NORTH FORT POLK – It is fitting that the rifle emblem of the Expert Infantryman Badge is worn on the left breast over the heart, according to Staff Sgt. Carmelo Carrero, a member of the cadre during the July EIB course for 256th Infantry Brigade soldiers.

“It takes a lot of heart to pass this course,” he said. “Many are called, but few are chosen.” Carrero, a 12-year veteran of the Guard after 10 years on active duty, said he passed the EIB course in 1990 at Shoffield Barracks in Hawaii.

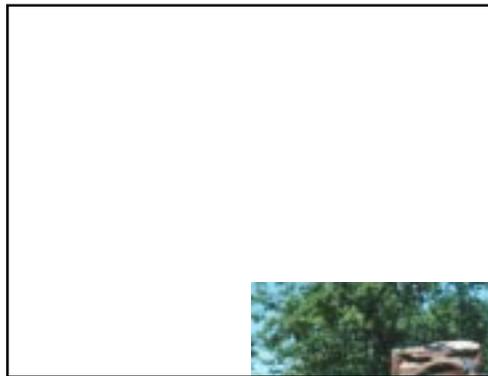
The readiness NCO of Det. 1, Alpha Co. of the brigade’s 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry in DeRidder, Carrero said 60 members of the 2nd and 3rd battalions began the rigorous course. Nine graduated.

Sgt. Henry Roe was one of seven “3rd Herd” soldiers who made the grade. Roe, 28, of Pineville is a Bradley Fighting Vehicle gunner for Bravo Co. at Camp Beauregard. The five-year veteran, a radiology student at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, works in civilian maintenance for the Guard.

Sgt. Enrique Ruano, 37, of Merryville north of Lake Charles, serves with Carrero in the DeRidder unit. He said he joined the



1st Sgt. Stephen Hickman and Capt. William Rachal get their EIB badge pinned by Brig. Gen. John Basilica at North Fort Polk



Guard at the age of 32 and of serving in the military devotee studies crimin.



State University and is a volunteer firefighter in Merryville.

1st Sgt. Stephen Hickman, 36, of DeRidder, is the top shirt for Alpha Co. and has been in the Guard 16 years. “I got in because my brother-in-law was in and said all they did for drill was drink beer and play volleyball,” Hickman said as his fellow soldiers laughed. “I soon found out that wasn’t the case.”

Hickman, who works at a plastics plant in civilian life, said the 12-mile road march with a 35-pound ruck sack was the toughest challenge of the EIB course for him. Many of the other soldiers agreed, especially since the march had to be done under extreme heat and humidity conditions, with the heat index over 105.

Capt. William Rachal, 30, commander of Alpha Co., led by example in passing the EIB course with his soldiers. He said he spent four years as an enlisted man before going to Officer Candidate School after Operation Desert Storm in 1991.

He has a bachelor’s and a master’s degree in financial planning on move from Terre in Rouge to take a new

3673rd performs Annual Training at Camp Beauregard

Spec. Stephen Merritt, a former 19K during his active duty days and currently a 44B (welder) for the Louisiana Army National Guard’s 3673rd Maintenance Co., justifies his reasoning for performing 10/20 level maintenance procedures on a 915A vehicle.

“I know this is not a tank, and I’m not welding anything but you have to figure after 3 days and nights of drivers’ training that this vehicle needs some type of maintenance.”

Merritt also knows the importance of scheduled maintenance not only because of the on hands experience that he’s gained through the military but from working at the Wal-Mart Distribution Center where maintenance and the

transportation of goods fit like “hand and glove.”

“There isn’t any difference in the lube job that I’m doing for the guard on this truck, verses what I see that goes on everyday at my civilian job. Wal-Mart runs their trucks the same way we run ours, [the guard] so I know the type of stress they go through, that’s why I’m helping out today.”

For Merritt, the best part of being here is “getting away from home.” He says with an exciting tone. Although he does admits it is too hot to perform his current MOS, which are duties of a welder, never the less he would gladly take the challenge if any assignments come his way, but would prefer to pass the time lubing a fleet of 915A trucks.

225TH FOCUSES ON COMMUNITY PROJECTS

The 225th Engineer Group, based at Camp Beauregard, usually has one combat mission: go and build pretty far forward in the battle theatre.

During annual training 2002, the focus switched to the civilian sector.

While one of the units that make up the group, 769th Engineer Battalion, makes its way to Afghanistan, the three remaining

units were responsible for 13 special projects spread out throughout the state of Louisiana.

Everything from roofs for the Girl Scouts, firing ranges for a local sheriff’s department to a road to alleviate floods and another road at a small airport.

But in order to accomplish the projects, the units that make up the

225th rotated in phases. “Every year we line up one behind the other during drill ... months in advance,” said Maj. Skippy Radcliff, executive officer of the 205th Engineer Battalion.

Sometimes not only logistics and manpower stand in the way. Rain can be an obstacle, ending the day’s work, Radcliff pointed out.



2nd Battalion troops fire AT-4, Dragon anti-tank missile

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

FORT POLK – Armed guards escorted the AT-4 anti-tank weapons from the ammo point on Fort Polk to Range 33 on Artillery Road so the soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry could do live-fire training.

It was all part of increased post security that includes checkpoints at all entrances to the formerly open Army post. “Better safe than sorry,” battalion Command Sgt. Maj. Homer Stelly said. “I wouldn’t want anyone but soldiers in training exercises getting ahold of these weapons.”

Before long, the range echoed with the deafening reports of anti-tank rounds blasting rusted-out armored personnel carriers and other downrange targets. Earplugs were mandatory.

Private 1st Class Brad Broussard of Lafayette, 25, a member of Bravo Co. in New Iberia, hit his target center mass after a few other soldiers had near-misses. “I just got out of basic training in August, where we fired the 9mm training version, so I’m pretty familiar with it,” he said.

Broussard, a ticket agent for Atlantic Southeast Airlines, a Delta Airlines connector at Lafayette



Regional Airport, said he will attend University of Louisiana at Lafayette in the fall to study industrial technology.

One battalion soldier was chosen to fire a single round from the more powerful Dragon anti-tank weapon, a wire-guided missile that can part an armored vehicle like opening a can of sardines with a meat cleaver.

Private 1st Class Jonathan Boudreaux, 19, of Raceland, a member of Charlie Co. in Houma, was chosen for the honor. In the Guard only 16 months, Boudreaux said he joined for the college money to study

criminal justice at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, “but since joining, I’ve had the time of my life out here with these guys. It’s like being part of a big family where everyone watches out for each other. I really love it.”

Company commander Michael Melancon of Baton Rouge said Boudreaux’s enthusiasm is contagious. “He’s one of those guys who works hard but always has fun at the same time, and the other young troops admire that and look to him for leadership,” Melancon said. “When it’s time to get serious and work extra hard, he’s a stud who works like an animal and always volunteers for the toughest tasks, a true soldier.”

Boudreaux carried his Dragon, a bulky weapon about twice the circumference of an AT-4, to the firing point and sighting on an upended APC downrange. With a roar and a backblast flame, the missile leapt from the tube. It made a popping, crackling noise like fallen electrical lines as it raced toward the target.

A few minutes later, Air Force personnel from Texas conducted a live bombing exercise on the range.

F-15 Strike Eagles dropped a pair of 2,000-pound bombs that slammed into the red dirt hills with huge fireballs and raised a pair of towering mushroom clouds above the shimmering pine tree horizon.

Soldier processing deployment packets as fast as he can

Cpl. Robert Walker only has 11 hours to accomplish his mission. Approximately 340 soldier deployment packets must be completed by 1800 hours – 6 p.m. civilian time – because the next phase begins.

Tucked away in the rear echelon in the battalion headquarters, Walker is one of seven soldiers tasked with preparing and finalizing the other 504 soldiers’ paperwork.

While the rest of the 141st Field Artillery drills day and night in the muddy, humid and hot fields of Camp Shelby, Miss., Walker has the luxury of a 3-ft wide fan. He’s out of the sun. And the only way he’ll get wet is running to his barracks at the end of the day.

Plenty of time, right? No problem, you say? Walker’s thankless and much overlooked

position isn’t lost on the sergeants ultimately responsible for the checklists.

“In the event the ball s up and we have to go with the (256 Infantry Brigade), our soldiers are ready to deploy,” said staff sergeant Richard Reysack, the battalion S-1.

Reysack adds, “This is just like on the gun line. This is just as important.”

Before any unit member can be deployed, the soldier’s personal, medical and immunization records need to be updated.

The personal information insures that orders and identification are present. And this is where changes are made to life insurance – which can be as much as \$250,000 – so that benefits go to the right hands. No

former spouses or girlfriends.

In the medical section, Walker runs through looking for a copy of HIV testing, dental records, and see if medications are on file.

And the final obstacle is over immunization history. If tetanus or typhoid shots are needed they find out here. Those that can produce copies of the shots can argue their case. Otherwise, it’s a visit to the physician.

“I know our mission will be successful at the end of AT and when brigade comes in for inspection. They’re going to be organized,” Reysack said.

And it’s a matter of pride.

“The satisfaction (higher commands) won’t say we’re soup sandwich.”

Experience in Honduras proves valuable at Camp Cook

Sgt. Willie Davis took out a sledge-hammer in Honduras ready to knock down a wall. The officer in charge of the building project didn’t care for Davis’ assessment and protested the action. But as the person responsible for quality assurance, Davis wasn’t prepared to negotiate.

“If it’s not right, it’s gotta come down, Sir” the Bogalusa native and self-employed carpenter remembers saying.

Eventually the wall did come tumbling down because it wasn’t evenly constructed. And, more importantly, Davis says, standards were not compromised in the rebuilding of the Latin American country during the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch.

His commander agreed: “You’re there to do a quality job, not a quantity job.”

Davis laughs when he recalls that one specific incident. But for members of the 205th Engineer Battalion, quality over quantity is the hallmark of a soldier and his unit, a gauge that no undertaking will be done unsatisfactorily.

“It makes me feel good that we do good work on time or ahead of time,” he said.

Members of Bravo Company’s 1st platoon worked on installing new latrines at the Camp Cook facility. It was one of 13 projects, scattered across the state, the unit was tasked during annual training.

Home to the Louisiana Army National Guard’s Primary Leadership Development Course and Non-Commissioned Officer Academy, junior grade enlisted Guardsmen learn the essentials to become promoted to the ranks of sergeant and staff sergeant.

And while the school taught soldiers in classrooms, just outside fellow troops wearing hard hats performed duties as electricians, plumbers, carpenters and masons.

Some of them, like Davis, do this type of work as civilians. Others don’t.

2nd Lt. Rene Suri, Sr., 32, of New Orleans, works as an ambulance crewmember for On-Call Nursing.

Although his civilian job doesn’t mirror his

responsibilities as a platoon leader, the bar of expectations is set.

“We’re going to go way beyond what we’re supposed to do,” Suri said.

That’s something Spec. Esven Pelayo, 22, can confirm first-hand.

He’s been laying the foundation, running wire, installing the light fixtures, framing and placing sheetrock.

“I can actually do it all,” he said.

A fork lift operator for Coca-Cola in Baton Rouge, Pelayo prefers the labor to sitting idle.

“I like working with my hands. Just like to work and not sit around,” he added.

With projects scattered throughout Louisiana, there hasn’t been much inactivity for the unit. And one day Davis hopes to have a good reason to be on the user end, like when he’s up for promotion.

“One of these days,” Davis said, “I’m going to go to BNOC. And I’m gonna say ‘I’m going to my latrine. I’ll be back.’”

769TH PREPARES FOR AFGHANISTAN DEPLOYMENT

By Master Sgt. John Sullivan
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK – “This is the hard part right now. The waiting.”

That’s how Maj. Robert Kyger, executive officer of the Louisiana National Guard’s 769th Engineer Battalion described what the guardsmen were going through now that they have finished their training. The unit was called to active duty in May and reported to Fort Polk for final training before being deployed to Afghanistan.

For a little more than two months, the men and women of the unit have trained and prepared at a pace that Kyger called feverish.

“Then, we reach certification and are ready to go and now we have to wait for our transport,” Kyger said. “For some of the soldiers, this will be their third good-bye to their families. That’s what makes it kind of tough.”

He explained that the guardsmen said good-bye to their families when they left their armories for Fort Polk. Because of the time delay in leaving this Central Louisiana Army post, many have had another chance to see their families.

“That’s the second good-bye and now as we get closer to actually leaving, there’s the third good-bye.”

Kyger, a veteran of 19 years in the Louisiana National Guard, said he has watched the troops under his command as they have spent a lot of hours training at different sites on Fort Polk.

“The training was intense,” Kyger said. “They are working at an incredible pace and then all of a sudden, it’s back to a walk again.”

The unit is now packing up its equipment and making last minute adjustments before leaving. The exact date they will leave Fort Polk for Afghanistan is unknown, but from the private first class to Kyger the same answer is given: “Let’s go.”

The deployment has not been without sacrifices, he said.

The new owner of a house in Hammond that he was remodeling when the order came for the deployment, Kyger said his partially finished house was burglarized while he was on active duty at Fort Polk.

“Someone broke in, stole a generator and all of my tools,” Kyger said. “But, I’m not the only one facing something like this. There are a lot of soldiers who are here who are facing problems at home and they haven’t slacked off one bit.”

The major said he waited until he could go home and see his family and file a police report.

“I guess that’s the breaks,” Kyger said.

“While I’m over there, my feelings and my heart will always be with my family. I will be here with my new family, but my heart will always be back home.”

Kyger said he has watched the men and women of the 769th tackle every training exercise and pass it with flying colors.

With Afghanistan the focal point of America’s war on terror, Kyger said many of the troops are apprehensive about going.

“We are going to a place where things go bang in the night and it’s not by accident,” Kyger said. “It’s because of someone with an evil intent.”

Kyger said the war on terror and the events of Sept. 11 are on everyone’s mind as they work and prepare for their duty in Afghanistan.

“Everyone here was watching TV on Sept. 11,” Kyger said. “Everyone here knows why we are going and what we are being called to do. When these soldiers come home, they can look everyone straight in the eye and tell them that they did their duty when their country called.

“They know the reason we are here and why we are going there. They know that our country is being threatened. They saw what happened on Sept. 11 and they’re going over there to make sure it doesn’t happen again.”

Kyger said he could not go into details about where the unit would be stationed or what its particular mission will be.

“These soldiers will do Louisiana proud,” Kyger said. “Years from now, when they are sitting around the campfire and tell tall tales, they can tell their children and grandchildren that they had a hand in America’s war on terror.

“They can say they stood up when called. And you know what, not one person said no. When they were called, they all came to the flag.”

Kyger said he is very patriotic and makes no apologies for it.

“You want to meet some real patriots,” Kyger said. “Here they are. The men and women of the 769th are true patriots. They have left their jobs, families and friends behind to go to a place that isn’t all that safe because their country has called.

“That is a true patriot.”

As he and the rest of the engineer battalion with its distinctive castle coat of arms prepares for their departure, Kyger said though his thought will be back home, his mind and attention will be focused on the mission at hand.

“My job is to get them over there to do the job that they have trained so hard for,” Kyger said. “And it is my job to make sure that they come home safely. This job will be over when I see them with their families back at their home armories.

“Until then, we are a family and a Louisiana family and that means we look out after each other.”

America’s heroes ...



Spec. Andrea Duhon gets the “Hero of the Day” award from Capt. Greg Parker, HHC 256 Inf Bde Commander, and 1st Sgt. Quinn Richard.



Bayou Bandits train hard

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

FORT POLK – Sgt. Cory Guidry said the Bradley Fighting Vehicle maneuver known as “bounding overwatch” is a little like a game of checkers, except the players are armed with 20mm cannons, 7.62 coaxial machine guns and TOW missiles.

“We start out in a wedge formation like an arrowhead of four Bradleys as we move toward the objective, then once contact is made we go on line and one team moves forward as the other covers, then the other team jumps ahead, and so on,” he said.

Guidry, 28, is a Bradley commander for Charlie Co. of the 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry in Crowley, the Bayou Bandits. During annual training in July, he drove a Bradley for the company executive officer.

He said he has been in the Guard seven years, lives in Gueydan and works at an oilfield supply warehouse in Broussard. “I want to go back to school because the Guard pays for it, that’s part of the reason I joined, but I also wanted to do something for my country.”

At a nearby training area on the “40 series” of ranges, Sgt. Robert

Minor, 44, of Lake Charles, was unloading ammunition from a HMMT cargo vehicle. The ammo specialist said he has 25 years of service under his utility belt.

“I started out planning to do just my six-year enlistment obligation, but once I got in, I liked it so much I just decided to stay.”

Spec. Bryan Barrow, 21, of Sulphur, a tracked vehicle mechanic, said he has to be ready to react to any kind of maintenance problem in the field.

Sure enough, as he was preparing to take part in a field class of first aid to keep sharp on his basic soldiering skills, a call for help came in from soldiers who had pulled to the side of the road to let a Bradley pass and got some concertina snagged under their vehicle.

Barrow grabbed some heavy leather gloves and a wire cutter, crawled under the Humvee and began working the snarl of barbed wire from around a wheel axle. Forty-five minutes later, he had the soldiers on their way.

His quick response and positive attitude got him a highly valued “attaboy” commemorative coin from Maj. Gen. Bennett Landreneau.

“Anytime,” Barrow called out as the soldiers went on about their mission. “Let me know if you run over anything else.”

Bayou Sappers clear the way at Fort Polk’s Peason Ridge

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

PEASON RIDGE – Whether it’s clearing a minefield, laying one down, blocking a road or opening one up, the Bayou Sappers are up to the task. The 1088th Combat Engineer Battalion of the Louisiana Army National Guard’s 56th Infantry Brigade made its mark at the Peason Ridge training area north of Fort Polk during annual training in July.

Spec. Ronald Pruitt and Spc. Nolan Landry, both 23, worked in tandem on a pair of camouflage-painted bulldozers to dig defillades, or fighting positions, for M1A1 tanks and Bradley Fighting Vehicles.

“You want it at a depth that the tank can go down into it and be below ground level, then it moves to the front of the defillade, sights and fires at its target, and backs down into a position where it can’t be seen by the enemy,” said Pruitt of Bravo Co. in New Roads. The battalion is headquartered in Plaquemines.

A six-year veteran of the Guard, Pruitt said he lives in St. Francisville and attends LSU in Baton Rouge.

“I’m majoring in mechanical engineering with a minor in Spanish,” he said. “I want to learn another language because it opens up the rest of the Western Hemisphere to me on a professional level. I can get jobs anywhere in Central or South America and the engineering companies will pay me a lot more money than for jobs in the states.”

Pruitt said he formerly belonged to the 415th Military Intelligence Co. in Carville, where he studied Russian. “I have a few Russian language skills, but I switched to Spanish because I didn’t feel like traveling that far from home to work once I get my degree and get a job,” he said.

Landry, also a heavy equipment operator in Bravo Co., said he and Pruitt also drive tractor-trailers for the unit. “We do a lot of cross-training so everyone knows everyone else’s job,” he said.

Landry works as a guard at Hunt Correctional Facility in St. Gabriel. “I always wanted to be in law enforcement, so that’s how I’m starting out,” he said. “I’ve been in the Guard for four years and plan on going to college later, but that’s not the main reason I joined the Guard,” he said.

“It might sound corny to some people, but I wanted to do some kind of military duty as a patriotic obligation,” he said. “I felt like I owed that to the country and I think everyone who is capable should consider at least one hitch.”

108TH CAV SOLDIER STAYS IN GUARD BECAUSE IT’S ‘FUN’

By Staff Sgt. Shannon Kleinschmit
Det 2, 102nd MPAD

Fort Polk – The M113, Mortar Track, equipped with a 120mm mortar, sits quietly as light rain drops pelt it’s metal exterior. For Specialist Calvin Coleman, a twenty-two year old 13F, Forward Observer, the weather is only a minor hindrance.

The members of A Company, of the 108 Cavalry, Louisiana National Guard will remain in

the field doing various training maneuvers until July 22.

Coleman is handling the tube of the 120mm mortar, which is mounted inside the vehicle.

“I joined the National Guard almost five years ago,” Coleman said. “I’ve been with A Company, 108th Cavalry the whole time.”

Coleman is presently attending Louisiana Technical College as an Industrial Electronics major in Natchitoches, Louisiana.

“Even though I joined for the school I joined for the school money in the beginning, I stay because of the,” Coleman said. “It’s been fun so far.”

Coleman is a resident of Clarence, Louisiana. He lives with his family.

He smiles when he says, “My mother is very proud of me being in the National Guard, I just hope that my son doesn’t follow in my footsteps. I miss him when I’m away.”



Belize soldier says LANG trains differently

By Master Sgt. John Sullivan
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK – “You train a little differently than we do.” That’s how Pvt. Jermanie Martinez, 23, a member of Co. 3, Land Command North of the Belize Defense Force compared the training he gets back in his native land and the training he was taking with the members of the Louisiana National Guards 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry.

The 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry, part of the Louisiana National Guard’s 256th Infantry Brigade, is at Fort Polk as part of its two-week annual training exercise.

Part of that training this year is to help train 37 members of the Belize Defense Forces here as part of an exchange program between the United States and the Central American nation.

“I like it here,” Martinez said. “The climate is just like back home. I feel very comfortable here.”

Wearing the distinctive solid green uniforms and their helmets, the troops showed the British influence in their training by the way they marched and fell into formation.

“These guys are very professional and highly motivated,” said Sgt. 1st Class Kris Comeaux of Abbeville. “They came wanting to learn.”

On this particular day, the 37 members of Co. E were on a small arms range off of California Avenue at Fort Polk. Their task for the day was to zero the M16A2.

The first thing they noticed was the size of the range and that raised a few eyebrows among the Belize soldiers.

“We do things a little differently,” said Pvt. Floyd Thimbriel. “We train with the M16A1 and we zero at 100 meters.”

That raised a few eyebrows among the Louisiana Guardsmen, Comeaux said.

“They do things a little differently, but that’s been the kick out of working with them,” Comeaux said. “It’s good to learn how other people do things.”

Thimbriel zeroed his weapon during the first firing order, which brought a smile to his face and to the faces of his comrades.

“Back home we train very rough,” Thimbriel said. “The guardsmen we are training with are very good, very professional. I am glad I had a chance to come here.”

Throughout the morning as the crackle of rifle fire echoed through the pine forests of North Louisiana, the soldiers of the BDF and the Louisiana National Guard traded tips and training techniques.

“We don’t drive very much when we go to training,” Thimbriel said. “We march a lot and we train very rough.”

Comeaux said that during the short two-week period, the guardsmen would show their counterparts how the Louisiana National Guard trains on rifles, the AT-4 anti-tank rocket as well as patrolling techniques.

“There’s a lot of ways that we are alike,” Comeaux said. “I guess all soldiers are alike when you get right down to it.”

For Pvt. Luis Cho, 30, this marks his second year as a member of the all-volunteer BDF.

“This climate reminds me of home,” Cho said. “It is good to train with other soldiers. I learn and they learn, everyone learns.”

BDF SOLDIERS PARTAKE IN M-16 TRAINING

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

FORT POLK – Private Marcos Noralez of the Belize Defense Force stood at his silhouette target pounding his chest with his fist as his fellow soldiers gave the thumbs-up sign to help him celebrate his expert marksmanship.

A smiling Noralez had just fired three rounds at a “zero” target to help him set his M-16 rifle sights accurately. The three holes in the paper target, his “shot group,” were so close together they could all be covered by a 50-cent piece.

Noralez is one of 37 BDF soldiers who took part in a training exchange in July. A platoon of troops from Belize came to this Vernon Parish post to train and a platoon of U.S. soldiers traveled to Belize, according to 2nd Lt. Ian Cunha, the BDF officer in charge and a full-time soldier in Belize.

Cunha said the platoon is from Easy Co. of the BDF’s 1st Battalion. “We came to do some light infantry training, qualify on the rifle range, and get some other training to help us perform our missions at home,” he said.

During a break in the training one day, nearly the entire platoon could be found in an empty lot playing soccer. It was evident after

watching a few roundhouse mid-air kicks that the guys knew what they were doing. They were clearly not a group of American troops with a soccer ball, despite the recent strong U.S. showing at the World Cup.

“It is our national sport,” Cunha said. “But your country did an outstanding job at the World Cup this year, better than Belize. We aren’t at that level internationally, but every child plays soccer at home, like baseball here.”

BDF Staff Sgt. Kurl Smith waited his turn to fire on the rifle range. The troops would also get a chance to fire the Light Anti-tank Weapon, or LAW. Smith said most BDF troops are like the National Guard in the United States.

“There are some full-time people, but most of us train part-time,” he said. Smith said BDF troops train for two hours each Tuesday and Thursday and one weekend every three months. He said his civilian job is in construction.

Smith said the BDF provides homeland security, guards the airport at Belize City and does border patrols to help curb drug trafficking and illegal immigration. Belize shares borders with Mexico to the north and Guatemala to the south and west. The coastal nation’s eastern “border” is

the Caribbean Sea.

Smith said he and his fellow troops enjoyed the training, weren’t bothered much by the heat at Fort Polk since they come from a tropical climate, and didn’t have any complaints to speak of.

“We hear some of our American friends talking about how the food could be better, but for us, as long as it fills us up, we don’t complain,” he said. “We’ve been fed very well. Nobody leaves the mess hall hungry.”

Master Sgt. Kevin Bliss from the headquarters of the 1st Battalion, 394th Infantry from San Antonio, Texas, part of the reserve element of the 2nd Brigade, 75th Infantry Division, was helping conduct the training for the 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry of the Louisiana Army National Guard’s 256th Infantry Brigade.

The 2nd Battalion, or Steel Lightning Battalion, is headquartered in Abbeville.

Asked who he was with, Bliss didn’t hesitate. “Team Abbeville,” he said. “Hoo-ah!”

Bliss said the BDF troops are highly motivated and proficient in their skills. “They appreciate this opportunity, and they produce results,” he said.



Warrant officer explains simple, gross, willful

By Staff Sgt. Shannon Kleinschmit
Det. 2, 102nd MPAD

Fort Polk -- For Chief Warrant Officer Jody Moore, a 41-year-old Director of Logistics and Supply Administrator for Brigadier General Richard Averitt, Deputy STARC Commander for the Louisiana National Guard, providing the facts and appointing the responsibility for Reports of Survey are a tedious specialty, which engulf her daily affairs.

“What we do is analyze the facts of incidents involving military material, appointing survey officers to further investigate these

incidents (if needed) and to provide assistance to those appointed survey officers,” she said.

Even as Moore conducts additional duties, such as supply appropriations while attending annual training at Fort Polk, she is still assisting appointed survey officers from past incidents.

She explains, “I have a case that is already two years old, although the case has been closed, the soldier, who has been found liable for the damages incurred to a piece of military equipment, feels he is not at fault. It boils down to Simple or Gross acts of negligence and Willful misconduct.” She goes on to say, “We leave the responsibility

to determine Simple or Gross Negligence and Willful misconduct to the appointed Survey Officer, which is usually the closest commissioned officer within the damaged materials area of responsibility. In a nutshell, Simple negligence is an accident that could have been avoided whereas Gross negligence occurs when an individual is just plain reckless. Willful misconduct is as it sounds, the individual incurred the damage on purpose. Our definitions are clearly defined in AR 735-5.”

Moore has been a member of the Louisiana National Guard since 1979. She resides in Hornbeck with her husband.

German soldiers train with LANG equipment

By Sgt. Kevin Cowan
Det 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK – The most obvious difference is the camouflage pattern on their uniforms. But aside from that, they are your typical tanker.

“We were quite surprised that everyone was so friendly and helpful,” said Private 1st Class Christian Keil. “It has been really good training.”

Keil is here training on the M1A1 Main Battle Tank, the M-2 .50 caliber machine gun and the M-240 machine gun. A tank ammunition loader by military occupational skill, Keil heard about this training and had to be a part of it.

Now that he is taking part in the training, he has noticed they are just like any other tanker in the world.

“The best part was working with your sergeants,” Keil. “We didn’t expect everyone to be so open and friendly.”

Those friendly and helpful soldiers with the unusual camouflage are actually Louisiana Army National Guard soldiers from 1st Battalion, 156th Armor out of Shreveport.

You see, Keil is German.

Keil, a member of the 284th Panzer Battalion from Heidenheim, Germany, is participating in a training exchange. Troops from the 156th recently returned from a training mission in Germany where they learned about the Leopard 2 tank and weapon systems.

Although this training may not be beneficial in the operation of each Army’s respective tanks, the main objective less obvious.

“We have our tanks and you have yours, so the training does not help us in that way. It’s more about knowing and understanding each other,” Keil added.

He really wanted to know and understand us as Americans so much that he volunteered to take part in this training. Keil is part of the Reserves in the German Army.

“Going to America is very special,” he said. “I just wanted to experience it.”

Hopefully, with continued exchange programs like this, more of the world will realize that as well.

EIB recipients say honor is ‘perfect end’ to Annual Training

By Sgt. Destiny Smith
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK—“This is the highest peacetime award given in an infantryman’s career,” said Capt. Judd Mahfouz, 3rd Battalion 156th Infantry Brigade’s S-4 and a recipient of the Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB).

“It sort of validates your infantry-ness,” Mahfouz said.

Nine infantrymen received the EIB on Thursday, in a ceremony at Fort Polk. This seemed to be the perfect ending to two weeks of intense training.

“The training has changed in the last year,” said Cpl. Craig Steven Taylor, an EIB cadre. He was awarded his badge while on active duty five years ago. “Now there are prerequisites. These are to make sure that the competitors are qualified.”

These prerequisites are the following: score 70 or higher in each category of the APFT, shoot

expert with the M16A2 rifle, complete the day and night land navigation course with and without a global positioning system and complete a 12 mile road march in three hours or less with a weapon and a 35 lb. ruck sack.

Coming from active duty, sometimes the National Guard’s training are seen by some as substandard. But, Taylor denied feeling that way.

“The course is just as intense, but shorter,” he said. And the fact that it was intense was agreed upon by the other participants.

“This is the most professional training that I have ever taken part in during my military career, in any setting,” Mahfouz said. “It was very intense and stressful. Every infantryman should experience it.”

And, one recipient felt that not only all infantrymen should take part in the course, but all soldiers.

“It was great training,” said 2nd Lt. John Waller, a native of Shreveport and an infantryman

in 3rd Battalion. “I wish every soldier could experience it.”

Staff Sgt. Kevin Sheumaker, also of 3rd Battalion, agreed with his fellow soldiers about the quality of training.

“This is the best training I have ever had in the Guard,” he said.

As a civilian, Sheumaker is a paramedic in Lake Charles. He served active for four years, and he has been in the Guard for nine.

Mahfouz, a native of Alexandria, is the deputy director of the Youth Challenge Program at Camp Beauregard, when he is not training.

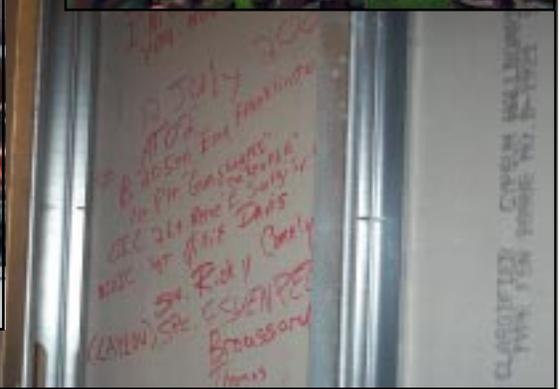
He served five years enlisted, and he has served in the Guard for a total of 14 years. Waller has served in the Guard for six years and intends to serve many more.

“This is really a good program,” said Taylor. “It establishes esprit-de-corps among the troops, and it is something for the younger soldiers to shoot for and look forward to.”













GERMANS DRIVE TANKS

**By Sgt. Destiny Smith
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD**

FORT POLK -- "A tank is a tank," said Sgt. 1st Class Bernhard Orglmeister of the German Army 284th Panzer Battalion. The German Army participated in a cultural exchange today with the tankers of 1st Battalion, 156th Armor.

Familiarization with the M1A1 tank was on the German tankers' agenda today. The German's seemed eager to jump into the tanks, as their three-man crews suited up.

Sixteen tank drivers were allowed to drive the U.S. tanks with the assistance of a U.S. Army

tank commander (TC).

The German Army is different in that each tank position is specialized, according to Staff Sgt. Richard Carroll, TC of one of the tanks.

There is one driver, one loader, one gunner and one person who knows every position, the TC. In the U.S. Army, every tank, a 19K, is trained on every position, but the TC job comes with experience.

There was one major difference noticed between the two tanks, though, the sounds. The U.S. tank's engine is the same engine found in a UH-60 Blackhawk Helicopter.

"Our tank, the Leopard 2A4, has a 'tank' sound," said Orglmeister. "But the U.S. tanks have a helicopter sound, like we are getting ready to fly."

But that difference didn't stop the familiarization.

"We set aside a three-hour block of instruction for the Germans for language considerations, but it only took an hour," said 1st Sgt. Todd Sneed, first sergeant of C Company 156th Armor. "They are really good."

"They're good, but they just go really fast," said Carroll. "They don't know half throttle, they just go the fastest they can."

New policy to ensure accountability of equipment

Forgot your canteen at home? No problem. Just stop by and borrow one from the supply sergeant, right?

Not anymore come August. They probably won't have one to lend.

A new National Guard Bureau directive will replace the current supply system – as it's known today - with an automated centralized issue facility or CIF, based at Camp Beauregard, where all clothing and equipment issue for the 10,000+ soldiers in the Louisiana Guard will originate.

Already implemented in the Regular Army, the Minnesota ARNG developed a CIF system to bridge technology and accountability in the supply arena.

Now, NGB wants every state in line with the new program.

Unit supply sergeants will only act as middlemen and shelf stock will be a thing of the past, said CW5 Michael Fuller, chief supply branch officer.

"The soldier is going to have to take care of himself," he said.

The process will have scheduled turn-in of excess equipment lying around the supply offices throughout Louisiana Guard units. The aim, according to reports from the NGB, is to address the loss and obsolescence that comes with overstocking happening all over the country.

In Minnesota, a reported inventory reduction of 30 percent and 75 percent fewer SPBS-R transactions have resulted since CIF took over.

The move, officials say, will "provide soldiers in a predictable, timely and cost effective manner." The new system will also reduce supply stock loss and allow soldiers to keep their gear even when they move to other units in the state.

So, now when a soldier enters the Guard, the CIF will also interface with the pay system, SIDPERS, and keep a record. The supply sergeant will requisition the basic TA-50 equipment through

a secured web server. Then in a few days, a package delivery will come with that soldier's issue. Any other transaction will be recorded at IF. And a 90-day ETS report from SIDPERS will inform CIF of whose equipment needs to be collected.

The plan should take 12-15 months for the entire state to convert - all staged, according to Fuller.

Three federal technicians will handle the bulk of the administrative end: SFC Frank Jackson, Spec. Kevin Smith and civilian Fannie Wilson.

Smith, who spent his two week summer camp as a member of 3673rd Maintenance Company, knows first-hand how his unit, day job, and this new initiative will help ease the administrative burden of the unit supply sergeants.

"We don't police it, but our main job is to take the stress off supply sergeants," he said.

Wilson, retired from the Air Force and a former Guardsman, sees this annual training period as a great learning opportunity for the supply section.

"As far as supply goes, this is real world. What they are doing here is invaluable experience," she said.

Jackson echoed the sentiment, especially in the final days before the program begins.

"It makes a difference – (the 3673rd) support," he said, "The magic of supply is the people behind it."

For those who have concerns that USPFO's upcoming task might be a little daunting, they only need to look on one of Fuller's office walls.

There hang three "Chief of Staff Army Supply Excellence Awards" his post has won consecutively since entering the Army-wide contest in 1999.

An open spot waits for the fourth plaque, 2002, he will receive Sept. 5.

A shady spot



Spec. Todd Savoy (middle) takes a break from digging a bunker for the 1088th Combat Engineer Bn B Co.



Bringing it home: soldiers turn in equipment

By Staff Sgt. Shannon Kleinschmit
Det. 2, 102nd MPAD

Fort Polk -- Soldiers wipe down the interiors of several Bradley M2A2, track vehicles while other soldiers commit to various light repairs and maintenance checks.

Although it appears to be a controlled pandemonium, for the soldiers of C Company, 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry, it means the prelude to another Annual Training's end.

First Lieutenant Jeff Graybill, C Company executive officer, is holding a crescent wrench and a screwdriver in his left hand. He assists his troops with various repairs in preparation to turn their vehicles of over to the Maneuver Area Training and Equipment Site on North Fort Polk.

"We pulled in from Range 40 last night at around 10 p.m.," Graybill said. "The troops didn't get to bed down until about 1 a.m.

"Between 5 and 6 a.m. they were up and working by 7 a.m. this morning. After they turn in their vehicles to MATES they'll clean their individual equipment, such as weapons and masks and then it's off to Houma."

Sergeant James Scaruffi, a 38-year-old, a Bradley crewman, said, "We're outta here. I'm a husband and a father of seven...it's time to go home."

A former Infantry Scout, Scaruffi resides in New Orleans. He has served on active duty for eight years and the last two years with the National Guard in his present occupation.

German soldiers treat Guardsmen to authentic meal

By Sgt. Destiny Smith
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK—American soldiers enjoyed a German-style dinner Tuesday in an awards ceremony to end the small-unit exchange between the 1st Battalion, 156th Armor and the 284th Panzer Battalion of Hadeheim, Germany.

From 9 a.m. until 7 p.m. and without a break, Sgt. 1st Class Georg Dorr of the 284th and his staff of 3 KPs prepared over 600 pork loin steaks and 20 kilos of potatoes. "The meal includes pork loin in hunter gravy, special franconian mashed potatoes with onion and egg and Bavarian-style cabbage salad," he said.

"They didn't have everything on the

menu," he said. "We had to change it several times. So we settled on this one."

This meal, prepared for over 300 troops, was difficult, but Dorr has prepared a meal for a crowd of 7,000.

Dorr is a chef in Germany. About 30 kilometers away from Hadenheim, his father owns a traditional Bavarian restaurant called Alte-Vogtei.

Dorr said he would love to thank the 156th for all of their support and hospitality.

"We had a very good time, and the soldiers were very good to us," he said.

Before the meal, the battalion commanders, Lt. Col. Richard Boehme, of the 284th, and Lt. Col. James Marze, of the 156th, tapped the keg of

German beer that the 284th imported to Louisiana for this occasion.

As the beer was poured into beer steins and given to the commanders, they toasted. The two armies presented plaques to each other.

The 156th presented beer steins decorated with the 156th's motto, to the battalion commander, the battalion sergeant major, the company commander and the first sergeant of the 284th.

The battalion commanders presented every soldier with the 284th certificates of appreciation, and if they qualified with the American weapons, they received marksmanship badges.

Following the award presentation, the two armies ate, drank and were merry.

Belize soldiers participate in live fire exercise at Fort Polk

By Staff Sgt. Shannon Kleinschmit
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

Fort Polk -- On Tuesday morning of July 9th, members of the Belize Defense Forces, E Company, Light Infantry Unit, and the Louisiana Army National Guard's A, B, and C Companies of the 2/156 Mechanized Infantry Battalion, joined for an AT4 live fire exercise.

It is 9 a.m. at Range 33d on this warm summer morning. Sgt. 1st Class Kris Comeaux briefs the Louisiana Guard and BDF troops on range safety.

Range safety is quickly followed by a significant block of instruction on the use of the AT4, anti-tank

weapon, -- diligently conducted by Master Sergeant Kevin Bliss. Both Sergeants are members of the Louisiana National Guards' HHC, 2/156 Mechanized Infantry Battalion.

The morale is high among the troops during the exchange of questions and answers with MSG Bliss and SFC Comeaux.

For most of the BDF troops, it is their first time being introduced to the AT4, and for a select few, their first time firing the weapon.

Second Lieutenant Ian Cunha, the Platoon Commander of the BDF unit stated, "We put all the names of the 37 BDF troops in a hat last night, and drew four names, it was the best way to be fair."

As the whoosh and crack of the AT4 resounded through the air, the members of the LAARNG expressed their delight with the familiar Army "Hooah."

It didn't take but a few direct hits at the ranges scattered targets before the BDF troops themselves were sounding off the same Army "Hooah."

Private Luis Cho, a 30 year old infantryman of the BDF leaves the firing area of the range with an expended AT4 tube and a very large smile.

"I was very excited to fire the weapon and was surprised at how loud it was. It was a very big bang," Cho said.



German soldiers take turn on small arms range

By Sgt. Kevin Cowan
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK – Most soldiers around the world are proud of the decorations they wear on their uniforms. From Airborne to Air Assault and the other medals of honor that are worn, each one has special meaning.

Some such soldiers found that meaning this week here at the small arms qualification range.

“They get to wear our marksmanship badges on their uniforms,” said Sgt. 1st Class Tim McKnight of 1st Battalion, 156th Armor from Shreveport.

They are the German troops from the 284th Panzer Battalion from Heidenheim, Germany. They are here participating in an exchange program in which troops from the 156th went to train in

Germany earlier this month and now the German troops are training with U.S. Army equipment.

“Some of them actually did very well,” McKnight said of the troops who fired the M16A2 rifle and the M9 pistol.

The Germans can wear foreign marksmanship badges regardless of the nation presenting them. As for most troops, qualifying with a foreign weapon does not come around often.

“This is the first time I have fired any foreign weapon,” said Sgt. Chris Kautnik, a tanker.

And that first time usually takes a little time getting used to.

“I had a little trouble the first time,” Kautnik said on firing the M16. “But after I learned the sight picture, I did better.”

Good enough to shoot Sharpshooter.

He then went on to shoot Expert with the M9.

“Our pistols fire basically the same and both equally balanced,” he stated. “But with our qualification, we must hit at least three out of five targets to qualify.”

Additionally, in contrast to U.S. qualification procedures, the Germans rifle tests marksmanship as well. Each soldier fires ten rounds at a bulls-eye target. The target has concentric rings numbered one through ten. With those ten rounds, the soldier must score a minimum of 75 points to qualify.

Although the methods are very different, the results come out the same. If you can’t hit the target, you can’t qualify.

So when you do, wear the badge with pride.

A day in the life of a MATES soldier

By Staff Sgt. Shannon M. Kleinschmit
Det. 2, 102nd MPAD

Fort Polk – Private First Class Jason Bonin, a twenty-one year old 63B, Lightwheel Mechanic of Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion of the 156th Mechanized Infantry Brigade, of the Louisiana National Guard, hits the motor pool of the Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES) at around six-thirty a.m.

Several soldiers are already working on vehicles,

both track and wheeled by the time Bonin begins working.

The standard shift for the members of HHC 3/156th Mechanized Infantry Brigade is from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

By 9 a.m., Bonin is working on his second vehicle. As he heaves a large battery from a two and a half ton truck and places it onto a wooden pallet he says, “This is my first annual training.”

Bonin, a recent graduate from Basic Training, and

Advanced Individual Training as of last February, says, “I was originally interested in the school money, but then I just started thinking about the overall benefits, like the part time money and job training.”

Bonin plans to enroll into community college in the near future. He presently resides in Lake Charles.

He has been with the Army National Guard for a year and a half.

“My parents have no problems with my obligations, they’re pretty proud of me overall,” he said.

Logistics a critical part of battle training

By Sgt. Destiny Smith
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK—“Logistics can’t win wars, but they sure can lose one,” said Maj. Martin Priest, executive officer of the 199th Support Battalion. Priest said logistics supplies the “beans, bullets, ammunition and fuel” for the missions.

“The 199th’s mission here at AT is to provide all logistical support for the brigade to conduct annual training and real world missions,” said 1st Lt. Robert Credeur, the battalion S-1.

“Without us, they can’t shoot, move or communicate,” said Priest.

The 199th, commanded by Lt. Col. Michael Borrell, is headquartered in Alexandria. A Company is in Jonesboro and Detachment 1, Company A is in Colfax. B Company is in Winnfield, Detachment 1 of B Company is in Alexandria and Detachment 2 of B Company is in Fort Polk. C Company is in St. Martinville.

YCP cadets observe Annual Training

By Sgt. Destiny Smith
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK—Forty-five Youth Challenge Program (YCP) cadets participated in a one-day field trip here to see the 256th Infantry Brigade in action. The cadets, from the Camp Carville facility, all had the highest scores possible on their Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) tests, which means that they will more than likely receive their Graduate Equivalency Diplomas (GED) before the September graduation.

“I like the guns,” Cadet Anthony Rabito, of River Ridge, said. “And the field trip today is making me think more about joining the Army.”

After shooting the M-16 A2 rifle, Cadet Matthew Corsivo of Shreveport said, “I was already considering the military, but now I am leaning toward the Guard. And if I do join any branch of the military, I want to be an infantryman.”

Pvt. Dalton Alexander of Patterson, a member of the 256th, said that the cadets seemed enthusiastic. “They are curious about what’s going on,” he said. “They want to know about the ranges of the weapons and how far the frequencies of the radios reach. But what they really want to do is shoot the weapons.”

And that they did. The M16 Rifle, the M203 Grenade Launcher and the M240 Squad Assault Weapon were weapons on display to shoot. The cadets eagerly formed a line to get their turns.

Cadet Taz Washington of Monroe was beaming after he finished shooting. “I am getting my GED in August,” he said. “And then I want to join the Guard and be an infantryman.”

As a result, this one-day field trip here hopefully will produce some more of the brightest and most ambitious soldiers in the Louisiana Army National Guard.



MREs get a bad rep

By Master Sgt. John Sullivan
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK – They’re delightful. They’re delectable. They’re delicious.

Well, maybe not all three.

They are MREs — a complete, self-contained meal in a light brown, plastic bag that has been the lunch-time meal for more than 2,000 Louisiana National Guard soldiers from South and Central Louisiana. They guardsmen and women are at Fort Polk, located near Leesville as part of their two weeks of annual training.

MRE is a military acronym that stands for Meals Ready to Eat. Or as some guardsmen and their regular Army counterparts will say, Meals Rejected by Ethiopians.

“They are really not that bad,” said Spec. Larry Ryan, of Lafayette. “Some of them aren’t that great. But they aren’t that bad.”

Ryan spends most of his day sweating out the details of making sure that more than 1,000 guardsmen and women with the Louisiana National Guard’s 256th Infantry Brigade from Lafayette are getting enough to eat. When not wearing his camouflage uniform, Ryan is a chef at Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center.

The guardsmen get hot, freshly cooked meals for breakfast and dinner and each meal, including the MREs, has plenty of fresh fruit available.

“We cook for about 250 patients and about 250 or so staff everyday,” Ryan said. “There we don’t give them an MRE for their noon meal.”

Ryan, 34, began his cooking career when he was 17.

The MREs are packaged by the Wornick Co. in McAllen, Texas.

There are about 100 or so individual meals that are currently in service.

They range from strange sounding items like Chicken in Thai Sauce with White Rice to a standard South Louisiana staple, Jambalaya.

“I haven’t been able to bring myself to eat the Jambalaya yet,” Ryan

said with a laugh. “I just can’t see that.”

Ryan said a soldier sitting down in the training areas at Fort Polk will find everything needed for a complete meal in the resealable brown packages.

There is even a small Meals Ready to Eat Heater in each package. The heater is actually an olive green plastic sleeve that has a chemical tab in it that, when mixed with water, produces enough heat to warm up the main entrees.

Ryan said it takes about 10 to 15 minutes to get the main entrée where it is good and hot.

“If that’s what you want,” he said with a grin. “Some people like to just rip open the top and eat them cold. It’s kind of a personal preference thing.”

In the Pasta with Vegetables in Tomato Sauce, a soldier will find the main entrée with a slab of pineapple, crackers and either regular cheese spread or jalepeno cheese spread.

Calorie watchers will find this delightful entrée contains 180 calories and 3 grams of fat. The pineapple slab contains 110 calories and 1 gram of fat. The pasta, which is coated in a rich, red colored sauce, also contains 35 grams of carbohydrates and 1,070 miligrams of sodium.

By the time you have consumed the whole package, a standard meal has anywhere from 300 calories to 450 calories.

“They are designed so a soldier in the field will get a complete meal,” Ryan said. “They have everything in there: the main entrée, a dessert, crackers and sometype of spread, candy and usually a beverage powder.”

The beverage powder can be anything from lemonade to a very sweet tasting cherry drink to cocoa powder for hot chocolate. And every MRE, no matter what the meal, has a small bottle of Louisiana’s homegrown and home produced Tabasco hot sauce in it.

“Everyone loves the Tabasco,” Ryan said. “You see people putting it on everything.”

Some of the meals are a mystery, though. One such meal is Chicken a la

King.

“I don’t think anyone really knows what is in that one,” Ryan said.

For the vegetarians, there are even several non-meat meals.

“I guess there’s something for everyone,” Ryan said. “You just have to see which meal you get. Sometimes you can be surprised.”

Recipes for the Soldier on the Go

Cheesy Spaghetti

First, take your MRE Spaghetti with Meat Sauce and get a tube of Cheese Spread.

1. Keeping the two plastic containers separate, heat the spaghetti and cheese sauce for about 10 minutes with your handy MRE heater.
2. Mix the two in the spaghetti container.
3. Add Tabasco sauce for taste.
4. Garnish with crushed MRE crackers.
5. Serves 1.

Beef Stew and Dumplings

First, get a Beef Stew main entrée, MRE crackers and some fresh water.

1. Heat the main meal for 10 minutes.
2. While the main meal is cooking, crush the MRE crackers, while still in their package, into a uniform powder. (Some soldiers use the old method of using their hands to crush the crackers. Others, using their Kevlar helmets take the more direct approach. Use the method that best suits your situation.)

Once the crackers have been crushed, add a small amount of your fresh water to make a pasty dough. Shape them into as many dumplings as you can make. Add to the still cooking stew.

3. Add Tabasco sauce for taste.
4. Serves 1.



Medical hold patients want to get back to work

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 1, 102nd PAD

NORTH FORT POLK – It never fails. The patients in the medical hold barracks at the annual training of the 256th Infantry Brigade would rather be back out in the field doing their jobs.

“Wouldn’t you?” said Staff Sgt. James Verdejo of Charlie Co., 1088th Combat Engineer Battalion in Napoleonville. “I came up advance party and hurt my foot helping to unload MCLC trailers for mine clearing duty, but I’m bored out of my mind sitting around here all day. I’d rather be out with my guys.”

Verdejo, 38, said he’s been in the Guard 10 years after doing 14 years on active duty. “I was a dental technician on active duty in Germany and at

Fort Sill in Oklahoma, but when I got in the Guard, I decided I wanted to get out of office work, so I went for the combat engineers.”

Verdejo, a native of the Bronx who now lives in Baton Rouge and works in a carpet warehouse, said he was a Pershing missile crew member out of basic training, “but that MOS got terminated, so I got into dental, but the job I’m doing now is the most fun of any of them.”

Spec. Gregory Williams, 38, a member of the 199th Forward Support Battalion headquarters company in Alexandria, said he volunteered for an air assault class when he got here “and I came off the rope the wrong way on the wall and aggravated an old back injury.

“I was in rehab for my back for a while and

I felt good and wanted to find out what I could do, but I guess I tried to come back too soon,” he said. “I got impatient to get back out there and rock and roll, but I’ll be back. I guess I just need to rest it up some more, but I’m not real good at keeping still. I guess I’m hyper.”

Williams said he’s been in the Guard four years after four years on active duty in Korea and at Fort Carson, Colo. He said he studied office occupations in college “to tie in with the administrative and personnel work I did in the Army, but now I’m studying to be a paralegal.

Williams said he’s “thinking about going active again. That life just suits me because I like to stay busy. There’s always something to do and you’re never between jobs.”

Guardsman trying out for state’s NBA team

By Spec. Erin E. Robicheaux
256th Infantry Brigade, PAO

FORT POLK -- Micheal Jordan and Bill Gates were never in the United States military, and that’s something that 21-year-old Spec. Danny Guillory has over both of the corporate giants.

A native of Lake Charles and a graduate of Washington-Marion High School, Guillory never thought of a career in sports.

“I love playing basketball but I never dreamed that I could make a career out of it,” he said.

Guillory began attending the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in 1999 and was a walk-on to the basketball team. When the Ragin’ Cajuns went to the Sweet 16 tournament in 2000 he was there.

“That was one of my more disappointing moments,” Guillory said, “We lost to the University of Indiana by one point.”

He may just get the chance to make up for that.

A few weeks before the National Guard left for this year’s annual training at Fort Polk, Guillory was playing basketball with a few guys in Lafayette, some that he had never met before. One of the strangers ended up being a friend of L.A. Lakers star,

Shaquille O’Neal.

“Out of the blue one day an agent called me at home and asked me to come to New Orleans to try out for the new NBA team that the state is getting,” said the baffled Guillory.

The Charlotte Hornets will soon be moving their franchise to Louisiana and will be renamed the New Orleans Hornets.

The National Guard soldiers will be returning home on Saturday, July 20th, and the next day Guillory will be trying out for the NBA.

“I have to be in New Orleans on Sunday and the tryouts are for three days. I should know one way or the other by Wednesday,” he said.

If Guillory makes the first cut he’ll be guaranteed a spot with an NBA team making at least the minimum \$350,000 a year. There will be one more cut after that where he will find out if he stays with the Hornets.

So what are his plans if he doesn’t make the cut? Well it turns out that this young soldier is a Renaissance man with a knack for computers.

“About two months ago I was playing online and saw an ad for a contest that a Houston-based computer company was having,” Guillory

said, “The contest was to see if anyone could hack into their security system.”

The prize for winning the contest was a job with the company and a hefty bonus. Guillory turned out to be one of the only two applicants who could figure it out. When it came time to make the final decision and award the prize, the company couldn’t deny Spec. Guillory when they heard his childhood story.

“They decided to do a background check on myself and the other guy,” he said, “and when they did mine they saw that there was something on my record from when I was 9-years-old.”

It turns out that Danny was a natural. Even as a child he had figured out how to hack into Calcasieu Marine National Bank’s security system.

“Computers have always come naturally to me,” he said, “After seeing that they had to give me the job.”

Guillory has been with the company for the past month but says that it may have to wait.

“If the NBA comes knocking on my door, I’ll have to answer and let them in,” he said.

Spec. Guillory is an 11M from 3/156th in Lake Charles.



Recruitment, retention Annual Training

By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD

NORTH FORT POLK – Commanders called it a recruitment and retention version of annual training.

While troops still trained hard and did their jobs, the battalions of the 256th Infantry Brigade had as few as half of their assigned strength of soldiers in the field, so July training at Fort Polk proceeded at a more deliberate pace than usual and troops had more time to focus on individual skills and maintenance.

“It’s relatively laid back this year,” said Lt. Col. Thomas Beron, commander of the 3rd Battalion, 156th Infantry, headquartered in Lake Charles. “We can work on retention, letting our soldiers know how important they are to us, which we can’t always find time to stop and do when things are really busy.”

Lt. Col. Jacques Thibodeaux, 2nd Battalion commander, agreed. “We are still getting after the mission, but there’s more time this year to talk to soldiers and make sure all of their needs are being taken care of.”

Private 1st Class Josh Lacombe, 19, from 2nd Battalion’s Alpha Co. in Breaux Bridge, said it was his first AT after getting out of basic training, “so I really don’t have

anything to compare it to as far as annual training goes, but I just came from Fort Benning’s infantry school, so I feel like I’m on vacation now.”

Lacombe, who lives in Lafayette, said he is studying nursing at UL Lafayette. He said he and other battalion soldiers have had a good time with a platoon of soldiers from the Belize Defense Force training here with Bradley troops from the Steel Lightning battalion, headquartered in Abbeville.

“We watched ‘Black Hawk Down’ with them last night,” Lacombe said. “That was an interesting experience since we’re all soldiers. The BDF troops tend to be kind of quiet, but not among themselves. They get fired up and we can tell they’re having a good time here doing stuff they don’t get to do at home.”

Spec. Jeremy Voisin, from 2nd Battalion’s Charlie Co. in Houma, said he’s been in the Guard six years.

He said he studied electrical engineering at Nicholls State in Thibodaux and works as an electrician at a shipyard in Larose. Voisin attends a Pentecostal church and said he is considering going to Bible college.

“I’m not sure if the GI Bill covers that, but I’m looking into it,” he said. “I’ve got more time to read my Bible this year than I usually do, so I’m getting a head start on my studies.”

The luck of the draw

By Spec. Erin Robicheaux
256th Infantry Brigade, PAO

FORT POLK – Corporal Anthony Stephenson Maggio of Erath could never have guessed the hand that he was about to be dealt but he played with a poker’s face anyway.

A nine-year veteran military policeman with the Louisiana National Guard’s 256th Infantry Brigade, Maggio recalls how he came into the Guard.

“Me and three of my buddies were about to graduate high school and we were sitting around one night playing cards,” Maggio said. “Somehow the discussion turned to how we would pay for college. None of us had a clue.”

Maggio recalls that one of his friends said that he’d considered a branch of the military but he wasn’t sure which one he would like to go into. “Being the spontaneous youngsters we were,” he said with a smirk, “we all decided to put four pieces of paper into a hat, each one containing a branch of service on it—the Navy, Army, Marines, and Air Force.”

Each potential serviceman pulled out a slip of paper. Maggio drew the Army. After doing some checking he decided to go through with it and enlisted in the National Guard. The only other one to see it through was the one who picked the Marines. Maggio says that this year he feels as if he’s being separated from his two families: his family back home and his fellow MP’s. Not long ago he had surgery on his ankle for an injury he sustained during a baseball game. As a result he has been doing his annual training in an office, answering phones and keeping things running smoothly when his commanding officer isn’t around.

It’s one of the conditions of having to stay off of his ankle. “My boys are out there right now sweating, getting eaten up by insects, and not able to take a shower,” Maggio said. “They’re all like brothers to me and it makes me feel guilty that I get to sit in the air conditioning all day long while they’re out in the field busting themselves up.”

He says that although the conditions are usually uncomfortable, he wouldn’t trade being an MP for anything. With a look of content on his face he says, “It’s all worth it for the comradery.” Maggio lives in Erath with his wife of one month, Eydie.

Slemco reunion

By Sgt. Destiny Smith
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK—When Sgt. 1st Class Gary Broussard, retention non-commissioned officer for the 2nd Battalion 156th Infantry Brigade, arrived in Lafayette to escort the family day/boss lift bus on Saturday, he had no idea of who he would see.

“We sent out invitations to all of the major organizations in the community that support the National Guard,” Broussard said.

One boss who showed up to the event drew quite a bit of attention.

J.U. Gajun, chief executive officer and general manager of SLEMCO, an energy corporation headquartered in Lafayette, arrived to attend the boss lift along with all the families.

“He is my former employer,” Broussard said. “I was very surprised to see him, and I am proud to see him out here showing his support for the Guard.”

Broussard was a SLEMCO employee from 1985-1989. He was a meter reader and an assistant dispatcher at SLEMCO’s Kaplan Warehouse.

“I walked up to Mr. Gajun and introduced myself to him as a former employee,” he said. “I know he didn’t know me personally, but he shook my hand like we’d known each other.”

Even though Gajun didn’t know Broussard personally, his support for the National Guard trickled down to his employees.

“Every time I had a weekend shift and had to go to drill, they would work with my schedule,” Broussard said.

At first glance it would seem that he was out of place, as Gajun walked around the muddy tank range with his polished black leather shoes, navy sportscoat, khaki pants and safari hat. But, he seemed pretty comfortable in the passenger side of the HUMVEE with a Kevlar covering his head instead of the safari hat.

Even though Gajun has no known employees in the National Guard, he gladly accepted the invitation.

“In my line of work, I get many invitations like this,” he said. “But this one was too important to pass up.”

This was Gajun’s first time at a military training event, and he said he was impressed with what he saw.

“The Guard is important, especially with everything taking place in the world today,” he said. “And, since the military is reducing in numbers, the Guard has become more important in the last 20 years, and it will definitely become more important in the next 20 years. We are supporters of military, patriotism and government. And, at SLEMCO, we do everything we can to support our National Guard.”



Soldier's civilian job different from military MOS

**By Master Sgt John Sullivan
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD**

FORT POLK – Garon Alario can say his civilian job and his job in the military are a good example of extremes.

Alario, a sergeant in the communications section of the Louisiana National Guard's 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry, is at Fort Polk for his two weeks of annual training.

The Delcambre resident works on small pieces of equipment and components that make up one of the radios that the 2nd Battalion uses as a lifeline for its separate units to keep in touch.

When not wearing his camouflage uniform, Alario is an employee with Parker Drilling in New Iberia.

The drilling company recently completed a 6,000-ton oil rig that stands 27 stories tall and is now being shipped to a remote island in the Northern Pacific near the Arctic Circle.

The rig, named the Hawk, is destined for the Sakhalin Island project, a joint oil exploration effort between American, Russian, Indian and Japanese companies.

Once assembled, the rig will drill down almost 8,000 feet and then drill a horizontal shaft almost 30,000 feet to begin drilling for oil under the Pacific Ocean.

"It's a big difference," he said with a laugh. "Here I keep radios working and there I was helping build something that seemed to blot out the sky."

The giant oil rig is currently being shipped from the Port of Houston for the remote Russian island.

"It's cool to think that I was part of that," Alario said. "Out here I am helping make sure that a new type of radio that we have is working and that everyone can communicate."

For the sergeant that can mean long days

with radios and the operators to make sure that everything is working.

Alario said that no one talks about the events of Sept. 11, but it's always there in the shadows and in their thoughts.

"I think everyone is a little more determined and a little more serious this year," Alario said. "I think Sept. 11 is there in our minds. It is in mine. I think about it and I think about being out here and how proud I am of this uniform."

Even though the noon temperatures at Fort Polk may reach 95 on a regular basis, with the humidity it suddenly feels like a 105 degrees.

Still, Alario said, the heat and the humidity haven't slowed down the guardsmen.

"I think everyone is just a little more focused this year," Alario said. "I think that everyone wants to be ready in case we are called on to defend this country. I think we are ready to do whatever is asked of us."

STARC administrators take care of soldiers

**By Sgt. Bernard Chaillot
Det. 2, 102nd PAD**

FORT POLK – Lots of people at the state headquarters of the Louisiana Army National Guard at Jackson Barracks in New Orleans can't figure out how Sgt. 1st Class Ricky Robertson does everything he does on a daily basis.

But during annual training at this Vernon Parish Army post, personnel sergeant Robertson said it's all a matter of prioritizing multiple tasks and never forgetting that helping soldiers is his No. 1 responsibility.

"One of my major responsibilities is keeping everyone's 201 file in order, updated and correct," he said.

"That is the main file every soldier has from basic training through retirement, including schools attended, dates of rank, family and pay information, medical and dental records and everything else that happens to a soldier during their career, so it's important all of the information be right," he said.

"But if a soldier walks in the door to ask for help with something while I'm working on files, which happens any number of times every day, my priority becomes helping that person standing in front of me, without fail," Robertson said. "And if I can't help, I will find out who can. I will take care of that soldier."

Robertson, 43, who's been in the Guard 25 years and also performs the duties of a company clerk at state headquarters, said he enjoys running

and bowling as leisure time activities.

"I run three times a week, about five miles each time, to relieve stress and stay in good shape," he said. "It started about 15 years ago when I was doing a PT test and a 56-year-old soldier came in ahead of me. He walked over and said how in the world did I let an old man like him whip me, and right then and there I said never again, so I took up running seriously and now it's part of my health routine."

Robertson said it is crucial to have a good, quality pair of running shoes to avoid injury and get the most out of workouts. "Lots of people tend to want to scrimp and buy cheap shoes, but it doesn't pay," he said.

"Everybody who runs has to find their own pace, their own rhythm," he said. "I have two speeds, mellow and hip-hop," he laughed. "I start out mellow then get into my zone with the hip-hop rhythm."

He said he works out in the gym on both machines and free weights to build up strength and cardiovascular fitness. Robertson said it pays to be fit to maintain the level of energy needed to take care of 350 soldiers at Jackson Barracks and about another 100 at Camp Beauregard.

Another STARC mainstay is Capt. Jona Hughes, 36, of Baton Rouge, an education service officer. She said her job is to ensure that all soldiers know what educational benefits they are entitled to in the military.

"That includes free tuition at state schools,

other tuition assistance programs and the GI Bill benefits to help out with books and other expenses," she said. "There is a vast array of educational benefits available."

Hughes said her civilian job is a spin-off of her Guard career. She does the same job as in the Guard as a federal technician at Jackson Barracks. Although it is a civilian position, as a Guard member she wears BDUs to work each day. "I'm not AGR, or a full-time Guard member, but I wear the uniform every day."

Lt. Col. Russell Hooper, 38, former commander of the 1st Battalion, 141st Field Artillery, the famed Washington Artillery at Jackson Barracks, handles newly assigned homeland security tasks for STARC.

It is an area of responsibility born of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. "We work with the Office of Emergency Preparedness, local civil defense officials and parish governments on various security procedures," he said. Many of those procedures are confidential for security reasons.

Hooper, a seven-year veteran of the Guard, served on active duty for 10 years with the 5th Army, formerly at Fort Polk but now headquartered in San Antonio, Texas. "I came to Louisiana as a member of a Resident Trainer Detachment, the Louisiana Guard gave me an opportunity to go AGR, and I took it."

Hooper lives in Terrytown with his wife and two children.



Soldier's experience in medical clinic invaluable

**By Spec. Erin Robicheaux
256th Infantry Brigade, PAO**

FORT POLK — When the familiar music of the television show M*A*S*H* starts up, it's hard not to get excited at the anticipated adventures of the staff at the Mobile Army Support Hospital during the Korean War. Twenty-five year-old Fanta Smith knows all too well how interesting life can be in an Army medical clinic.

"Most of the time soldiers come in with the usual insect bites and scrapes, but what they're really looking for is a nice clean place to sit in the air conditioning for a while," Spec. Smith said.

Smith is a student at Southern University and is majoring in physical therapy.

"I get a lot of good experience when people come in with sprains and limb injuries, which is why I chose my current field," she said.

Troop Medical Clinic, or TMC for short, is the first place that soldiers go when they have a sickness or injury. The staff treats them and makes them as comfortable as possible during the soldier's time at the clinic.

sible during the soldier's time at the clinic.

Smith is one of the first people at the clinic that an injured soldier sees. Her job is to help process them in so a doctor or physician's assistant can then treat their injuries.

"We can usually send the soldier right back into the field, but if they require rest we'll send them to a barracks set up as a medical hold facility," Smith said. "It's just a quiet place where they can rest up and get well."

Smith said that there are even times when they'll have to send a soldier to a hospital to receive more care depending upon the nature of their injury.

Some of the most common injuries the TMC receives are heat casualties, infected insect bites, and limb injuries.

Smith is a Baton Rouge resident who joined the National Guard three years ago to get her education and experience in her related field of study.

When asked of the most beneficial aspect of the military, she said,

"It has motivated me more throughout all areas of my life."

Guardswoman drives tank during exercise

**By Sgt. Kevin Cowan
Det 1, 102nd MPAD**

FORT POLK – As the sun began to make its way over the western horizon, the anticipation began to rise -- because girls don't drive tanks. But today there would be an exception.

In the U.S. Army, combat skills are reserved for males only. Female soldiers are more and more taking jobs formerly male only and doing a fine job in them, however, for now, combat skills remain male only.

One of these combat skills is that of a tanker. It's not a pretty job, but someone has to do it.

The hours are long, the spaces are cramped, the dirt is plentiful, and the sweat flows in gallons.

But according to Sgt. 1st Class Tim McKnight of 1st Battalion, 156th Armor says that the job is addictive.

"Once you're a tanker, you're always a tanker," McKnight said with a smile. "There's just something about it."

But one female soldier found that 'something' McKnight was talking about.

"It was incredible," said Sgt.

Destiny Smith, "with me being 115 pounds and driving a 65-ton tank."

Smith, a journalist with Det 1, 102nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, has been covering the 1/156th from Shreveport while they are on annual training.

The 1/156th is hosting a platoon of German soldiers from the 284th Panzer Battalion out of Heidenheim.

During this exchange program, a platoon from the 1/156th went to Germany to cross-train on the Leopard 2A4 tank, while the German troops came here to cross-train on the M1A1 Abrams Main Battle Tank.

Then it was time for some cross training for Sgt. Smith.

After receiving a crash-course on the different jobs inside of the tank, Smith got some hands-on training in the drivers seat. McKnight meticulously explained just how to drive a tank. Then he went over it again.

"It was confusing during the class," Smith said. "But when I got in the seat, it all came together."

Once McKnight and the rest of the tank crew were in place, he gave the order.

"Sgt. Smith, start the tank," he said.

With the flip of a toggle, the panel display lit up like a Christmas tree. As she pressed the 'Start' button, the behemoth began its high-pitched whine.

Once the tank was at full power, McKnight, the tank commander, said "Sgt. Smith, whenever you're ready."

After a couple of seconds, the massive, 65-ton machine began to crawl.

"A little more throttle and guide it onto the road," he ordered gently.

As the tank climbed onto the gravel road and straightened out, it suddenly lurched forward while a shout of excitement came over the radio system.

"I was surprised how fast it went," Smith said in amazement.

"I was scared at first, but they said everything was going to be all right, so I just went."

The ride continued without a hitch and was deemed a success by the rest of the tank crew.

"Not bad for a rookie," joked Staff Sgt. Richard Carroll of the 1/156th.

As Smith opened the driver's hatch and climbed out of the hull of the tank she smiled.

"I want one!" she screamed. "But I want mine to be purple and white."



WISE WORDS FROM COMMANDER

By Sgt. Destiny Smith
Det. 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK – “In order to have a good battalion, you need to be good friends with the most important ranks in your command, otherwise the reserve cannot live,” said Lt. Col. Richard Boehme, battalion commander of the 284th Panzer Battalion of Hadenheim, Germany.

The battalion participated in a month-long, small-unit exchange with the tankers of the 1st Battalion, 156th Armor.

“We saw that the thinking of tank troops is the same around the world,” he said.

Boehme said the armies have fused with no problem.

“The units have had no problems getting along. They accept each other, and they have had no problem coming together.”

He also said that he didn’t know that the German culture was so alive in the southern United States.

“It’s astonishing how many American soldiers and people around the area speak German.”

Boehme said that the only problems the battalion has had during the Louisiana-half of the exchange were the heat

and the choice of barracks.

“My soldiers are not used to the open-room buildings,” he said. “On our training, they usually live in six-man rooms.”

“Overall, the mission has been a big success. For the soldiers, personally, for the company, and for the battalion,” he said.

“This exchange gave each army a chance to see the equipment and methods each one uses, and it gave them a chance to learn each other. And learning is the most important thing in understanding each other.”

2/156th emphasizes teamwork is recipe for success

By Sgt. Kevin Cowan
Det 1, 102nd MPAD

FORT POLK – One of the things that help an organization be the best is teamwork. For the maintenance section of 2nd Battalion of the 156th Infantry Brigade (Mechanized), it’s standard procedure.

“We worked as a team,” said Spec. Todd Bryan of Headquarters Company. “When something came up, we tackled it.”

His mission for this year’s annual training was the same as usual. As a Bradley Hull Mechanic, Bryan not only did what he specializes in, but also helped out the rest of the crew.

This year’s mission was to “stand ready for recovery,” he said. And that

meant he would have to rely on some of his cross-training skills. Bryan is also a Hemmit Wrecker operator.

This part of his job requires him to find those vehicles in need of assistance.

When a vehicle either breaks down or gets stuck, a radio call is made to the Unit Maintenance Collection Point where Bryan would be dispatched to their location. He would then pull out the stuck vehicle or bring the vehicle back to the UMCP.

Once the vehicle makes it to the UMCP, the teamwork begins. Everything is done by the maintenance crew to get the vehicle operation once again.

If they can’t fix it, the vehicle is transported to the Battalion Support Area.

Although his annual trainings have been relatively the same, this one has been a little more relaxed.

“Last year, we had more intense missions,” he added referring to the Brigade’s rotation at the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif. “This year was very easy. Everything worked like clock-work.”

Bryan, an Abbeville native, has been doing this for the last six years. And although his enlistment is about over and he is unsure if he will re-enlist or not, he says he has enjoyed every minute of it.

“It’s been great. I’ve enjoyed meeting all of the people I work with,” he said. “They are like my second family.”

YCP CADET LOOKS FORWARD TO MILITARY CAREER

By Spec. Erin Robicheaux
256th Infantry Brigade, PAO

FORT POLK -- Justin Duffey knows the Army slogan “we do more before 7 a.m. than most people do all day” is all too true.

He has been a cadet with the Louisiana National Guard’s Youth Challenge Program at Carville, La., since April 15 of this year.

“My cousin is in the Army and is a lot more disciplined now because of it,” he said. “I just wanted some of that for myself.”

The cadet and 45 of his fellow classmates were at Fort Polk on Saturday to witness a firing exercise by the 2nd Battalion, 156th Infantry. They were also able to witness the 199th

Support Battalion at work in the field supporting the Louisiana National Guard’s 256th Infantry Brigade during its two weeks of annual training.

Cadet Duffey’s day begins with a wake-up call at 4:15a.m.

“We wake up, do stretches, sit-ups, push-ups, and run at least two miles,” he said.

By 6 a.m. he and the rest of the cadets have already showered, had reveille, and are in formation ready for breakfast.

The rest of the day is filled with classes because the program is also a way for these cadets to receive their Graduate Equivalency Diploma.

Duffey says that when school is out for the day that doesn’t mean the day is over and they can play.

“From about four o’clock until five o’clock we have to do barracks maintenance,” he said. “After that we have reveille and chow.”

Before lights out at 9 p.m., they have their final formation and receive their mail.

“My favorite thing about the Youth Challenge Program is the weekends,” said the cadet. “We can sleep until 6 a.m. instead of four.”

Duffey says that there isn’t a doubt in his mind that he’ll make a career out of the military.