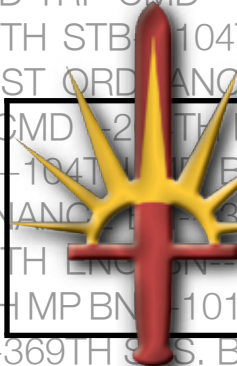


# WINTER 2013





Brig. Gen. Michael C. Swezey  
COMMANDER, 53RD TROOP COMMAND

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#### ABOUT THE 53RD TROOP SCOOP

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#### SUBMISSIONS

Articles and photos are welcome. Please provide articles in Microsoft Word format along with high resolution digital (jpg.) photos by e-mail to [thomas.w.wheeler@us.army.mil](mailto:thomas.w.wheeler@us.army.mil).

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## 34th Annual Combat Sustainment Training Exercise

### "TAG MATCH"

MAY 31st – June 2nd  
Camp Smith, NY

Printable registration forms available on the NY SARTS web page: <http://www.dmn.state.ny.us/sarts/tagmatch.htm>





## ★ MESSAGE FROM THE 6 ★



**Brig. Gen. Michael C. Swezey**  
53rd Troop Command  
"For the Soldier"

Spring 2013 has arrived. It was a long winter for everyone. We were still getting flurries in the beginning of April here in New York. Go figure. Also, everyone in the Troop Command remembers how this winter began. Super Storm Sandy hit the downstate area like ... well ... like a hurricane. The

highest storm surge of water that NYC has seen in over 100 years. Who was there to help the people of New York? Once again ... you.

The dedicated service of our Soldiers is, and should be, an inspiration for all. In times of trouble you drop what you are doing, with only hours notice, and run to the call. To our NCO's ... thank you for your leadership. From our highest CSM (CSM Lou Wilson), through the Brigade and Battalion CSM's, through all the company 1SG's, down to our most junior Buck Sergeants - you folks are professionals. The backbone of our organization ... and the backbone of this Country. You have never wavered, you have never faltered, you are steadfast and you are resilient. You are Strong.

To the officers and Commanders and Staffs - thank you for the leadership you deliver time and time again. Engineers, MP's logisticians - you do your jobs and you do it well.

Lastly ... to you the Soldiers. That 18 year old kid who just enlisted. To the Soldier who I asked at Howard Beach

the day after the storm hit, "Did you think you would be doing this work in NYC when you joined the Guard?" The response was motivational, "Sir, this is exactly why I joined."

Some people have fears for the future of this Country. I have no fears. With people like you to work with the future of this State and Nation is bright, our future ... your future ... is a cloudless sky. Stay strong, stay together, take care of your Family, take care of each other, keep thinking of tomorrow and how you and your unit can become even better.

I am honored to serve with you.



## ★ MESSAGE FROM THE 7 ★

I read an article from an upstate Veterans' Wellness magazine that got me thinking about our Soldiers health and wellness for today and tomorrow.

I felt it was more in the line with Comprehensive Soldier Fitness and I wanted to share it with you and something I took a lesson from.

20 year Marine Corps Veteran, Master Sergeant Bruce Van Apeldoorn, 63, swore he would always stay fit. Then one day he realized that instead of having a Marine Corps physique, he looked like more like an egg.

He regained his focus with the help of a weight management program at his local VA outpatient clinic that gave him a customized weight-loss plan and counseling sessions.

Once the pounds began steadily melting away his enthusiasm increased. The Master Sergeant's goal, to get back into his dress blues.

At first, the Master Sergeant's goal was to lose 10 percent of his body weight. But then he read an article about training for a 5K, he decided to give it a shot. In August 2012, he completed the 5K in 33 minutes. When he hit a weight-loss plateau, he either got advice from a counseling session or set a new goal. Every time he changed things up, he would lose another 5 pounds.

Today, he maintains a rigorous six-day-a-week routine of running, weight training and calisthenics. This was five times harder than the conditioning regimen of his youth. It was worth it to him.

Last summer, he attended a Marine Corps parade in Washington, D.C. He attended many of these events before, but this time, he wore his dress blues, which finally fit again. So far, he lost 65 pounds and he was two pounds away from his goal. He never would have guessed that he could feel this good in his 60s.



**Command Sgt. Major Louis Wilson**  
53rd Troop Command  
"For the Soldier"



# Team Sandy mission continues

Story and photo by Master Sgt. Peter Towse, 42nd Infantry Division



QUEENS, NY -- New York Army National Guard Soldier Sgt. Alfaro Geovanny with C Company, 642nd Aviation Support Battalion and McKineley Theobald with the Americorps National Civilian Community Corps talks with a local resident of Breezy Point, NY November 28, 2012. Working with local authorities in the wake of hurricane Sandy, Geovanny and other Soldiers of the 642nd are going door to door, providing goods and services, like water and food, and also collecting data to better assess the welfare of the residents.

**NEW YORK -- Hurricane Sandy may be over, but the New York Army National Guard is still engaged in providing assistance to New Yorkers in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island.**

Working with local, state and federal agencies, Soldiers assigned to the 230-member Team Sandy continue to go door to door checking on the current status of the citizens recovering from the devastation and collecting data to better help the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). With so many homes ruined by the flooding of hurricane Sandy, the data is invaluable when sending resources out into the boroughs, officials said.

Citizen- Soldiers go out in teams of two and knock on the doors of houses in a designated area. Each Soldier has a form and a series of questions to ask the homeowner.

"We started with the forms and collected data from the building managers," said 1st Lt. Malinda Vazquez, the planning officer and a resident of Queens, NY. "Now, we are going door to door, checking on the well-being of each resident and making sure they are ok."

The completed forms are uploaded manually each day and give OEM the information to help those most in need.

"The forms limited our ability to move the

data because the information had to be inputted manually and would take 3-5 days for the information to reach to proper agency," said 2nd Lt. Anthony Migliore, the team Operations Officer and resident of Smithtown, NY.

Because of the time necessary for the information to reach local and state agencies, a new system was developed to make the information gathering process more efficient. A new form, that is filled out electronically using an electronic tablet, can now be sent to the database instantly and the information is automatically sent to the proper agency.

"Now that we have over 200 [electronic] tablets, the information is transmitted instantly to a centralized database managed by the Disaster Immediate Response Team," Migliore said. "As we continue the operation, we are able to configure the tablets to reflect more detailed information."

The New York National Guard has completed over 96,000 door-to-door wellness checks and continues to refine the process to knock on more doors in less time.

"We are working closely with the New York City police department, fire department, Americorps, FEMA, OEM and the Mayor's office to make our data collection more efficient,"

Migliore said. "Our maps are becoming more precise and the use of the electronic tablets makes our information gathering easier."

The maps of each affected area are broken down by sectors and cells. Each sector is made up of an entire neighborhood and each cell is roughly 5 city blocks. Each tablet is tracked to record the progress of the Soldiers on the ground throughout the day and changes are made to increase the streets covered during the nightly meetings. The questions are also refined to make information gathering easier.

"We have developed eight teams to go door to door," said Master Sgt. Troy Haley, the NCOIC for one of the teams and a Troy, NY, resident. "With those teams, we are able to provide information instantly and get help to the people most affected by the hurricane. We also provide food, water, blankets and comfort kits as we go."

"We are here to serve our fellow citizens during this crisis," said Col. Mark Leahey, the commander of Joint Task Force Sandy and a resident of Rochester, N.Y. "We are here to let them know that they are not alone and we will do everything we can to help them."





# Re-deploying Troops hone job seeking skills

Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Brandy Fowler, New York Air National Guard

**BUFFALO, N.Y. --** Forty-nine New York National Guard Citizen Soldiers got a leg up on the skills it takes to get a job at a three-day training workshop hosted here by the New York National Guard.

The Soldiers, who just returned from deployment to Afghanistan and Kuwait, learned how to write a resume, interview for a job and translate their military skills into something that makes sense for a civilian employer during the three-days of training at the Adams Mark Hotel.

The Transition Assistance Program is mandatory for Soldiers leaving Active Duty, said Andrew Depalo, the director of Family Programs for the New York National Guard. The Veterans Opportunity to Work Act (VOW) of 2011 established the program and allocated the funding, he said. It's the first time the New York National Guard has offered the program.

"The program provides service members with employment opportunities and gives them the tools and resources to become successful in the community," DePalo explained. "The training focuses on transitioning from the military to the civilian workforce. It's about getting these service members actively engaged back into the community."

For Spc. Jon-Christopher Dixon, a Military Police Soldier from Central Square, N.Y., the class offered a chance to move closer to his goal of turning his skills as a Military Police Soldier into a job as a United States Marshall.

"My resume is mediocre and this training will help strengthen it. It's also helping me with the federal hiring process," said Dixon, a member of the 27th Brigade Special Troops Battalion.

"This course is a great bunch of tools for our toolbox," said Spc. Andrew Waite, who is also a member of the 27th BSTB.

"I have been looking for a job ever since I returned from deployment three months ago," the Lowville, N.Y. Soldier said. I need help with my interviewing skills and need to learn how to write a resume in order to market myself to prospective employers. This course is going to help me be better organized in job seeking and this class can only help me improve myself."

The instruction highlights websites that returning veterans can use as a resources for job hunting.

One of these is the New York National Guard's "Job Zone" at <http://dmna.ny.gov/jobs/>. maintained by retired Command Sergeants Major John Willsey and Robert Van Pelt. The website allows Soldiers to find jobs being offered by businesses that want to hire veterans.

Other websites offered help translate military skills into their civilian equivalents like the MOS Translator maintained by the Veterans



Transition Assistance Program instructor, Michele Lewis, looks on as her class completes a group project about strengths and weaknesses of hiring a veteran during a workshop here in March 3. The class is required of returning veterans. The TAP training is mandated by the Veterans Opportunity to Work Act.

Administration at : <https://mst.vaforvets.va.gov/mst/va/mos-translator>. The site allows service members to pick their service and military skill and see what civilian jobs their rank and experience translates into.

"I'm glad to be here because I am learning a lot of things I didn't know before," said Air National Guard Sgt. Michael Jenkins, a Scotia resident assigned to Hancock Field Air National Guard Base.

The students are learning these skills from people who have seen the benefits of the program first hand, said instructor Michele Lewis.

"I am a firm believer in this program. My father was a veteran and I watched as he came back from a deployment. It was hard for him to find a job. He didn't have this program to help him out and it took him about a year to get back on his feet," she said.

"We have a lot of veterans coming home and with all the problems that veterans are returning with, employment shouldn't be another one they have to deal with," said Sgt. 1st Class Byron Barnes, a member of the 427th Brigade Support Battalion from Rochester, N.Y.

"I'm getting some pretty good pointers and am excited to see where this is going to go. I think this is a good program and the instructors are passionate about the knowledge they are offering us," he added.

The course has many advantages, DePalo said.

Not only are the Soldiers receiving valuable training and getting expert advice, the State of New York is also saving money because of it, he added.

"When these Soldiers go back into the community to work, it cuts back on the cost of unemployment insurance for the state," Depalo said. "The state unemployment rate has decreased due to the VOW Act."

"The Soldiers leave here more educated about job hunting and when they finally get back to work, it's a boost to their confidence and in turn, a boost to their mental health. This is a tool to help eliminate negative stigma associated with unemployment," Depalo said.



# "Triple Deuce" deploys; Destination Qatar

Story by Eric Durr, *Guard Times Staff*



HORNELL, N.Y. -- New York Army National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Patrick Murphy congratulates Soldiers of the 222nd Military Police Company during their unit departure ceremony Feb. 22. The 140 military police Soldiers, based in Rochester with a detachment in Hornell, will train for overseas service at Camp Shelby, Mississippi before heading to Qatar. The unit will conduct security operations while deployed and is expected to return to New York in one year. U.S. Army photo by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters New York National Guard.

**HORNELL, N.Y.-- "Listen to the walls"**  
Hornell Mayor Shawn Hogan told members of the 222nd Military Police Company as they prepared to depart Hornell's historic armory for federal duty on Feb. 22.

The walls of the 100-year old armory—covered with plaques and pictures—tell the story of Citizen Soldiers leaving the Hornell Armory to fight in the Spanish American War in 1898, World War I in 1917, and World War II in 1940, the mayor said. Now 134 Soldiers of the "Triple Deuce" are adding to this legacy as they leave the armory to serve in Qatar, he added.

Hogan, was one of several speakers who honored the Soldiers during their mobilization ceremony. U.S. Representative Tom Reed, R-Corning, joined Major General Patrick Murphy, the Adjutant General; and Col. Jim Pabis, the commander of the 53rd Troop Command; in speaking to the Soldiers and their families.

Murphy assured the families that their Soldiers were ready and that their nine-month mission to secure U.S. facilities in the small Persian Gulf state would be a good one. "The Soldiers standing here are well-trained and professional," he emphasized.

"This is not necessarily a happy time but it does not have to be a sad time either," Murphy said. Soldiers join the Army National Guard

because they want to deploy and this is an opportunity for these part-time Soldiers to serve, he emphasized.

He urged the Soldiers and families to stay connected by phone and e-mail while they were apart.

The 222nd Military Police Company is headquartered at the Patriot Way Armory in Rochester and has a detachment at the small armory in Hornell. But the unit decided to conduct its farewell in Hornell because the community reached out to embrace the company, Pabis explained. The local Red Cross stepped up to host the ceremony and everybody wanted to get involved, he said.

"This is an historic moment for the entire community and for you," Hornell Mayor Hogan told the troops. "You are the sons and daughters of the City of Hornell. We embrace you and we will be here when you return."

The Fire Chief of Margaretville, a Catskill Mountain town whose

residents were aided by 222nd Soldiers following Hurricane Irene in 2011, was also there to wish the Soldiers well. The residents of the small, flooded mountain town have adopted the 222nd Soldiers as their own, said Gene Rosa.

Rosa brought Margaretville Volunteer Fire Department tee-shirts to distribute to all the soldiers.

The 222nd has been filled with qualified National Guard Soldiers from around the state who want to deploy, said Sgt. 1st Class Shane Stevens.

"It's been a great unit to be in and they know that they can trust our leadership and the leadership will guide them in the right direction and we should have a pretty good deployment," he said.

Major Karl Berg, the commander of the 222nd, said he had many Soldiers with previous deployments with Afghanistan or Iraq to help the newcomers figure out what needs to be done.

It is going to be a good deployment, Berg said.

The unit is conducting post-mobilization training at Camp Shelby, MS prior to deploying.



HORNELL, N.Y. -- New York Army National Guard Soldiers and family members of the 222nd Military Police Company reviews donated care packages for families at the mobilization of more than 140 Soldiers here during a unit departure ceremony Feb. 22. The military police Soldiers, based in Rochester with a detachment in Hornell, will train for overseas service at Camp Shelby, Mississippi before heading to Qatar. The unit will conduct security operations while deployed and is expected to return to New York in one year. U.S. Army photo by Col. Richard Goldenberg.





# Army moving women into combat positions

Story and photo by Eric Durr, Division of Military and Naval Affairs



FORT DRUM, N.Y. -Female Soldiers of the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion conduct premobilization training Aug. 10th, 2012. The battalion, based in Yonkers, deployed to Afghanistan in Oct. 2012. Courtesy photo.

**LATHAM-- Beginning in May, women will be able to fill officer and non-commissioned officer positions in the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's four combat battalions.**

The changes announced in January by the Department of Defense will allow female officers and non-commissioned officers to serve in up to 350 positions which currently only male Soldiers are authorized to fill.

The change will involve the Headquarters Troop of the 2nd Squadron 101st Cavalry, located at Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station; the Headquarters Companies of the 1st Battalion 69th Infantry and the 1st Battalion 258th Field Artillery in New York City; and the Headquarters Company of the 2nd Battalion 108th Infantry in Utica.

These include positions as medics, intelligence analysts, human resources specialists, and staff officer jobs such as battalion logistics, intelligence, personnel, chemical warfare, signal or fire support officers.

"I'm confident female Soldiers are fully capable of performing critical skills in combat units," said Maj. Gen. Patrick Murphy, the Adjutant General of New York.

"Our female Soldiers have distinguished themselves in Iraq, Afghanistan and around the world, working side-by-side with their male counterparts. I personally think this is a great

opportunity for our Soldiers and our organization," Murphy said.

Since 1994 the Army's policy has been to exclude female Soldiers from Infantry, Armor, and Special Forces elements because these units are likely to engage in direct combat with the enemy. While women have been attached to these units from other types of Army units, and have seen combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, they have not been assigned to these units at the battalion level or below.

There are currently 1,657 women in the New York Army National Guard-- 159 Officers, 23 Warrant Officers and 1,475 enlisted women--about 16 percent of the authorized total New York Army National Guard strength of 10,009.

Of these female Soldiers, 590 have served in Iraq and Afghanistan and 26 of these women have been awarded the combat action badge, noting that they have come under enemy fire. Another 13 women have earned the award and are no longer serving.

The positions which will be open to women are in the enlisted grades of sergeant, staff sergeant, and sergeant first class. Female officers will be able to fill positions open to second and first lieutenants and captains. The jobs are in the headquarters elements of the battalion.

Female Soldiers will be identified for these assignments based on their Military Occupational

Specialty (MOS), experience, and professional development needs. Women currently in 27th Infantry Brigade Combat team units will be considered first for these jobs. Female Soldiers can transfer from other states to fill these jobs as well.

"I think we have earned this opportunity with our mission execution and professionalism," said Major General Steven Wickstrom, the Commander of the 42nd Infantry Division.

"The 27th Brigade and its subordinate battalions have earned the opportunity. Now they have to demonstrate with planning, preparation, goal setting and execution that they continue to be worthy of being pathfinders as the Army makes this change," Wickstrom said.

The jobs now open to women in the battalion headquarters are:

- Human Resources Specialist (MOS 42A)
- Chemical Operations Specialist (MOS 74D) • Unit Supply Specialist (MOS 92Y) • Intelligence Analyst (MOS 35F) • Medical Specialist (MOS 68W) • Signal Support Specialist (MOS 25U) • Personnel Officer (MOS 42B) • Chaplain (MOS 56A) • Chemical Officer (MOS 74A) • Fire Support Officer (MOS 13A) • Logistics Officer (MOS 90A) • Battalion Surgeon (MOS 62B) • Intelligence Officer (MOS 35D) • Medical Service Corps Officer (MOS 70B) • Signal Officer (MOS 25A) • Physicians Assistant (MOS 65D)



# Finance Troops help put pay into state paychecks

Story by Col. Richard Goldenberg, Joint Force Headquarters



LATHAM -- New York Army National Guard Spec. Timothy Keaveny (right) assigned to the 4th Finance Detachment and Spec. Kingsley Anku from the 7th Finance Detachment join a dozen finance Soldiers inputting payroll for Soldiers who performed State Active Duty in response to Hurricane Sandy, here Nov 20. The Soldiers processed 4,100 individual pay records. Photo by Master Sgt. Corine Lombardo, Joint Force Headquarters.

**LATHAM – When New York State Military Forces are called on for disaster response, state active duty payroll processing puts those Soldiers and Airmen on the state payroll.**

With the overwhelming numbers of forces employed during the National Guard response to Hurricane Sandy last fall, however, extra manpower and expertise was needed to assist the Joint Force Headquarters and ensure personnel were paid for their service during the disaster.

“We have 10 personnel from the 4th Finance Detachment and four to six personnel from MNP inputting over 9,900 pay transactions and thousands of Direct Deposit requests,” said Col. Teresa Vancort, director of Military Personnel.

Those Soldiers augmented the state headquarters budget and finance staff, responsible for ensuring the state payroll processing during disaster response missions.

Beginning in early November, with thousands of New York National Guard military forces on duty to respond to the storm’s damage, each National Guard member required a unique payroll entry as a state active duty pay action.

Over five pay periods from November 2012 into January 2013, every servicemember needed to be entered into the state payroll system,

described Chief Warrant Officer Sean Fredericks, a Human Resources Systems Chief from Military Personnel.

The challenge is that the federal pay system for Army and Air National Guard members is distinct from the New York State payroll system. The state could not easily obtain payroll data for Soldiers and Airmen, Vancort said.

The Finance Detachment Soldiers and Military Personnel Directorate Staff were a perfect fit for the payroll actions, which peaked in mid-November with more than 4,100 pay actions for the state active duty force.

“Almost every Soldier in the mission had to be input into the state pay system as a new hire before any other transactions could occur,” said Vancort.

“This was a big activation, so having the Soldiers was a positive impact,” said Rob Martin, director of the state headquarters Budget and Finance office.

“Actually, we usually plan on bringing in Soldiers to help on processing depending on the size of the activation,” Martin said. “This particular one was large so hence the 16 (Soldiers). The agency hopes in the future to automate the process to some extent to lessen the use of uniformed personnel.”



# Troops find home, happiness in Afghanistan

Story and photo by Sgt. Lori Bilyou, U.S. 114th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**FORWARD OPERATING BASE MESCAL, Afghanistan --** Forward Operating Base Mescal has no Morale, Welfare and Recreation facility. It has no Post Exchange, no laundry drop off and no post office.

Soldiers stationed here receive mail once a month and the chow hall offers two choices at every meal: Take it or leave it.

Despite the spartan accommodations, six National Guard Soldiers with the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion from Yonkers, N.Y., call Forward Operating Base, or FOB, Mescal home and they are happy to do so.

"I looked FOB Mescal up before we got here and it didn't look very pleasant. There was a lot of talk about the food and the bad winters, but it's not that bad," said Sgt. Sergio A. Rodriguez, a light-wheeled mechanic from the Bronx, N.Y. "I guess you could say it's become home."

All of the Soldiers come from urban areas in New York: Mount Vernon, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Staten Island -- places where crowds are the norm and convenience is taken for granted. Now they live on a FOB that has fewer inhabitants than an average New York City elementary school and on which money is useless because there's no place to spend it.

"As far as my team is concerned, I feel like being away from the comforts of Kandahar Airfield has been beneficial to them," said Staff Sgt. Marcus A. Jones, a noncommissioned officer in charge of the signal team.

The Yonkers' team was not impressed when they arrived and surveyed the facilities they inherited from the outgoing signal unit.

"This place was really bad when we got here, especially the living conditions," said Rodriguez. "The tent was just a big hollow shell. It was very messy with clumps of stuff here and there -- very disorganized."

But when the outgoing unit showed the New York team around, they offhandedly mentioned a pile of wood they hadn't used and were leaving behind.

"We saw the wood as gold," said Rodriguez. "Our eyes lit up and instantly there were a million ideas of what to build. Now everybody claims we have the best living conditions in the



Staff Sgt. Marcus A. Jones, from Staten Island, N.Y., and Sgt. James P. O'Connell, from Bronx, N.Y., relax in their tent on Forward Operating Base Mescal, Afghanistan, Dec. 25, 2012. Jones is the noncommissioned officer in charge of a six man team at FOB Mescal with the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion from Yonkers, N.Y. O'Connell is a multichannel transmission systems operator with the same unit.

southern region because of the way that our tent is set up."

Inside the tent the team built individual rooms for each Soldier. They separated the living area from the work area and created a common room for meals or a movie. They built shelves to store and organize supplies and a workstation to set up computers and signal equipment.

"I think in the short time that we've been here we've accomplished great things with what we had," said Rodriguez. "And that has made everything much easier."

In addition to learning construction skills, the signal team is of course, doing their job by providing both secure and unsecured radio and satellite capabilities for the entire FOB as well as boosting the networks of other nearby FOBs.

Their small number has enabled each Soldier to cross train, which in turn ensures things run smoothly. The network specialists learned some transmission skills and the transmission specialists learned some networking. They've all learned to lay cable.

"Even Rodriguez, who's a mechanic, comes in and tries to trouble shoot some issues or helps out with installing printers or Google Earth or whatever the request is," Jones said.

Without the distractions that larger bases have, Jones and the members of his team utilize their time better than others who might waste it on video gaming or hanging out on the board-

walk like some do on Kandahar Airfield.

"People on larger bases could do more constructive things, self development things like looking into schools, applying for jobs or researching what they'd like to do when they get home," Jones said. "I think everyone on our team has found their own way or what direction they'd like to travel since they've been out here."

Jones' team can also enjoy the simplicity of a FOB with little to offer but time.

"This is probably the most peaceful state of mind I've been in, in a very long time," said Spc. John Martin, an information and technology specialist with the team. "Being here has made me realize all the stuff I used to take for granted back home. Whether it's something as simple as hot water or vegetables, being here has made me grateful for all the stuff I have back home and conscious of the fact that people in this country are not as fortunate as we are."

This might explain why this six-man team, is quite content to remain on FOB Mescal for the duration of their deployment.

As Rodriguez explains it, "It's complicated, but to me I feel like I can learn more out here than I can at KAF. I'm actually hoping that they'll fly us home from Mescal. I don't even want to go back to KAF, not even for transition. If it was my option, that's how it would be. I really like it out here."

## Keep your eyes on the road

*Commentary by Art Powell, Directorate of Communications and Public Affairs, U.S. Army Combat Readiness/ Safety Center*

Golfers know they make a better shot if they keep their eye on the ball. Likewise, motorists and pedestrians can be safer if they keep their eye on the road.

Distracted driving has become a major safety issue for American drivers. According to [distraction.gov](http://distraction.gov), more than 3,000 people were killed in distraction-related crashes on U.S. roadways during 2010.

There are many causes of distracted driving: texting, talking on a cell-phone, eating and drinking, chatting with passengers, grooming, reading, using a navigation system, watching videos and adjusting the radio, to name a few. Text messaging, however, is the most alarming distraction, for it requires virtually all of a driver's visual, manual and cognitive attention.

In an effort to address the problem, the U.S. Department of Transportation has banned commercial drivers from using cellphones while driving, encouraged states to adopt tough laws and launched several campaigns to raise public awareness about the dangers of texting and driving.

Department of Defense and Army leaders have taken their own steps to reduce distracted driving accidents. DOD Instruction 6055.04 prohibits

personnel from engaging in text messaging while driving government-owned vehicles on or off military installations, and while driving any vehicle, regardless of duty status, with government-supplied electronic equipment. It also discourages the use of hands-free devices, which inhibit safe driving.

Texting while walking can pose perilous hazards as well. Fortunately, many incidents end with only an embarrassing situation — bumping into a wall or falling without injury, for instance. Walking in front of a car, though, could produce far worse results.

Walt Beckman, a safety specialist with the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center Driving Directorate, said drivers and pedestrians can keep themselves both safe and connected with just a little patience.

"Smart motorists know the best way to talk on their portable devices is to get out of traffic and come to a stop so they can talk," Beckman said. "The same holds true with texting and walking. If you're in a busy area, stop and complete your texting in a safe place, then resume walking."

For more information on driving safety, visit <https://safety.army.mil>.



# ARE YOU READY?

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## Around the 53<sup>rd</sup> in Pictures



(TOP LEFT) Members of the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, a National Guard unit from Yonkers, N.Y., deployed to Forward Operating Base Mescal, Afghanistan, Dec. 25, 2012. The six-man team is responsible for providing both secure and unsecured radio and satellite capabilities for the entire FOB as well as boosting the networks of other nearby FOBs. From left to right: Pfc. Curtis L. Brewington, Sgt. Sergio A. Rodriguez, Spc. John Martin, Sgt. James P. O'Connell, Staff Sgt. Marcus A. Jones and Spc. Jonathan Pereira. U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Lori Bilyou. (TOP RIGHT) Major General Patrick A. Murphy, the Adjutant General of New York, listens as Staff Sgt. Willis Wynne, Brooklyn, New York, 145th Surface Maintenance Company, New York National Guard, explains the wear and use of a mine detector headset, Jan. 16. The 145th SMC is training on a variety of equipment during their annual training period at the National Maintenance Training Center, Camp Dodge, Iowa. Iowa Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Chad D. Nelson. (BOTTOM LEFT) GLENS FALLS, N.Y. - New York Army National Guard Soldiers, families, friends and supporters from the community march in the 9th annual Christmas Eve roadmarch. The march is a tribute to all military personnel serving away from home for the holidays this year. U.S. Army photo by Col. Richard Goldenberg, New York National Guard. (BOTTOM RIGHT) BROOKLYN, NY -- 1st Lt. Malinda Vazquez, the Operations Officer in Charge for Team Blackheart, checks the electronic tablets, used in the wellness checks, prior to the morning convoy to Staten Island from Floyd Bennett Field December 8, 2012. The Soldiers of Task Force Sandy perform wellness checks on the citizens of New York City in the wake of hurricane Sandy.



