



# The Rail Gunner Newsletter

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ISSUE 2

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Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Pegasus Fires, prepare to depart Fort Hood, Texas for the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., Feb. 7. The battalion will spend the next month training with and supporting 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

## Soldiers headed to the National Training Center for the first time

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez  
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

The Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery, Task Force Pegasus Fires, have spent months preparing to go to the National Training Center in Fort Irwin, Calif.

They have gone through a number of training events to include taking part in Ironhorse Rampage, a field training exercise conducted to certify the essential tasks required prior to this NTC rotation.

The battalion will be spending the next 30 days at NTC, or the “sandbox” as it is called by some Soldiers, defending an imaginary U.S. ally during a hypothetical conflict.

For some Soldiers within the battalion such as Staff Sgt. William Bishop, a multiple launch rocket system section chief with Battery B, 2-20th FAR, this will be their first time going to NTC.

“This is a new experience,” said Bishop, a native of Odessa, Texas. “I’m all down for it. This is a great opportunity.”



## The Rail Gunner Monthly Staff

**Commander**  
**COL William E. McRae**  
**Command Sgt. Maj.**  
**CSM Antonio Dunston**  
**Rail Gunner PAO**  
**CPT John Farmer**  
**NCOIC**  
**SGT Garrett Hernandez**

# RAIL GUNNER 6 & 9 SEND



**Colonel**

**William E. McRae**  
41st Field Artillery Brigade  
CDR

Oman, the National Training Center or Fort Hood, Texas, your legacy as an individual is based on your approach, hard work and effort to live a good life to the fullest.

Thank you for your service, and what you do for our great Nation and the Rail Gunner team. I truly look forward to reuniting the forward deployed element with their families, friends and fellow Rail Gunners!

**-Rail Gunner 6**



**Command Sergeant Major**  
**Antonio Dunston**  
41st Field Artillery Brigade  
CSM

Rail Gunners,

Greetings from the Middle East! As winter's chill fades and spring and warmer weather emerges, we'll spend much more time outdoors with our friends and Families.

I ask that you remain "safety vigilant" and mindful of the many dangers associated with our favorite outdoor activities. Please do not allow enthusiasm to give way to complacency.

I am extremely thankful for those who stay safe, and help their fellow Rail Gunners stay that way too.

I implore you all to continue this trend of excellence and enjoy time with your fellow Soldiers, friends and family.

As always, I expect you to all to strive for excellence in all that you do. Your commitment to the Army Values and your fellow Soldiers matters each and every day. So whether you're in Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar, Jordan, Bahrain,

Rail Gunners,

Hello once again! As Soldiers, we have the privilege of serving our great nation. Service to our country is not a right nor is it something to which we are entitled. It is a privilege, it is an honor and it is our solemn duty. And it's within the context of service that I want to talk about the importance of strong moral character.

The eyes of America are on us constantly; watching and scrutinizing everything we do. Not only do the American people expect us to be good role models, they need it from us.

Just like police and firefighters in our local communities, we must be men and women of strong character.

We cannot let the inappropriate actions of a few speak louder than the outstanding conduct that I see every day.

COL McRae and I both demand strong character here in the brigade. This demand is not exclu-

sive to the Army; it exists everywhere - military and civilian alike.

Everyone values people with the integrity to stand against complacency. Everyone values people with the personal courage to say the "hard no" instead of the "easy yes." Everyone values people with the strength of character to maintain the standard especially when it's unpopular.

As most of you are well aware, the Army is cutting back in all areas to include personnel manning. There is no more room in our Army for those who cut corners, skimp on the standard and refuse to do what is right.

If you let your character speak for itself, you will go far in this profession and will make the brigade, the Army, and our country be stronger, more professional and above reproach.

**-Rail Gunner 9**



## ***Soldiers headed to the National Training Center (cont'd)***

Bishop said during his eight years of service, he has trained at White Sands Missile Range, N.M., many times but has never trained at NTC.

Pfc. Melissa Czarnogursky, a multiple launch rocket system operations/fire direction specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Bn., 2-20th FAR, is another Soldier going to NTC for the first time.

"I'm excited to go to NTC," said Czarnogursky, an East Rutherford, N.J., native. "It's going to be a good training opportunity and my first taste of what a deployment would be like."

Czarnogursky said she is excited about employing her training in the stressful and austere conditions of the Mojave Desert.

Spc. Rahjaunn Campbell, a multiple launch rocket system crewmember with Battery B, recounts that for the last six months, his battery has been training in preparation for this culminating event with 1<sup>st</sup> BCT.

"I think NTC is going to be pretty smooth," said Campbell, a native



Soldiers from 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Pegasus Fires, prepare to depart Fort Hood, Texas for the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif., Feb. 7. The battalion will spend the next month training with and supporting 1st Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

of Pittsburgh, Pa.

While at NTC, the Soldiers will be supporting the 1st BCT with long-range fire support.

The Soldiers of 2-20th FAR have been told that once the exercise starts they can expect some rigorous training to include a lack of sleep, long convoys through rough terrain, and plenty of Meals Ready-to-Eat.

## ***Chaplain team strengthens unit resiliency, recognized as Hood Hero***

Story and photo by  
Staff Sgt. Jason Thompson  
13th Sustainment Command  
(Expeditionary), Public Affairs

Though every soldier is a hero, one particular chaplain assistant with the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) was recognized with a Hood Hero award for customer service excellence at the quarterly Hood Hero luncheon at Club Hood Feb. 11.

Staff Sgt. Kevin Stevenson was nominated by his previous command, the 41st Fires Brigade, where he established and maintained a Soldiers' Resiliency Office at the brigade's headquarters.

"It is an honor to receive this recognition," said Stevenson, "but I did not do it for the recognition, it was a great opportunity for the soldiers to stop in and take a break from their normal

grind. It was an amazing morale boost for the troops."

Stevenson said one of the biggest draws for the soldiers was the consistent supply of coffee, popcorn and other snacks available throughout the work week and even the weekends as well as a comfortable area to just sit and unwind.

"It was an excellent environment for the soldiers to decompress from the daily stress of



Staff Sgt. Kevin Stevenson (left) and Maj. Alan Irizarry, the former unit ministry team for the 41st Fires Brigade, received a Hood Hero award during an awards luncheon at Club Hood Feb. 11 for their work with the 41st Fires Bde. running a unit resiliency office. Stevenson now serves with the 13th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary) and Irizarry serves as the garrison priest for Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

## Chaplain team strengthens unit resiliency, (cont'd)

the mission," said Stevenson. "The soldiers could come in, relax for a minute, discuss life with their peers, myself or the chaplain, and move on with the mission with a full charge on their battery."

The resiliency office was a success for the command according to Maj. Alan Irizarry, the brigade's chaplain during Stevenson's time at 41st Fires Bde., who now serves as the garrison priest for Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

"During our time as the unit ministry team, the brigade had a significant

decrease in the (serious incident reports), and the success of that can be attributed to Staff Sgt. Stevenson's efforts," said Irizarry. "The brigade commander would often visit our resiliency office as an opportunity to sit down with the soldiers in a casual setting and could keep abreast of the issues and challenges facing his unit from the bottom up."

In addition to operating the resiliency office, Stevenson and Irizarry sponsored several motivational luncheons where they would volunteer to cook

for the soldiers and provide an additional opportunity to release the stress from the normal duty days.

"At the end of the day, whatever I could do to help the soldiers, that was what it was all about," said Stevenson. "The chaplain and I were doing things that were fun for us. We were available to support the soldiers with whatever situation we could. That was fun for us, but we also realized the positive impact it had on the soldiers."

## Preparing for an overhaul

Story and photos by  
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez  
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

One-by-one vehicles rolled through the gate of the 589th Brigade Support Battalion motor pool, here, en route to the temporary location Jan. 13.

After months of preparation, all of the vehicles, equipment and shipping containers were moved from one motor pool near 31st Street to its provisional home near 63rd Street.

The battalion, along with the two batteries with which it shares the motor pool, moved to the former motor pool of 3rd Brigade Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division.

"3 BEB is moving out of their motor pool, and we will be back-filling them into their motor pool," said Maj. Andrew Smith, the 589th BSB support operations officer and native of Brea, Calif. "We will occupy for about 12 months while the current motor pool is being renovated, and once that is completed, the 589th will be moving back to its original motor pool. We will still be able to continue our mission whether we are here or down the road. Things won't change once we are up and operational,"

Over the next year, the 589th



1st Sgt. Susy Corona of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Task Force Pegasus Fires leads HHB vehicles out of the motor pool on Fort Hood, Texas, Jan. 13. The 589th Brigade Support Battalion along with Battery A, 26th Field Artillery Regiment (Target Acquisition Battery) and HHB are relocating all vehicles, shipping containers and other equipment within their old motor pool, so it can be renovated over the course of the next year.

BSB's old motor pool will go through major changes as it is being renovated.

The buildings will be getting new roofs, new air conditioning units, and more office space, said Brent Cabaniss, a mechanical engineer with the Fort Hood Directorate of Public Works.

In the months leading up to the move, 589th BSB worked to ensure they would have the time to set up the new

motor pool once it was reached.

The most difficult task was getting vehicles serviced ahead of schedule, said 1st Lt. Jim Noblin, the executive officer of Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Task Force Pegasus Fires.

Vehicles are scheduled for routine maintenance and have a time frame in which it must be completed.



# Preparing for an overhaul (cont'd)

Much like a common sedan, military vehicles undergo routine maintenance like oil changes, brakes replacements, or tire rotations.

“November and December we were trying to get ahead as much as possible and as much as the service window would allow,” said Noblin, a native of Walls, Miss. “If there was something due in January, and if we could get done in December, we would.”

Now that the move is complete 589th BSB Soldiers are spending time setting up their work areas and returning to repairing equipment.



Sgt. Dannicia Noel, a Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear Specialist, guides Spc. Escoto, a Field Artillery Automated Tactical Data System Specialist, both Soldiers are from Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, Task Force Pegasus at Fort Hood, Texas, Jan. 13. The 589th Brigade Support Battalion along with Battery A, 26th Field Artillery Regiment (Target Acquisition Battery) and HHB are relocating all vehicles, shipping containers and other equipment within their old motor pool while it is being renovated over the course of the next year.

## First three female artillery soldiers join Fort Hood artillery unit

By Jennifer Hlad  
Stars and Stripes

CARLSBAD, Calif.—Melissa Czarnogursky wanted to serve her country, and she didn’t want to sit behind a desk all day. So when she heard that the Army had opened six previously male-only military occupational specialties to women, she asked for a list of the jobs.

One in particular caught her eye: Fire direction specialist. It involves collecting and transmitting data about missile and ammunition strikes, and helping those operating the multiple launch rocket systems know where to fire during combat.

The job also sounded exciting to Anika Degraff.

“I wanted to try something new,” Degraff said. “What better than to shoot rockets?”

Now, more than a year after the Army’s announcement, Pfc. Czarnogursky, Pvt. Degraff and Pvt. Larissa Schwerin are the first three female fire directions specialists with 41st Fires Brigade, based at Fort Hood in Texas.



Staff Sgt. Jarrett Simpkins, left, interviews Pvt. Anika Degraff, right, a fire direction specialist with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 20th Field Artillery Regiment, Task Force Pegasus Fires at Fort Hood, Texas, Nov. 19. Degraff is one of three new female fire direction specialists in 2-20th FAR (U.S. Army photo by Capt. John Farmer, Task Force Pegasus Fires public affairs)

The women arrived at Fort Hood about a month ago, and almost immediately went into the field for a training exercise that lasted about a week and a half. They said they were happy to get a quick immersion into the unit, and

learn new aspects of their job. But Degraff said she was also surprised at how friendly everyone was.

“They showed us the ropes,” she said of her fellow soldiers. “They just

## *First three female artillery soldiers join unit (cont'd)*

wanted to show us how to do our jobs the best way.”

Czarnogursky said the unit made an effort to make sure the women fit in and didn't feel separated from the rest of the soldiers.

Still, Degraff said it was kind of strange to arrive and have everyone already know who they were.

“I don't see us as different than anybody else,” she said. “The only thing different is where we go to the bathroom.”

The three women said the job can be challenging, but nothing a woman couldn't do.

Czarnogursky said many people were surprised when they heard about the job, but only because they didn't realize it had been opened to women. She said she hopes other women will try this and other military specialties that were previously closed to them.

“You should go for it if that's what you want to do,” she said. “As long as you can handle the job, you shouldn't be treated any differently.”

Degraff said she has been surprised by the publicity the women have received.

“We get a lot of publicity for something that isn't that big a deal to me,” she said. “I understand their

excitement, but I'm putting on the same uniform you are, man.”

Still, she said, she looks forward to seeing the first female ranger, or seeing women in other jobs that have been closed.

“Obviously we're different, but when it comes to the job, you put all that aside,” she said. “You learn to think past ... male and female.”

Czarnogursky said she is proud to be part of history, but she also hopes the attention will die down soon so they can all just work on fitting in with their new unit.

“We are just trying to do our jobs,” she said. “We're all green.”

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## *There is a first time for everything; including NTC*

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Story by  
Sgt. Garrett Hernandez  
Task Force Pegasus Fires, Public Affairs

The National Training Center, Fort Irwin, Calif. provides many opportunities for units who attend. The training at NTC, in vast expanse of the Mojave Desert, offers training like no other Army.

For Staff Sgt. William Bishop, a multiple launch rocket system section chief with Battery B, 2nd Bn., 20th FAR, TF Pegasus Fires, this was his first experience at the NTC.

“It was pretty great,” said Bishop, a native of Odessa, Texas. “It was a lot of what I hoped it would be, a lot of training, and working a lot of integrated fire support with the different units.”

The training offered Bishop and his crew valuable insight into how they fit into the fight.

The training kicked off with a scenario that included the invasion of a hypothetical hostile country. The invasion of the country started with a barrage of artillery shells and rockets. Once the dust had settled, tanks and

Bradley fighting vehicles, from 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div., moved through the area cleared by the artillery fire. The next phase of training included engaging an enemy army played by the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment.

“It opened my eyes to how it would actually go in a real battle,” said Bishop.

The exercise was designed to test the processes, tactics, and techniques from squad-level all the way to brigade-level. Not only are the individuals units challenged, this exercise tested the coordination and interaction between 1st BCT, 1st Cav. Div. and 2nd Bn., 20th FAR, TF Pegasus Fires.

“We actually got to see what we were doing with our support,” said Bishop.

Bishop said that during this exercise he and his crew were able to see the effects of their artillery strikes. They watched as convoys and their security escorts moved to staging areas to wait for the artillery to clear the way.

Besides seeing their piece of the puzzle, Bishop and this crew were able to see how others career fields, within

the Army, fit into the puzzle that is the battlefield.

At one time during the training, Bishop and his crew were removed from the training when a member of the enemy discovered the crew in their hidden position and “destroyed” the MLRS as part of the training scenario, said Bishop.

Once his crew was removed from the training they had the opportunity to see how the battalion aid station evaluates and treats casualties and how mortuary affairs handles remains.

For Bishop an eight year, the whole thing was an eye opening experience.

“We are not just firing rockets for fun, there is a battle going on out there,” said Sgt. Major Edgar Fuentes, the top enlisted advisor for 2nd Bn., 20th FAR, TF Pegasus. “We don't see the enemy like armor or the infantry but we shape the fight for them.”



# Throughout the Brigade



589th BSB motor pool move



Land Navigation



2-20th FAR Railhead operations



2-20th FAR departs for NTC



St. Patrick's Day Run



Tactical Combat Casualty Care

## ***Rail Gunners***



# REENLISTMENTS

Rail Gunners reenlisted during the months of January, February and March:

## 1-21st FAR

Staff Sgt. Collier, Cameron  
Staff Sgt. Heller, Jeffrey  
Staff Sgt. Jones, Kareem  
Staff Sgt. Mailos, Mack  
Staff Sgt. Vanmeter, Henry  
Sgt. Brooks, Tiffany  
Sgt. Garrell, Cory  
Sgt. Geossens, Joshua  
Sgt. Morgan, David  
Spc. Applegate, Samuel  
Spc. Bennett, Patrick  
Spc. Harris, Larry  
Spc. Peete, Tynesha  
Spc. Vazquezlopez, Christ

## 2-20th FAR

Sgt. 1st Class McFall, Caleb  
Staff Sgt. Bates, Ronald  
Staff Sgt. Wilson, Tavares  
Sgt. Butterworth, Michael  
Sgt. Schmidt, Brent  
Spc. Aguiar, Casey  
Spc. Escobar, Juan  
Spc. Kelley, Brandy  
Spc. Mitchell, Darielle  
Spc. Pana, Hezron  
Spc. Williams, Eddie

## 589th BSB

Sgt. Cuestas, Alessandro  
Sgt. Gilmer, Robert  
Spc. Caldwell, Alicia  
Spc. Collier, Leonardo  
Spc. Green, Tayyana  
Sgt. Henneberry, Cheryl  
Spc. Leverett, Randall  
Spc. McAuley, Tarys

## HNB

Sgt. Daley, Delaina  
Sgt. Homan, Alexander  
Sgt. Subis, Arvan

## A/26 FAR (TAB)

Sgt. Morrison, Ryan



# PROMOTIONS

We would like to congratulate all of the Rail Gunners that were promoted during the months of January, February and March:

## January

Lt. Col. Charles Kean  
Staff Sgt. Battle, Ejaye  
Staff Sgt. Mcelwain, Leonard  
Staff Sgt. Robinson, Neechelle  
Sgt. Dayes, Caleb  
Sgt. Godboalt, Andrea  
Sgt. Johnson, Taneisha  
Sgt. Poore, Gregory  
Sgt. Ruiz, Nancy  
Sgt. Stone, Fredrick  
Sgt. Upton, Billy  
Sgt. Williams, Jonathan

## February

Staff Sgt. Nicholas, Kiera  
Staff Sgt. Noel, Dannicia  
Staff Sgt. Theroux, Nathan  
Sgt. Cabbagestalk, Jermaine  
Sgt. Contreras, Jessica  
Sgt. Crull, Derek  
Sgt. Morgan, David  
Sgt. Threat, Justin  
Sgt. Valdespino, Heriberto  
Sgt. Wheeler, Justin  
Sgt. Whitt, Ryan

## March

Staff Sgt. Klug, Bradley  
Staff Sgt. Montgomery, Ricky  
Staff Sgt. Vasquez, Mario  
Sgt. Barnes, Corey  
Sgt. Brown, Chase  
Sgt. Chargualaf, Patrick

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*All editorial content of this publication is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the 41st Fires Brigade Public Affairs Office. If you have any questions, comments, concerns or suggestions contact the 41st Fires Brigade Public Affaris office at 254-287-0739 or email [john.a.farmer24.mil@mail.mil](mailto:john.a.farmer24.mil@mail.mil).*

*Check out the unit's Website at [www.hood.army.mil/41stFires](http://www.hood.army.mil/41stFires), on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/41stFiresBrigade](http://www.facebook.com/41stFiresBrigade), or Flickr at [www.flickr.com/41stfiresbrigade](http://www.flickr.com/41stfiresbrigade) for additional information.*





To send your story ideas and pictures to the 41st Fires Brigade  
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