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Leadership Corner

We are the Cal Guard

Major General David S. Baldwin



You'd be hard-pressed to convince me there's a more dynamic, capable National Guard force than the one that calls California home. And the facts back me up.

Our state's guardsmen have deployed more than 41,000 times since 9/11, responded to an emergency incident on average once every three days, lead the nation's top-ranked programs for at-risk youth, trained alongside emerging democratic militaries in Ukraine and Nigeria, fought raging wildfires throughout the year, and steadily prepared our women and men for the next call to arms.

But despite being the nation's most frequently deployed National Guard force, there remains a glaring misperception among the public as to what exactly the Cal Guard is or what it is our guardsmen do.

Too often, we're confused with the Coast Guard, active duty Soldiers or Airmen, or the Army or Air Force Reserves, and while we proudly serve alongside these sisters and brothers-in-arms, the truth remains that the National Guard is distinctive among the U.S. Armed Forces in that we serve both state and nation, that we are essential during both peace and war.

This is a message that must get out. And like everything we do in uniform, we must be intentional and strategic in communicating that message. That's why I've directed our

plans and public affairs leaders to create and execute an external outreach plan, one that will be utilized by Cal Guard commanders at every level in the communities in which they live and serve.

Central to this plan is establishing the Cal Guard identity.

This is all about making the Cal Guard both recognizable and respected across California. Otherwise, the Cal Guard risks falling off the radar of the public and our stakeholders. These are the individuals who ensure we have the funding and influence to remain a robust, viable force as we decrease our presence overseas.

In establishing our identity, we should first strive to be widely known as the "Cal Guard." Moving forward, I encourage you to use the term when referencing the California National Guard or the California Military Department. Use it when you speak, trade e-mails, or even post to Facebook or Tweet (#CalGuard).

The use of "Cal Guard" reminds the public of two critical facts: Above all, we are California's Guard, that is, we carry a responsibility to serve and protect our state; also, we stand in solidarity alongside the state's other emergency-response agencies that carry similar names, such as CAL FIRE and Cal OES. Interagency coordination is the bedrock of our state mission. One team, one fight.

In further establishing our identity, we should embrace and popularize the theme of "Keeping California Safe." This is a direct, simple reminder to our California neighbors that our calling is rooted in our state mission. Whether natural or manmade, foreign or domestic, the Cal Guard is vigilant in preparing and responding to threats that dare to harm our state's residents.

Building on this foundation of an established identity, the external outreach plan will provide key command messages and talking points, localized to units across the state.

Commanders at all levels should anticipate receiving the plan and should incorporate it into their command duties. It is my intent that both Army and Air commanders familiarize themselves with this messaging, and that they use it to proactively and regularly engage their neighboring civic and community leaders.

It is not enough that we serve our communities, we must also engage them. Town hall meetings, office calls with elected officials, community training – these are examples of the outreach efforts that are essential to strengthening the Cal Guard's reputation and impact.

The Cal Guard is a force intent on Keeping California Safe. It's why we exist, why we train, it's that to which we are called. Now let's get the message out.

Remember, safety first at A.T.

Command Sergeant Major William Clark Jr.



It's that time of year again for annual training (A.T.). This year A.T. will be combining all three components of the Cal Guard: Army, Air and the California State Military Reserve (CSMR) in a truly joint training environment.

With all of these participants and the many types of equipment that will be involved, I find it necessary to remind every one of the three key components to a successful A.T.: safety, risk management and personal responsibility.

Soldiers/Airmen at all levels will:

- (1) Stop unsafe acts detrimental to operations.
- (2) Be responsible for accident prevention by applying risk management (RM).
- (3) Comply with Army/Air regulations, the Occupational Safety and Health Act, safety regulations, the Occupational Health Program, work practices, and standing operating procedures (SOPs).
- (4) Use all personal protective equipment (PPE) and protective clothing provided, including seatbelts, according to training, hazard analyses, work instructions, and as required, by the task at hand.
- (5) Report accidents, near misses and hazards in the workplace to your supervisor or leader as soon as possible.

Composite risk management (CRM) is the primary decision-making process for identifying hazards and controlling risks across the full spectrum of missions, functions,

operations and activities. CRM is a decision-making process used to mitigate risks associated with all hazards that have the potential to injure or kill personnel, damage or destroy equipment, or otherwise impact mission effectiveness. The primary premise of CRM is that it does not matter where or how the loss occurs, the result is the same – decreased combat power or mission effectiveness. Here are five simple steps to incorporating CRM at any level:

- Step 1: Identify hazards.
- Step 2: Assess hazards to determine risk.
- Step 3: Develop controls and make risk decisions.
- Step 4: Implement controls.
- Step 5: Supervise and evaluate.

What these simple steps for safety and risk management boil down to are individual responsibility and duty.

As a Soldier or Airman, it is your responsibility to perform your duty to the very best of your ability – and to improve your performance. You are also responsible for your personal conduct and appearance. You and every other member assumed this personal responsibility when you took your enlistment oath.

Every Soldier and Airman has certain duties and responsibilities, and most have some level of authority. You should know what these are and how they apply to you. One of your obligations is to carry out your duties to standard

and to the best of your ability. Bear your responsibilities knowing that you are part of a great team that only works well when each of its members do their best. If you are in a leadership position, exert authority to build the team and develop your Soldiers. Your fellow service members are depending on you each and every day to make tough decisions based on your rank and duty position.

Noncommissioned officers, the backbone of any component, train, lead, and take care of enlisted members. The NCO provides advice to officers in every aspect of unit operations. NCOs often represent officers in their absence.

Junior enlisted are where the rubber meets the road. Junior enlisted perform their duties to standard AND to the best of their ability. All junior enlisted must be able to do those individual tasks to standard because that is where every successful operation begins – at the individual task level.

As you can see, each Soldier, Airman and CSMR member of the California National Guard plays a vital role in the overall success of this year's annual training, as well as in our day to day mission. We all bear individual duties and responsibilities to ourselves, our units and the California National Guard. I have no doubt of the capability each of you brings to the overall success of our organization as you daily live the motto, "Always Ready, Always There."

Publisher

Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin
The Adjutant General

Director of Public Affairs

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Submissions

Articles:

- ★ Articles range from 350 to 2,000 words. All articles should be accompanied by multiple high-resolution images.
- ★ Include first names, last names and military ranks. Always verify spelling.
- ★ Spell out acronyms, abbreviations and full unit designations on first reference.
- ★ Only submit articles that have been approved by your unit's public affairs officer.

Photographs:

- ★ Highest resolution possible: MB files, not KB.
- ★ No retouched photos, no special effects.
- ★ Include the photographer's name and rank, and a caption: what is happening in the photo, who is pictured and the date and location.

E-mail submissions and feedback to:

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Cover photo by
Tech. Sgt. Efrain Lopez

Tech Sgt. Michelle Brandt, 163rd Reconnaissance Wing Maintainer, inspects an MQ-1 Predator during post flight checks at dusk at the Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, California, on Jan. 7, 2012.

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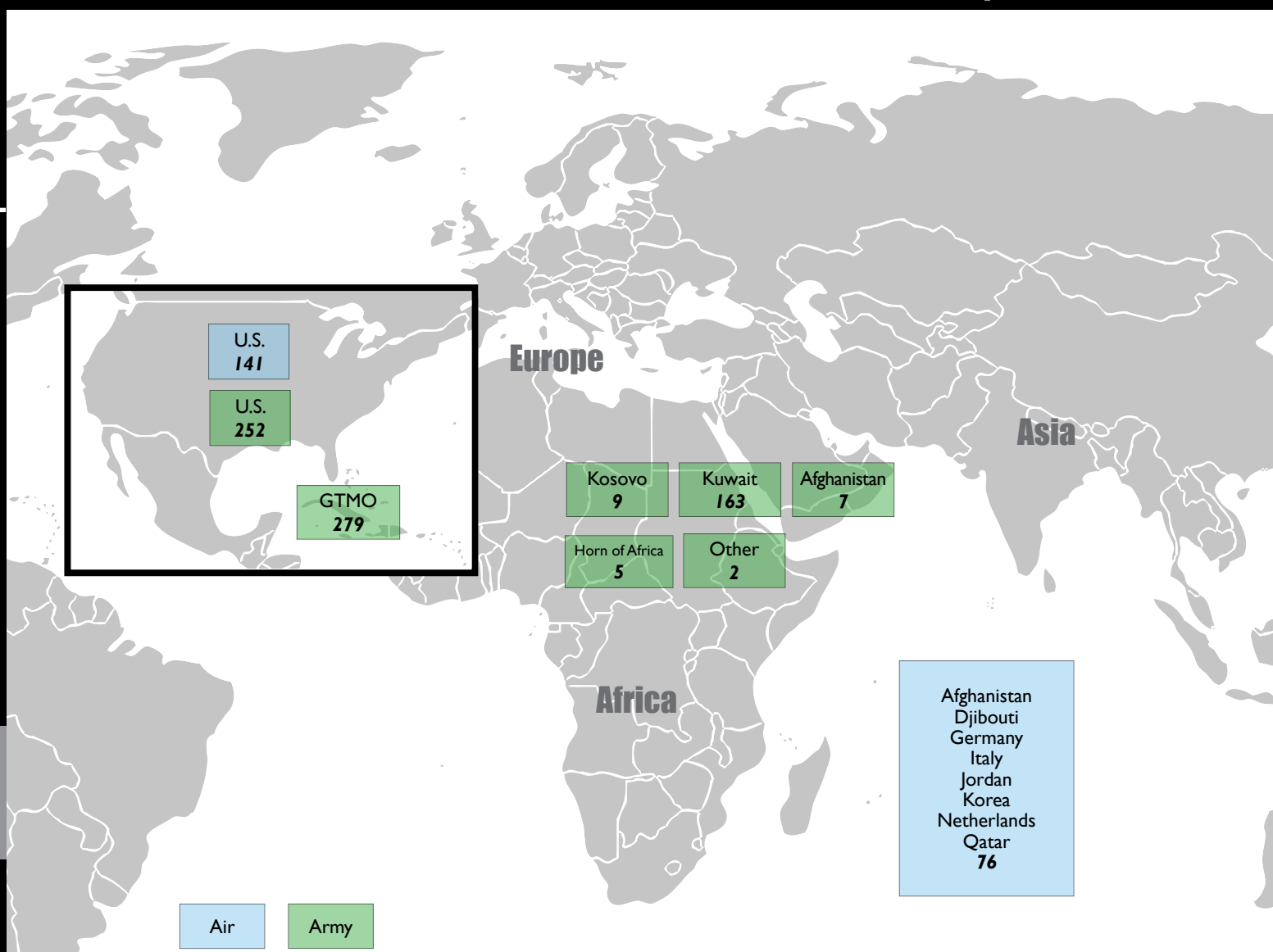
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MQ-1 Predators fly off into the sunset

The California Air National Guard's 163rd Reconnaissance Wing retires its MQ-1 Predators after a series of firsts; MQ-9 Reaper takes over mission

An Air Force MQ-1 Predator goes out on patrol from Balad Air Base, Iraq. The California Air National Guard retired its MQ-1 Predator fleet in April. Photo by Master Sgt. Beth Holliker

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

The sun has set on the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing's MQ-1 Predator mission. The final mission of the California Air National Guard unit's Predator aircraft ended at 1528 Zulu time on April 1 after eight years, 230 days, nine hours and 30 minutes of consecutive flights without a break supporting our warfighters overseas.

These Air National Guard remotely piloted warriors from the 163rd RW were operational daily on combat air patrol safely flying for 3,150 days, consistently creating a series of monumental firsts. But, as of April 1, all MQ-1 Predator operations have ceased. The Predator's replacement, the MQ-9 Reaper, has taken over and started a new era at the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing.

"The Grizzlies have safely accomplished the MQ-1 remotely piloted aircraft mission and it couldn't have been done without their dedication and professionalism," said Col. Dana Hessheimer, commander of the 163rd. "It is the Grizzlies' intestinal fortitude that allowed the mission to occur on a daily basis supporting the warfighter on the ground to the on-scene commanders in [the Cal Guard's Domestic Support of Civil

Authorities (DSCA) mission]."

The 163rd Grizzly Airmen flew 5,509 sorties in support of operational missions, logging 102,245 hours. During their many hours on duty over the last nine years, they provided armed overwatch of friendly forces, prepared areas of responsibility (AORs) overseas, helped infiltrate and exfiltrate troops and scanned roads for improvised explosive devices. The Predators provided protective cover for our service members while overseas as their eye in the sky.

The wing flew 1,070 sorties totaling 6,240.5 hours in support of training. Along with the daily missions overseas, these Airmen supported civil authorities during fires and floods stateside, conducted search and rescue exercises and simultaneously supported their flying training unit school house..

"Our 163rd Airmen have a can-do attitude and no-task-is-too-tough mindset," said Hessheimer.

The 163rd Grizzlies began their journey into the RPA mission in August of 2006. This was a first for the Air National Guard. And the 163rd RW did not stop there. It also became home to the first field training detachment (FTD) and field training unit

in the Air National Guard. In January 2009, the wing's FTD was the first in the Air National Guard to train maintenance Airmen. Then again in March 2009, it set the standard by being the first ANG RPA training unit to train pilots, sensor operators and maintenance crew chiefs for the MQ-1 remotely piloted aircraft mission.

The 163rd RW continued to make history in February 2009 with the first RPA flight in national air space.

In August 2013, the 163rd RW led the way in emergency disaster relief efforts by supporting civil authorities during the third largest fire in California's history, the Rim Fire, which threatened Yosemite National Park. The 163rd made history when it was the first RPA unit to provide real-time full motion video to the CAL FIRE incident commander on scene at the Rim Fire. This ability to provide real-time video footage to support agencies battling wildfires soon grabbed the attention of those in the business of emergency disaster relief efforts.

"We do not have to land for crew fatigue and refueling," said Hessheimer. "We provide with persistence which is more beneficial than a manned aircraft. We are not limited by the crew swaps."

The wing hopes to fly more in support of rescue missions, Hessheimer said. "We are trained to find people and vehicles. We are proven overseas and our skills could be utilized to find lost hikers, and you name it, to protect our citizens state side."

The Airmen of the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing will continue to lead the way when they receive the MQ-9 Reaper mission in July 2015.

"We are the most experienced wing in the world flying remotely piloted aircraft," said Hessheimer. "Our pilots are still here today flying daily since 2006 with a consistent and safe record of operations. Our pilots fly combat air patrol missions and have both training and operational experience with over 6,000 sorties."

Hessheimer said the 163rd pilots can be conducting overwatch in the morning and by the afternoon bring lessons learned to the students in the field training unit.

Real experience is produced at the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing with the benefit of teaching someone the next day, he added.

The business of search and rescue has been accomplished much up to this point by aircraft manned by a pilot in the air, he explained.

"You can accomplish the mission of saving lives and then go to your 9-year-old's soccer game," Hessheimer said."

Hessheimer was the pilot who ended the MQ-1 era by flying the last sortie on April 1. "It was very gratifying to see it through start to finish," he said.

He was the conversion officer when the wing pioneered the MQ-1 RPA for the Air National Guard and is now the wing commander in charge as the 163rd seizes the future.

The 163rd RW is the first remotely piloted aircraft unit to distribute video, providing access feeds to First Air Force and NORTHCOM for DSCA missions during emergencies. The approval and mission orders for these missions come directly from the Secretary of Defense. Due to legal protections, there are strict requirements on these missions for what can be looked at, what can be done with the video and when it needs to be destroyed.

In emergency response operations, the Secretary of Defense tasks the 163rd through NORTHCOM, the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center, the Air Force Rescue Coordination Center or the Joint Rescue Coordination Center Pacific.

"Our most valuable asset is our people," Hessheimer said. "With their valuable skills and dedication, we are able to assist in domestic relief efforts and provide global mission capabilities and support for troops on the ground in harm's way."

Next on the horizon for these Airmen of the future is a move to a new base.

The wing will move its operational flight from the Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville to March Air Reserve Base in Riverside in order to better support training units and disaster response missions.



LEFT: Senior Airman Michael Muela, a crew chief from the 163rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, conducts pre-flight checks on an MQ-1 Predator remotely piloted aircraft at Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, California, during a pre-flight inspection, Feb. 10, 2013. **ABOVE:** Airman 1st Class Allan Polzin of the 163rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, conducts pre-flight checks on the MQ-1 Predator remotely piloted aircraft while in communication with the pilots prior to a training flight at Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, Nov. 3, 2012. Photos by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

Team California dominates U.S. Army Small Arms Championship

By **CAPT. JASON SWEENEY**
California Military Department Public Affairs

The California National Guard has not just been winning the annual U.S. Army Small Arms Championship, it's been dominating it.

Team California won its third consecutive title at the "All-Army" competition this year, which took place Feb. 1-7 at Fort Benning, Georgia. The team of four Cal Guard infantry Soldiers fired in more than 20 matches using M16 service rifles and M9 pistols, besting 27 other squads from the active duty Army, Army Reserve, Army National Guard and ROTC.

"We knew that everybody was gunning for California," Sgt. 1st Class Sean Bayard said. "We weren't about to let them take it from us. Mentally, they were so worried about us it affected their competition. Toward the end, you could see teams kind of implode due to the pressure."

This was Bayard's second year on Team California. Bayard, a former Marine who serves in the Cal Guard's 1st Battalion, 184th Infantry Regiment, works on the civilian side as a gang detective for the Los Banos Police Department.

"All the way through the competition we remained focused," he said. "Were able to stay focused, keep it to the basics and have fun. The last day during the multi-gun competition we just ran away with it."

Fellow teammates Sgt. Javier Tapia-Garcia, Sgt. Demetrios Iannios and Staff Sgt. Leif Devemark agreed that applying the shooting fundamentals they learned in training was critical to their success.

"I had a lot of fun, to be honest," Tapia-Garcia said of the competition. "I learned a lot. I'm not going to lie. I got to make some history with the team and be up there on the podium."

He attributed Team California's success to staying cool and having fun. "You can't go out there with a negative mindset," he said. "It will jack you all up."

Tapia-Garcia served with the 10th Mountain Division in the active duty Army and now serves with the Cal Guard's 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry Regiment. On the civilian side, he is a student at Long Beach Community College. He plans to transfer to Long Beach State University this year and pursue a degree in mechanical engineering. This was his first year shooting for Team California.

Team California won the competition's top event, the U.S. Army Small Arms Team Championship, which measures a squad's ability with a rifle and pistol in a variety of events that test physical fitness, decision-making, motor skills and psychological resilience. Not only did Team California take home the top prize, it also won other team awards. Team California took first place in the competition's Multi-Gun Team Match Championship, U.S. Army Service Pistol Team Championship, Pistol Team Match with 1.5-Mile March and Paper Team Match.

"Once again, California National Guard



TOP: From left, Staff Sgt. Leif Devemark, Sgt. 1st Class Sean Bayard, Sgt. Demetrios Iannios, Spc. Javier Tapia-Garcia, win California's third title in a row at the U.S. Army Small Arms Championship at Fort Benning, Georgia, Feb. 1-7. ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: Soldiers compete at the "All Army" competition at Fort Benning. Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Raymond Piper

"We knew that everybody was gunning for California."

- Sgt. 1st Class Sean Bayard

Soldiers have shown their talents and capabilities are tops in the country," said Lt. Col. Daniel Markert, state marksmanship coordinator for the Cal Guard. "These Soldiers embody the tradition of the citizen-Soldier, and we're proud of their hard work, dedication and top-class skill."

The California National Guard Marksmanship Program, he added, invests time developing a Soldier's capabilities and leadership.

"We are developing their ability to operate under extreme pressure, and it doesn't matter what weapon we hand them," Markert said. "They'll go back to their units as subject matter experts, so they can take that expertise and that skill-building mindset to other troops."

The team members earned a number of individual awards at the contest. Iannios, of Callahan, California, took third place in the overall individual competition, making him the top shooter in the National Guard; and all four team members ranked among the top five National Guard shooters. Iannios also took second place overall in the Multi-

Gun Match and second in the Combat Rifle Excellence in Competition Match, while Devemark, of Oxnard, California, earned first place in the Pistol Match.

Devemark is a former Marine who is an electrician on the civilian side and serves



From left, Spc. Javier Tapia-Garcia, Sgt. Demetrios Iannios, Staff Sgt. Leif Devemark and Sgt. 1st Class Sean Bayard of the Cal Guard's marksmanship squad practice Jan. 30 at Camp Roberts, Calif., in advance of the Army Small Arms Championship. Photo by Lt. Col. Daniel Markert

with the Cal Guard's 1-184th Infantry Regiment. He worked as a weapons instructor for the Cal Guard's Task Force Warrior, a pre-deployment training task force that was disbanded in 2013. Devemark said he put in an effort to master the fundamentals of marksmanship while working for Task Force Warrior. He has been on Team California for the three consecutive wins.

"The second time we won it, we won it by about a quarter point," he said. "This time we spanked them by 500 points. It felt good."

He said teamwork was a big part of their success. "You can't be a superstar out there. You have to work as a team. Everybody did what they had to do."

Iannios, who works on the civilian side as a seasonal firefighter for Cal Fire and serves with the Cal Guard's 1-184th Infantry Regiment, was also on the last three winning teams.

"It felt great this year, because there were a lot of people trying to beat us," he said.

Iannios said he did a lot of physical training (PT) this year to be in top shape for the competition.

"It is advantageous to be in good physical condition," he said. "We all did PT to make sure we were physically in shape."

The top shooters at the Cal Guard's annual California Combat Match, which is held in the spring, are selected to be on Team California.

California sent two teams to the competition last year but only one this year. Due to budget constraints, there was less train-up this year than last. This year's team had only three days of training together at Camp Roberts, California, prior to the competition.

Devemark's daughter was born just four months prior to the competition. And Bayard was working extra hours at his civilian job as a detective in the two months leading up to competition due to a homicide investigation. Even so, the team members managed to maintain their focus and pull off another big win.

"Team chemistry was a big part of it," Bayard said. "We didn't track our scores as a team. We never looked at the results as a team. We're able to stay focused, keep it to the basics and have fun."

9th CST goes Hollywood

Universal Studios lends realistic setting to jet crash, radiation leak drill

By **BRANDON HONIG**

California Military Department Public Affairs

Six men in white, protective coveralls, rubber boots and helmets strode in two-man teams through an area of unimaginable destruction, where pieces of exploded jetliner were a normal terrain feature.

"I'm picking up a strong neutron emitter in this area," one said through a breathing apparatus sealed with yellow tape to the coveralls around his face. "I'm getting high readings back here, but it might be reflecting off of that [fuselage]."

At the other end of the plane, a shout rang out.

"Hey! I got something over here," the Soldier yelled to his teammate, who came shuffling quickly over. "I told you there was a spike over here."

The two conferred then used complementary devices to take separate readings of the source.

"I need two identiFINDERs for verification," one said, referring to a handheld radiation-detection device. He was speaking to his teammate and to his incident command post, which was listening in and viewing the readings on their devices. "The reading has been identified," he said after a five-minute wait for the identiFINDER to complete its analysis: "Charlie. Oscar. Five. Seven. With a confidence of 10."

Cobalt-57 is a radioactive metal used in medical tests, which is why it's present at the site of this simulated plane crash, where a notional health care company's factory once stood. In uncontrolled doses, however, radioactive cobalt can induce nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and bleeding. It can lower one's resistance to infection and cause temporary sterility. Patients may lapse into a coma or die, or they may experience long-term effects in the form of cancer.

The men and women who go in search of substances like cobalt-57 aren't your regular Soldiers and Airmen. They are highly-educated, driven, detail-oriented and physically fit. They are solid leaders, team members and communicators. They are



TOP AND BOTTOM LEFT: Members of 9th Civil Support Team survey the wreckage of a simulated plane crash at Universal Studios Hollywood April 8. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Staff Sgt. David Whitaker, left, speaks with Sgt. Rommel Vazquez, Staff Sgt. David Brian, and Sgt. Brian Quinonez as they prepare to survey the wreckage of a simulated plane crash. **Photos by Brandon Honig**

courageous enough to stare a nuclear disaster in the face and run toward it — and if the 9th Civil Support Team is any indication, they mistakenly think the rest of us are too.

"These things we are trained to combat, I wouldn't want to see anyone go through. If I have the skills to stop it, I'm going to," said Staff Sgt. Steven Kemp, one of the survey-team members who examined the wreckage April 8 at Universal Studios Hollywood, which provided a uniquely realistic setting for the exercise. "These things that could happen — civilians wouldn't walk away; everyone would try to do something."

Maybe Kemp is right, and everyone would

try to help. But few have the outstanding capabilities of the Los Alamitos-based 9th CST or its counterpart in the northern part of the state, the Hayward-based 95th CST. California is one of only three states whose National Guard can boast two of the elite domestic-response units.

"They have great expertise. Being able to turn to the CST and say, 'Hey, we need help,' is vital for the region," said Sgt. Michael Kelleher, supervisor of the Los Angeles County Sheriff Department's HazMat Detail. "There's not enough hazmat people in the world, and we are fortunate to have them in our area as a local asset."

Each CST comprises 22 Soldiers and Airmen with the skills to identify chemical, biologi-

cal, radiological and nuclear agents; project the consequences of an event; advise on response measures; and assist with requests for state and federal support.

CST members can rapidly analyze samples to identify chemical and biological agents; predict the dispersion of hazardous materials based on terrain and weather; and provide medical expertise and treatment information. The CST also brings a self-sustained decontamination facility for entry-team members and a state-of-the-art mobile communications system.

"We are subject matter experts, and we also come with a lot of response capability and gear that other response teams in the state do not have," Kemp said.

In the April 8 scenario at Universal Studios, the local fire department was first on the scene after the jet crash. Their devices indicated radiation and an unknown gas in the area, prompting the Sheriff's Department to alert the CST.

Once the flames were extinguished, the CST and the Sheriff's Department made a joint entry to the crash site to assess the scene, followed by further surveys by the CST. Analysis performed by the CST indicated which nearby areas were likely to be hit hardest by the radiation and helped Kelleher, the incident commander, plan evacuation and emergency-response activities.

"We're usually called out when the contaminant is unknown or if the locals are tied up with something else," said the CST's 1st Sgt. Laura Miller. "We work for whoever's in charge."

Miller said the CST is an exceptionally close-knit group — a second family — and it needs to be that way, because these service members rely on each other for their survival. Everyone needs to do their job perfectly, or the whole team — and huge numbers of civilians — could suffer. Fortunately the CST attracts the right kind of service member.

"CSTs are people who really want to be here — not coming out for a paycheck, but a different sense of purpose," Kemp said. "It's a challenging job, and we wear a lot of hats, but we have an inherent responsibility to the public."

Battlefield circulation

Leaders prep for consolidated annual training this summer

By **CAPT. JASON SWEENEY**

California Military Department Public Affairs

California Army National Guard Commander Maj. Gen. Lawrence Haskins conducted a battlefield circulation at Fort Hunter Liggett on March 5 during an ongoing combat support exercise.

Haskins, Col. Frank Emanuel, Col. Jeffrey Smiley and Col. Robin Pfeffer met with

Lt. Gen. Stephen Lanza, commander of I Corps out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state, to observe the exercise.

The 91st Training Division hosted the exercise for the 593rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command and Soldiers from the 7th Infantry Division and I Corps.

Haskins, Emanuel, Smiley and Pfeffer also met with Brig. Gen. Jon Lee, commander

of the 91st Training Support Division, to plan for the California National Guard's upcoming consolidated annual training event this summer, which will take place at Camp Roberts and Fort Hunter Liggett.

Cal Guard Army aviators flew Haskins and crew from Sacramento to Fort Hunter Liggett on three different aircraft: a C-12 Huron, a CH-47F Chinook and a UH-60 Black Hawk.



A Cal Guard CH-47F Chinook drops off VIPs at Fort Hunter Liggett on March 5 during an ongoing combat support training exercise hosted by the 91st Training Division. California Army National Guard Maj. Gen. Lawrence Haskins participated in a battlefield circulation in preparation for annual training this summer. Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney

Mission to Mars?

Cal Guard Tech. Sgt. Carmen Paul is one of 100 finalists for 4-person Mars settlement team

By **BRANDON HONIG**

California Military Department Public Affairs

When an Airman sets a goal, and an obstacle appears in front of her, she finds a way over or around it to achieve her objective. After years of trying, Tech. Sgt. Carmen Paul may have found her way over and around — and then some — in a most unexpected place.

“One day I’m watching some TED Talks,” Paul said, referring to a series of free video seminars available on the web, “and I ran across the CEO of Mars One. He was on there and gave his spiel, and I was like, ‘Holy crap, is this real?!’”

Millions of people likely wanted to ask the same question of the nonprofit’s CEO, Bas Lansdorp, but for a wholly different reason. To Paul and 200,000 others who applied, the idea of flying to Mars to found a human colony with three other people — and never come back — seemed like a great idea.

Paul knew when she was a teenager she was going to have a career in the military, but she had set her sights higher than most future Airmen — much higher. Growing up in Florida about 2 ½ hours from the Kennedy Space Center, Paul had seen the Space Shuttle overhead many times and had known from an early age that leaving Earth was her ultimate goal.

“I’ll never forget it — it was something so mundane as walking to the bus stop,” Paul recalled. “It was right at sunrise, and I looked up, and I stopped in my tracks because this thing [the Space Shuttle] is going up right there in the sunrise, and I’m like, ‘This is the coolest damn thing!’ ... [It became] this childhood thing that is kind of engrained: I’m going to be an astronaut one day.”

Paul enlisted in the Air Force right out of high school with a clear focus on getting into the space program, but she encountered roadblock after roadblock in a career field that was already hyper-competitive.

“There were a lot of pilot requirements I didn’t meet: I’m too short. My eyesight is not as pristine as they want it to be, and they didn’t accept laser correction then,” she said. “But I went on active duty and requested a space base — anything to do with space.”

Paul went into communications computer system control — commonly known as tech control — and learned skills valuable to her goal. But she encountered a discouraging commander and lengthy academic requirements that delayed her progress. Then, in 2011, NASA retired the Space Shuttle.

“I was pretty upset, since it was such an iconic program that I grew up with, but I knew it wasn’t the end [of my dream],” Paul said. “There are too many space nerds out there to keep human space exploration from dying out.”

Then in 2013, Paul saw Lansdorp’s talk on YouTube, explaining that four settlers would be chosen to depart Earth for Mars in 2024, following nearly a decade of intensive training.

The trip to Mars was expected to take six to eight months, during which the travelers would conduct scientific experiments and exercise three hours a day to prevent muscle atrophy and bone degeneration. On multiple occasions during the journey, the travelers likely would be forced to seek protection from solar flare-related radiation, restricting themselves to a small shelter within a water tank on board for days at a time.

And a return trip to Earth would never occur.

Paul sent in her application, including a resume, motivational letter and one-minute video, and was shocked to learn she had made the cut from 200,000 applicants down to about 1,000.

“A lot of [the candidates’] resumes were super-intimidating: Ph.Ds, doctors, engineers, astrophysicists, people who went to school for a million years and are in the aerospace industry. And some of them didn’t make it. I’m like, ‘How is this possible?’ I’m super-confused by it.”

The next round of evaluations included a medical exam and an interview via video conference, which Paul thought she had bombed, but once again she made the cut, this time to the final 100 candidates.

“I hit real hard on my teamwork and my experience in the military, and I told them a lot about my technical background, which is super-important,” she said of the interview.

Her personality, however, also played a role.

“They say they’re not looking for education or experience necessarily — they’re looking for people who get along well and are good at conflict resolution,” she said. “Conflict is going to happen no matter what, but we need to solve it very quickly or there will be major problems. ... I trust my teammates at work, and I don’t stir up trouble.”

Under Mars One’s plan, the first settlers’ supplies and building materials will be delivered to Mars in advance by unmanned flights. The settlers will use those materials to set up their habitat, and additional four-person teams



If Tech. Sgt. Carmen Paul of the Cal Guard’s 146th Airlift Wing gets her wish for a one-way ticket to Mars, she’ll have to leave her dogs behind. Photo courtesy of Tech. Sgt. Carmen Paul

are scheduled to arrive every two years.

“People think we’ll be bored [on Mars], but there will be so much construction, maintenance, research, we won’t have time to be bored,” Paul said. “The goal is to become as independent as possible.”

The settlers will have freeze-dried food and dehydrated meals reminiscent of the military’s meals-ready-to-eat, or MREs, for emergency situations, but the bulk of their food is to be grown in greenhouses on Mars.

The settlers will be able to communicate with home via video messages and emails, but real-time conversations with friends and family members will be impossible. Paul hopes she will eventually be able to communicate with her husband in real time, face-to-face on Mars.

“Well, hopefully, my plan is for him to come with me,” she said. “He has almost the exact same training background as me and the same career field, and he’s way smarter and funnier than I am, so I actually think he would make a better candidate.”

Craig Paul, who also formerly served in the active duty Air Force and the California Air National Guard, is planning to submit an application to Mars One, and if he’s rejected initially, he can continue applying multiple times for later settlement missions. If he isn’t accepted into the program by the time Paul is scheduled to leave, though, she may abandon her dream.

“I don’t know if I would continue on with it or not,” she said. “It would be difficult. When the time comes to make that decision, I’ll worry about it then.”

Of course, many other factors could derail Paul’s progress into outer space, including the mission’s massive technical challenges, which critics say could prevent Mars One from getting off the ground anytime soon. The launch, in fact, has already been pushed back to 2026. If the mission doesn’t happen or if Paul is not selected, she expects to have mixed feelings — among them, relief.

“I have a really good life here. I’m living the American Dream,” said Paul, a Chula Vista resident who works full-time in intelligence for the Cal Guard’s Counterdrug Task Force and serves with the Guard’s 146th Airlift Wing. “The thought of having to leave that behind is troubling, but this is like the biggest opportunity ever, which no one else has ever had before.”

Excitement isn’t the only thing luring Paul to Mars, though, and it’s not the purpose of the nonprofit Mars One. As Paul said, in addition to the adventure, “Ensuring humanity’s success is definitely a good bonus.”

“There have been several mass extinction events over the course of history, and it inevitably will happen again,” she said. “It’s an insurance policy if we start putting people on another planet.”

Paul will miss Earth’s mountains and sky, trees and beaches — and being able to step outside without suffocating. But in the final calculation, the tradeoff will be worth it.

“I get really excited about the thought of all the things we might develop during the mission, to kind of build a whole new way of life,” she said. “A colony on Mars — that’s really exciting, like something you think about as a kid.”



Tech. Sgt. Carmen Paul and her husband, Craig Paul, hope they both get accepted by nonprofit Mars One as settlers of the first human colony on another planet. Photo courtesy of Tech. Sgt. Carmen Paul

New Chinooks enhance Cal Guard's mission capability

CH-47F Chinook helicopters unveiled at ceremony in Stockton

By **CAPT. JASON SWEENEY**
California Military Department Public Affairs

New upgrades to an old workhorse are bringing added capability to the California National Guard's helicopter fleet.

The Cal Guard has been replacing its aging CH-47D fleet, which consists of aircraft originally built in the 1960s and '70s, with brand new, high-tech CH-47F Chinooks.

The first of 12 new CH-47F Chinooks arrived at the Cal Guard's Army Aviation Support Facility in Stockton, California, on Nov. 6, flying cross country from Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia. Ten of the aircraft have arrived in Stockton so far with two more arriving over the next several years. The Chinooks belong to Stockton-based B Company, 1st Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment, known as the Delta Schooners.

The new CH-47F helicopters are right off the assembly line with all new parts. The F-model retains the Chinook's rugged, dual-rotor, heavy-lift airframe but adds a high-tech digital cockpit that practically flies the aircraft by itself.

"The CH-47F brings improved situational awareness, reduced pilot workload, and higher operational readiness rates while maintaining all the lifting and load car-

rying capacity of the CH-47D," said Maj. John Allen, commander of the Army Aviation Support Facility in Stockton.

On Feb. 9 at the facility, the Cal Guard unveiled the new aircraft during a ceremony attended by Guard members, their families, retirees, the media and elected officials.

Rep. Jerry McNerney, of California's 9th Congressional District, was a keynote speaker at the unveiling ceremony, which took place in a California Army National Guard aircraft hangar.

"I was honored to be invited to help welcome the new Chinook helicopters to the Stockton Army Aviation Support Facility and address those present," McNerney said after the ceremony. "Stockton has the only full Chinook base in the entire state of California. The CH-47s are important military assets for our region and are vital for search-and-rescue missions and emergency response. I'm proud to support the Guard and the dedicated men and women who give their time and expertise to serve our community and our nation."

Also in attendance at the ceremony were 13th Assembly District Assemblywoman Susan Talamantes Eggman, 44th Assembly District Assemblywoman Jacqui Irwin and 26th Assembly District Assemblyman Devon Mathis.

The ceremony included several speeches and concluded with a low-level flyby, in which a CH-47F and a CH-47D zoomed over the crowd which had assembled on the airfield.

"The Chinook has been our heavy-lift workhorse for both our state and overseas missions for decades," said Col. Robert Spano, an Army aviator and the director of the California Military Department



ABOVE: A new California National Guard CH-47F Chinook is tailed by an older CH-47D over the San Francisco Bay on Jan. 9. **Photo by Master Sgt. David Loeffler** **RIGHT:** Rep. Jerry McNerney, of California's 9th Congressional District, checks out a new Cal Guard CH-47F Chinook with California Army National Guard Commander Maj. Gen. Lawrence Haskins during an unveiling ceremony for the aircraft in Stockton, Calif., on Feb. 9. **Photo by Master Sgt. David Loeffler** **BOTTOM LEFT:** California Army National Guard aviator Capt. Ben Bowman conducts an interview with the media during an unveiling ceremony of the Cal Guard's new CH-47F Chinooks in Stockton on Feb. 9. **Photo by Capt. Jason Sweeney**



The old workhorse first joined the Army's aircraft fleet in 1962. While the Army has long since retired other helicopters from that era, such as the iconic UH-1 Hueys and AH-1 Cobras, the Chinook is still flying strong.

Its versatility, usefulness and power, along with some high-tech upgrades, mean the aircraft will be a part of Army Aviation for decades to come.

Cal Guard helicopters rescue civilians in Sierras

A lost hiker and a father and his children are hoisted to safety in separate mountain rescue operations

By **CAPT. JASON SWEENEY**
California Military Department Public Affairs

California Army National Guard aviators rescued a 22-year-old hiker in Madera County in January and a father and his two young children in Sierra County in May.

The 22-year-old hiker became disoriented while in the area of Mammoth Mountain and had slept outside in the snow.

The California Office of Emergency Services and the Madera County Sheriff's Office requested assistance from the Cal Guard after receiving a 911 call from the hiker via cell phone.

On Jan. 29, the California Army National Guard de-

ployed a CH-47D Chinook helicopter from Stockton to search for the hiker as a storm headed toward his location.

Cal Guard aviator Capt. Ben Bowman coordinated the rescue from Stockton while talking to the hiker over the phone.

"Our intent was to recover him prior to nightfall and before the storm got there," Bowman said.

Around 4:30 p.m., the hiker was hoisted up into the Chinook from a steep slope with 100-foot trees.

In May, a 41-year-old Oakland man, his 5-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter were reported missing in Sierra County after a camping trip. They were missing for two days when the Sierra County Sheriff's Office requested

Cal Guard support for the search-and-rescue operation being conducted by the sheriff's office, CAL FIRE and the California Highway Patrol.

On May 12, the California Army National Guard provided a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and an LUH-72 Lakota helicopter with Forward Looking Infrared Radar (FLIR) and crews for night search operations.

The Cal Guard aircraft soon located the father and his children in a canyon and hoisted them out to safety.

"I'm exhausted," the father told ABC News 10 after the rescue. "I want to thank the National Guard and everyone who helped find us. I really appreciate it. I can't thank you guys enough. We are so grateful for everyone who looked for us and I'm so sorry that I caused any worry."

Electronic warfare crucial to mission readiness

The 129th Rescue Wing trains to take on SAM threat in two-week SoCal exercise

By **SENIOR AIRMAN BRIAN JARVIS**
129th Rescue Wing Public Affairs

Given the high-tech tactics that constitute the combat theater in the 21st century, the difference between life and death can boil down to a blip on a radar screen.

Elements of electronic warfare, in particular surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), were developed during World War II and used extensively in the Vietnam War.

Forty years later, the ever-present threat of a SAM—especially while in a deployed environment—is what led more than 40 California Air National Guardsmen from the 129th Rescue Squadron to convene in early March for a week of electronic warfare training.

'Wars are changing'

"The theaters in Afghanistan and Iraq didn't really have a radar threat based on the enemies we were fighting, so it's fortunate that we haven't had to deal with it in the past 10 years," said Maj. Brian Finnerty, 129th Rescue Squadron Commander and helicopter pilot. "However, the world is changing, the wars are changing, and we don't know what the future holds. This is one thing we may have to encounter."

Positioned at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, the training included three days of flying the rescue wing's HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters over the U.S. Army's Yuma Proving Ground near the Arizona-Mexican border, as well as two days of over-water training along the Southern California coastline. According to Finnerty, the locale provided the needed "happy medium" between desert and ocean.

With the 129th Rescue Squadron on schedule to deploy later this year, Maj. Travis McDevitt said the training improves the ability of Airmen to operate safely in a hostile environment, to discern which threats cannot be defeated and how to survive those that can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

"To protect ourselves and get away from threats requires four people to work together closely, and that interaction is what improved the most," McDevitt said. "It's the satisfaction at the end of three days, of seeing an air crew that was making mistakes, come out of an exercise successfully defeating a weapon system that just two days prior was shooting them down."

A helicopter pilot with the 129th since 2012, McDevitt said the resurgence of electronic warfare training is in tune with a "renewed focus on a sophisticated enemy"—one which makes the 129th's mission of personnel recovery even more critical.

"I've been doing this for fifteen years, and the rescue mission is certainly the most rewarding thing about flying for the Air Force," said McDevitt. "It feels really good to realize someone is going to go home and see their friends and family again, and not be in a coffin on that trip."

Teamwork

According to gunner Staff Sgt. Edward Drew, there's no such thing as rank in a helicopter, only crew position.

"Egos go out the window and take a side step to focus on the mission itself and the safety of the crew," Drew said.

In addition to honing his skills inside a 'helo,' the training provided Drew the chance to sit inside an enemy vehicle equipped with operational electronic warfare systems, and watch them go to work.

"We know what the threat is, we have all this info, but we didn't know how the threat actually operates. Being able to crawl inside really helped put together a full picture of the defenses they're using, of what the people who oppose us have to work with. It adds a human factor that you can use for the fight."



TOP AND CENTER LEFT: California Air National Guardsmen assigned to the 129th Rescue Squadron, look out at the desert floor at the Yuma Training Range, California, from an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter on March 10. The guardsmen were conducting a week of electronic warfare training to improve the ability of Airmen to operate safely in a hostile environment. **RIGHT:** Senior Airman Michael S. Dewein, assigned to the 129th Maintenance Group, performs maintenance on an HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter during multi-day deployment training at Marine Corp Base, Camp Pendleton, California. **Photos by Senior Airman Rachel Kane**



Mission support

Though it doesn't grab headlines, the biggest challenge within large-scale training missions is often logistics—moving helicopters, hazardous materials, life-support equipment and dozens of personnel to an unfamiliar environment and providing continuous support—not to mention a crew of maintainers working around the clock to keep the aircraft flying and deal with last-minute changes.

This time around, a case of busted tail rotors required Airmen from the 129th's base in Mountain View to make a last-minute dash by truck to haul in replacements parts.

"We have to make sure aircrafts are fully mission-capable. And when they're not, we have to get creative," said Master Sgt. Cleve Burt, who has spent six years with the 129th Maintenance Squadron. "But we have a good working group of primarily a young team now. It can take several years for them to get up to speed, but the young kids coming up have a lot of smarts to them, and different ways of looking at things."

Communication Navigation Specialist Airman 1st Class Robin Gaetos is one such example. Having joined the

129th in 2013 following her enlistment, this was her first training mission—and she will deploy for the first time later this year.

"Being new can be nerve-racking, but the training is going to help me handle the pressure of knowing my specialty and knowing what to do, using the resources I have, especially when they're limited," Gaetos said. "Hopefully, I can be as good as the people who train me."

Deployment ready

With more than 1,000 saves to its credit, the 129th is tasked to perform personnel recovery anywhere in the world—a complex and rigorous mission that requires constant training across a multitude of environments.

The weeklong training mission to Camp Pendleton, therefore, ensured that participants keep their certifications current and remain proficient.

"By getting the crews and maintainers down here—to a deployed location if you will—we really focused on flying operations and reinvigorated our tactical training," said Finnerty. "This week is one building block toward getting this squadron ready to deploy."



TOP LEFT: The Air Force Reserve's 452nd Air Mobility Wing loads a Coast Guard boat onto a C-17 Globemaster at the Cal Guard's Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos on April 16 as part of exercise Patriot Hook. **Photo by Brandon Honig** **RIGHT:** California Army National Guard Soldiers in Task Force Medevac train for this year's wildfire season aboard a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter at Folsom Lake, in Folsom, California, on April 2. **Photo by Sgt. Ian Kummer** **BOTTOM LEFT:** Bianca Graulau, a news reporter for Sacramento's KXTV News10, eyes a UH-60 Black Hawk on April 11 near the Pardee Reservoir during wildland firefighting training with CAL FIRE and the California National Guard. **Photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza**

A California Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter trains for the upcoming wildfire season during a training event with CAL FIRE in Lone, California, on April 11. The helicopter and crew are filling a "Bambi bucket" in the Pardee Reservoir before practicing a water drop. **Photo by Master Sgt. Dave Loeffler**



At a Glance



An HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopter flight engineer assigned with the 129th Rescue Squadron, performs a pre-flight inspection on March 11 during multi-day deployment training at Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton, California. California Air National Guardsmen from the 129th Rescue Squadron conducted a week of electronic warfare training to improve the ability of Airmen to operate safely in a hostile environment. **Photo by Senior Airman Rachel Kane**



MIDDLE LEFT:The 40th Combat Aviation Brigade's color guard presents the colors during a change of command ceremony at Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos, California, on Feb. 27. Col. Jeffrey Holliday assumed command of the brigade from Col. Todd Lewis. **Photo by Staff Sgt. (CA) Gene Arias** **RIGHT:**The Sons of Liberty Los Angeles chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution held its 33rd annual "Massing of the Colors" at Forest Lawn, Hollywood Hills, on Presidents Day, Feb. 16. The event included a formation flyover, a cannon and mortar salute by the California Center for Military History and a solemn flag presentation by the Blue Eagles Honor Guard of the California Air National Guard. **Photo by Staff Sgt. (CA) Gregory Solman** **BOTTOM LEFT:**The 33rd annual "Massing of the Colors" was held beneath the Hall of Liberty's "Birth of Liberty" mosaic at Forest Lawn, Hollywood Hills, on Presidents Day, Feb. 16. **Photo by Staff Sgt. (CA) Gregory Solman**

Parachute Riggers: One ripcord at a time

Silicon Valley-based Airmen from the 129th Rescue Wing pack parachutes in the Horn of Africa



LEFT: Senior Airman Mike Garcia, 82nd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron aircrew flight equipment rigger, secures the suspension lines onto the outside of a parachute using rubber bands, Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, March 26. The correct tolerances must be maintained to ensure proper operation. **RIGHT:** Senior Airman Dwain Miller, 82nd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron aircrew Flight Equipment rigger, carefully stacks the folds of a parachute during packing, at Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, March 26. **Photos by Staff Sgt. Carlin Leslie**

By STAFF SGT. CARLIN LESLIE
Combined Joint Task Force - Horn of Africa

The U.S. Air Force uses more than 20 types of parachutes to conduct personnel recovery, air-drops and asset insertion into a combat zone. Knowing what type of parachute is required for each mission and verifying the safety of those parachutes is the job of a USAF parachute rigger.

This responsibility on Camp Lemonnier, Djibouti, is up to the 82nd Expeditionary Rescue Squadron Aircrew Flight Equipment riggers, deployed from Moffett Federal Airfield, California, 129th Rescue Wing, Air National Guard.

"Being a rigger, everything we do has to be 100 percent," said Tech. Sgt. Isaac Corniel, 82nd ERQS AFE noncommissioned officer in charge. "There is no room for mistakes. There's no room for error. Their lives are in our hands. Even if we have a small twist in a line we want to make it straight, as it can mean someone's life."

Being deployed to Djibouti has allowed the 82nd ERQS AFE to train on real world missions unlike any other training they can get at home station.

AFE are required to pack a variety of chutes in a variety of conditions throughout the world to meet mission needs. The parachutes can take from 35 minutes to several hours to inspect and repack. Along with the complex quality control measures that must be performed.

"We just try to be the best that we can. We preach quality, quantity and efficiency," Corniel said. "We are combined with a variety of military forces being deployed, so our guys get to train on more scenarios than they would at home."

According to Corniel, being deployed to Africa has allowed the team here to have hands-on experience with more air drop missions, where as back home they would only provide chutes for one or two drops a month. The AFE Airmen have grown their understanding on the job to make their deployment a success.

"The guys have been great. They all live up to the riggers creed; they know now what it is to be a rigger," Corniel concluded. "We are a part of something special and we strive to keep the history of excellence between the pararescue teams and riggers."



Silicon Valley Air Guardsmen help rescue Saudi pilots

By 1ST LT. RODERICK BERSAMINA
129th Rescue Wing Public Affairs

Pararescuemen from the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing were involved in the rescue of two Saudi Arabian Airmen from the Gulf of Aden after their two-seater F-15 fighter jet crashed March 26.

Pararescuemen (PJs) and Combat Rescue Officers (CROs) of the 129th Rescue Wing's 131st Rescue Squadron have been providing personnel recovery support for Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA) during their deployment to the region. The Cal Guard Airmen are trained to execute personnel-recovery missions anywhere in the world, from arid deserts to snow-covered mountains.

"No matter what the environment or the circumstances, our Air Guardsmen always rise to the occasion," said Col. Gregory F. Jones, 129th Rescue Wing Commander. "In every rescue our Air Guardsmen perform, they live up to the Air Force Rescue motto: 'That Others May Live.'"

About 30 California Air National Guardsmen from the 129th Rescue Wing deployed from here to the Horn of Africa, Saturday, January 24 in order to provide combat rescue support to ongoing operations there. While deployed, these Airmen have been supporting CJTF-HOA's ongoing multinational, joint, interagency, intergovernmental counter insurgency and stabilization operations throughout the region.

Stock photo courtesy of the 129th Rescue Wing



Cal Guardsman wins Missile Defender of the Year

By **BRANDON HONIG**

California Military Department Public Affairs

The men and women of the 100th Missile Defense Brigade (MDB) live by the motto "300 Soldiers protecting 300 million Americans," and with a responsibility that great — a no-fail mission that citizens unwittingly rely on every day for their lives — missile defenders take their jobs very seriously.

"We're on standby to make sure nothing happens to our country," California Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Norman Perkins said. "On Saturday night at 2 a.m., [I'm] sitting in a 15-by-15 [foot] room with no windows thinking, 'I wonder if anything will happen tonight' - and you hope it doesn't. Your best day is when nothing happens."

"The 300" are spread across three states - California, Alaska and Colorado - including 14 Soldiers of the California Army National Guard who are stationed at Vandenberg Air Force Base, roughly midway between Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo. Though the California contingent makes up less than 5 percent of the 100th Missile Defense Brigade, those Guardsmen have already made a big impact on the missile defense world, with two members of Detachment 1, 100th MDB, holding the prestigious Missile Defender of the Year Award, which has been presented only five times by the nonprofit Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance.

"I was given the award, but quite honestly it's a team effort," Perkins said a week after the Jan. 10 awards ceremony in Alexandria, Virginia. "The award and the coin and all that, I showed it to my team members and said, 'Alright, now we've got two winners here at Vandenberg, so next year one of you all needs to go win it.' We've got a lot of great people here working together."

Vandenberg's other winner, Staff Sgt. Aric Wilkins, is a newcomer to Detachment 1, having won the Missile Defender of the Year Award in 2012 as a member of the Alaska National Guard. The two have become well-acquainted since Wilkins joined the Cal Guard in May, partly because Wilkins took over Perkins' old job as the detachment's training noncommissioned officer (NCO).

With that off his plate, Perkins now only serves as the unit's administrative NCO, family readiness coordinator and master resilience trainer. That is, of course, in addition to his primary role as a command launch equipment (CLE) operator.

"Unlike a unit that would have 100 to 200 people and have



Staff Sgt. Norman Perkins, California Army National Guard's Detachment 1, 100th Missile Defense Brigade, accepts the Missile Defender of the Year Award on Jan. 10 in Alexandria, Virginia. Photo courtesy of the Missile Defense Advocacy Alliance

a [personnel section, intelligence section, training and operations section, supply section, et cetera], we make up all those," Perkins said. "On an annual basis, [Detachment Commander] Capt. [Juan] Andrini has to look at all the things we need to accommodate and who needs to be in which roles, and we rotate through them so we all get training."

"Wearing these dual hats has created a lot of learning experiences for me," Perkins added, "and it's one of the reasons I believe I was nominated this year and awarded this great honor."

Wilkins, who knows a little something about the award, agreed that Perkins' well-rounded resume and tireless work ethic earned him the recognition.

"He does his job, he knows his job, and he has gone above and beyond to help any of us out with any issues we might have had," Wilkins said of his colleague. "[Earning the award] is about taking the time to teach new Soldiers, dig in and study all the aspects of your job and show that willingness to learn and go the extra mile."

"There is so much detail and so many different scenarios that could possibly happen," Wilkins said, "and when

something happens, it is quick. You need to know exactly what to do and do it."

Missile defense is a highly technical and demanding field, and the schools missile defenders attend are very intense, Perkins said. One class, for instance, requires soldiers to figure out how their computer system computes the trajectory of a Ground-Based Interceptor missile.

"Unlike a traditional military school, where they teach you something like how to tear apart a tank and put it together, the [missile defense] school teaches you how the system works - how it takes information from sensors around the world and compiles the information and how the parts interrelate. Then, when you get to your duty station, they teach you your actual role."

Perkins, a Florida native who joined the active duty Army as a track mechanic in 1986 and later enlisted in the Army Reserve as a wheel mechanic, is now making use of his fifth military occupational specialty. He joined the Florida National Guard in 2004 as part of a multiple-launch-rocket-system unit and was selected in 2009 for an Active Guard Reserve job in Alaska, where he began working in missile defense.

The institutional knowledge Perkins brought with him from Alaska is invaluable, Andrini said, as it makes him a jack-of-all-missile-defense-trades. Even more valuable, though, the commander said, are Perkins' initiative and dedication. He pointed to Perkins' work on the CLE mission, which the detachment just received last year, as an example.

"He's been a pioneer in transitioning us to that additional mission. He developed standard operating procedures and a checklist, and he helped train the rest of us to work in that position," Andrini said, noting that 11 of the detachment's 14 members are currently qualified CLE operators.

Perkins also has shown his above-and-beyond attitude in his role as administrative NCO, identifying several Soldiers who have earned commendations - many of which the Soldiers themselves did not know they had earned - and processing the paperwork. He also frequently organizes morale, welfare and recreation events, and he has spearheaded a number of charitable initiatives involving the detachment and the surrounding community.

"He's constantly going, like the Energizer Bunny," Andrini said. "All the time, I have to tell him to go home. But [to him] it's all about selfless service."

Brig. Gen. Reddicks takes charge of JFTB

By **BRANDON HONIG**

California Military Department Public Affairs

Brig. Gen. Nathaniel S. Reddicks has achieved a lot in the last few months — in fact, he attained two military distinctions that were not even among his career goals.

Reddicks' career aspirations were once capped at the rank of colonel and the command of an Air Force mission support group (MSG), but he achieved full-bird status years ago, and he has twice served as commander of an MSG.

Nonetheless, he kept striving, and in December he pinned on a general's rank while serving as the assistant adjutant general—Air for the California National Guard. Then in March he arrived at Joint Forces Training Base (JFTB) Los Alamitos — a California Army Guard installation — to assume full-time command of the base.

Reddicks, who noted that commanding an MSG is similar in many ways to running a base, is the first Air Force officer to command JFTB, which is run by the Army Guard but houses a variety of interagency partners and hosts training events for every military component.

"Of all the California Army National Guard installations, JFTB is the most 'joint,' and we have the potential to go even further with multi-component use," Reddicks said, discussing his selection as commander by Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the adjutant general of the Cal Guard. "The adjutant general's solution [of putting me in command] was non-standard, but it's going to work well. That's the adjutant general we have — he thinks outside the box, and this is a forward-thinking decision."

Baldwin's vision for the base, Reddicks said, is for JFTB to provide an optimal platform for rapid support to civil authori-

ties in the case of a domestic emergency or natural disaster. The Los Alamitos Army Airfield on the base is the only military airfield in Los Angeles and Orange counties, making it a vital resource for emergency responders.

"We are located within a population of nearly 15 million people, and we have the ability to provide all military services and handle any aircraft other than a B-52," Reddicks said.

He added that JFTB Los Alamitos has strong ties to the Southern California community and the various municipalities surrounding the base, which will be a continued focus under his command. Annual events at JFTB, such as the Race on the Base; the Wings, Wheels and Rotors Exposition; and the July 4th Spectacular attract thousands of attendees, and many smaller events throughout the year keep community members coming back.



Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Reddicks

On the military side, Reddicks thinks JFTB can do even more than it already does to support its military partners.

"Units [in all components] in Southern California should know that coming to JFTB is smarter and more cost-effective than going to other bases for exercises and training events," he said. "The support platform is here, and we are available to fill their needs."

Commo specialists make waves

49th MPs test their communications skills after being dropped by a Chinook in a remote location

By **MASTER SGT. PAUL WADE**
California Military Department Public Affairs

Nothing. That is what Staff Sgt. Darnell Sanders heard on the other end of his radio.

"Maintaining communications on military radio systems is simple in concept and theory," said the Information Technology Specialist assigned to the 49th Military Police Brigade. "But the practical application can be trying at times." Sanders sighed but maintained a calm demeanor. He hit a few buttons and turned some knobs.

"During training we control a good majority of the variables, like the environment. The location we train in could very well determine the mission's success or



Staff Sgt. Darnell Sanders, of the 49th MP Brigade, drives an ATV while guided by a crew chief from Bravo Co., 126th Aviation Regiment, on Feb. 12. The ATV and an MP communications team were flown to a remote Northern California location in a CH-47F Chinook helicopter. Photo by Master Sgt. Paul Wade

failure," Sanders continued as static hissed back at him.

"Outside of training there are more uncontrollable variables due to the nature of the situation. We don't get to pick where we're needed or when, which in my opinion are two of the biggest challenges we face," he said. He then turned to confer with his communications team, a critical arm of the Homeland Response Force (HRF) of the California National Guard (CNG).

"We wanted to reinforce our troubleshooting procedures. Rarely do we get the luxury of all our equipment working on the very first try, so ensuring our team knows how to properly address the problems is key to what we do," said Sanders.

It appeared he would get his wish as his team, consisting of Sgt. Nicholas Emmerling and Specialists Brandon Souza, Ana Matia and Bryania Tsui, huddled under the warm sun on a grassy hill fiddling with enhanced handheld multiband radios, push-to-talk and satellite phones and something called an Iridium SHOUT Nano.

"This is a HRF related exercise. We were looking to test our radios in a different type of environment as well as try out some new devices recently fielded to us," said Sanders.

So a Chinook helicopter, flown by Bravo Co., 126th Aviation Regiment out of Stockton, plucked the communicators from Travis Air Force Base in Fairfield on Feb. 12, 2015 and deposited them and their all-terrain vehicle in the middle of a remote rolling hill ranch dotted by knotted trees and roaming cattle. The reassurance of a friendly voice, either at their unit or at the CNG Joint Operations Center in Sacramento, would have to ride the electromagnetic waves more than 80 miles away.

The importance of their jobs, the ability to reach someone, cannot be understated. We are all tethered to our phones and even the slightest dropped call or "sorry, you're breaking up" can be beyond frustrating in our daily lives. Imagine if lives depended on getting through?

Each member of the team glided back and forth searching the airwaves for that magical grasp of a signal.

As with most of the National Guard, the various elements of the HRF would dive into a disaster area during a state or national emergency to help mitigate the loss of life and cordon off or block and brace structures to avoid further devastation. Cell phone coverage could be nil due to an earthquake or flood. Emergency first responders, if not able to coordinate rescues, call in reinforcements, update incident command centers or inform displaced citizens, might as well be shouting at each other using two cups and some string.

The team suddenly perks up. A voice is heard through one of the receivers. A connection is made. "Read you loud and clear" is one of the best replies a communications specialist can get.

"Mission success! We were able to communicate with all the assets we brought with us," said Sanders. "Thanks to the 126th, we got to test in an unfamiliar setting, troubleshoot and work out an actual practical application scenario," Sanders continued as the team squeezed back into the Chinook and headed for home.

"We feel that being able to solve real unforeseen problems versus induced or manufactured problems heightens the training value of the mission because it more accurately reflects what's apt to happen in a real situation," concluded Sanders.

40th CAB gets a new commander

By **COL. (CA) RICHARD LALOR**
Joint Forces Training Base Public Affairs

The flight line at Los Alamitos Army Airfield served as a fitting location for the California Army National Guard's 40th Combat Aviation Brigade change of command ceremony on February 27th where Col. Jeffrey Holliday assumed command from Col. Todd Lewis.

Lewis served as 40th CAB commander for 13 months and is succeeded by Holliday, who served as his executive officer.

Officiating the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Mark Malanka, Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver) of the 40th Infantry Division.

"It is an honor to officiate this change of command between two proven combat leaders," said Brig. Gen. Malanka. "Todd Lewis took command of a great Brigade and took it to the next level. Jeff Holliday is the right officer at the right time and his vast experience in the aviation community will be of value as the unit prepares to go into harm's way." Malanka awarded Lewis the Meritori-

ous Service Medal and he was honored with the Order of St. Michael by the Army Aviation Association of America. He was also presented with a framed replica of the Brigade colors as a memento of his command tour.

Under Lewis' leadership, the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade participated in the largest air assault training in over a decade during 2014 annual training. It supported more than 700 flight hours and dropped more than two million gallons of water combatting wild fires, participated in the Southwest border mission and introduced the CH-47F Chinook to the Cal Guard's aviation arsenal.

These achievements took place while the Brigade was preparing for Warfighter and ramping up to deploy overseas later this year.

"It is with great sadness, but with great understanding that I turn over command to Col. Holliday," said Lewis. "The defense of our nation depends on an unbroken chain of selfless soldiers... I am better for it, the Guard is better for it and the bad guys are worse for it."

CAB takes big step toward deployment

By **SGT. IAN KUMMER**
40th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

More than a thousand men and women from the California Army National Guard's 40th Combat Aviation Brigade converged on Camp Roberts March 24-30 for crucial preparation for their scheduled deployment to Kuwait later this year.

The troops were on the camp for Soldier Readiness Processing (SRP), which gave them a valuable opportunity to address any medical, personal, family or financial needs that could come up during their mission overseas.

The scheduled deployment later this year will be the largest overseas mission the CAB has performed since its return from Iraq in November of 2011. In that deployment, the unit provided critical support as the only aviation brigade in the country during Operation New Dawn. During the deployment, the CAB performed more than 19,000 aviation missions and logged more than 121,000 flight hours.

Many familiar faces from the Iraq mission and earlier deployments showed up to the SRP, but they were not alone. They formed ranks with many new comrades drawn from

other elements of the California Guard, and even brand new Soldiers experiencing their first year in the military. Regardless of background or experience, every one of these service members lined up at various stations that covered everything from dental exams to tax forms, which all needing to be finished before deploying, both for themselves as a team, and for their families back home.

"This wasn't as bad as I thought it would be, and it was cool to get to know the people I'll be deploying with," said Spc. Jessica Peebles, an aviation operations specialist from the CAB's Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

Each station at the SRP was manned by subject matter experts ready to answer questions and provide Soldiers with the help they needed. Issues needing more complex solutions were identified to be addressed in the upcoming months.

Staff Sgt. Maggie Ortiz, a Baldwin Park resident and the personnel noncommissioned officer in charge for the 1-140th, explained the purpose of the weeklong SRP process. "The SRP lets us know who has issues we can fix now to make the Soldiers more mission ready," she said.

3-140th Soldiers get ready for fire season

By **SGT. IAN KUMMER**

40th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

The wildlife of Ione got some unusual visitors one cool California morning.

An open field that had been empty just a few hours earlier quickly filled with activity. Soldiers scrambled to unload vehicles and set up a large tent, filling it with hundreds of pounds of equipment and surrounding it with antennae and generators. The treeline roared to life as helicopters soared back and forth and into the horizon.

While this was no doubt a strange scene to the various critters of Northern California, as denizens of the Golden State they might have appreciated the goal of the day's exercise: to prepare for the upcoming wildfire season.

California Army National Guard Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion, 140th Aviation Regiment's tactical operations center (TOC) conducted an Emergency Deployment Reaction Exercise (EDRE) during CAL FIRE's annual wildfire training April 11-12 at Ione, California.

A large wildfire during the hottest months of the year might require hundreds of personnel and dozens of aircraft, emergency and support vehicles.

Preventing accidents and safety issues from arising requires diligent planning and rehearsals. A good TOC is a "one-stop-shop" where people from multiple units and agencies can meet and coordinate.

"They can come to straight us, instead of wasting time trying to track down the right person in one of the crews," said Sgt. Jason Frost, an aviation operations specialist from

the 3-140th's Headquarters and Headquarters Company.

The members of the TOC are split between Mather and Stockton, but came together today as one team like they would in the event of an actual wildfire.

"This is great training for the Soldiers," Frost said. "This gets them out of the office and into the field to support aviation operations."

The TOC is typically operated by 10 to 20 Soldiers split into shifts operating around the clock. Everything that happens under their watch is meticulously recorded and reported.

Troops inside the TOC tent are able to watch live video feeds of the aircraft and ground crews in action. This support can prove crucial if something goes wrong, for example if a helicopter needs to make an emergency landing.

Also present at the TOC were members of the J-6 Emergency Communications program who were operating an Incident Commander's Command, Control and Communications Unit (IC4U). There are seven IC4U "shelters" in the state, each of them mounted on the back of a truck or Humvee.

The IC4Us are staffed by crews providing Internet and voice communications in emergency situations where there might not be available infrastructure. Sgt. Jason Roldan, a J-6 Emergency Communications specialist based out of Sacramento, pointed out a unique aspect of the IC4U in comparison with most other military assets: it is comprised almost entirely of civilian equipment and parts, making it as compatible as possible with any civilian organization that might be partnered with the California Guard.



A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flies over the TOC (tactical operations center) in Ione, California, during wildland firefighting training on April 11. Photo by Sgt. Ian Kummer

"It can also be a lot easier to get replacement parts that can be purchased at a civilian store," Roldan said.

This particular IC4U is mounted on a civilian truck, making coordination with other agencies even easier – most civilians are not licensed Humvee operators, but can still drive this IC4U if needed.

Practice makes perfect. According to Staff Sgt. Andrew J. Williams, the Stockton operations noncommissioned officer in charge, the unit is expected to be able to respond to an emergency within 12 hours. Once on ground, the Soldiers should be able to have the TOC up and running within an hour.

"We need to be able to go out to a place in the middle of nowhere, and make it our own," Williams said.

Task Force Medevac 'Soldier of the Year' has his eyes on the sky

By **SGT. IAN KUMMER**

40th Combat Aviation Brigade Public Affairs

What started as a childhood fancy has grown into a career ambition that has propelled a Soldier around the world.

California Army National Guard Spc. Dustin Sullivan, a crew chief with the 40th Combat Aviation Brigade's Task Force Medevac, has always wanted to fly. If he plays his cards right, he may soon get to do just that. But for the time being, there are other challenges ahead of him in his service to his community, state and country.

The native of Roseville, California, joined his teammates aboard a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter at Folsom Lake in Folsom, California, on April 2 to conduct a training exercise with a Bambi bucket. The bucket allows a helicopter and its crew to be critical assets in fighting the wildfires that rage across the dry brush and forests of California summer after summer.

High winds and the added weight of the bucket filled with hundreds of gallons of water make the flight a considerably more difficult and hazardous one than usual. Because of these added challenges, California Guard crews get as much training with Bambi buckets as they possibly can before the start of the wildfire season each year.

Sullivan and the other Soldiers in Task Force Medevac are no strangers to intense training. The task force provides medical and airlift capabilities that could prove critical in combat missions overseas, or during emergencies within the continental United States, such as natural disasters. Regardless of the mission, the task force members must be able to work together effectively.

"The medics and the crew chiefs cross train," Sullivan said. "We have to help each other in the back [of the helicopter]."

Though every Task Force Medevac Soldier needs to be



Spc. Dustin Sullivan (left) of Task Force Medevac participates in a training exercise in a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter over Folsom Lake, Folsom, on April 2. Photo by Sgt. Ian Kummer

proficient in his assigned tasks, Sullivan quickly distinguished himself as among the best, both at his full-time job as a federal technician and during his drill weekends with the California Guard. His hard work and dedication gained the notice of his supervisors, who offered him a chance to compete to be a battalion Soldier of the Year in February.

Sullivan passed with flying colors. He said the experience of being scrutinized by a board of senior leaders helped him identify areas where he could use improvement.

"There's a lot of things I didn't know," Sullivan said. "But I was confident, which is what they [the board members] were looking for."

These lessons may prove valuable for Sullivan in the near future, as he is currently going through the highly-competitive process of applying to be a warrant officer. This is a big step in his long-term goal to become a pilot. To be considered as a warrant officer candidate, a Soldier must first spend years building skills in that career field, proving his worth both as an individual

worker and as a leader.

Sullivan first enlisted in the Army in 2009 and was stationed with the 3rd Infantry Division in Savannah, Georgia. During his time as an active duty Soldier, Sullivan also served for a year in South Korea with the 2nd Infantry Division. Six months after the end of his enlistment in 2013, Sullivan signed up in the California Guard and joined the ranks of Company F, 2nd Battalion, 135th Aviation Regiment, a contingent of Task Force Medevac.

"[Sullivan] is a hard worker and he lives up to the Army values," said Sgt. David Calderon, another crew chief in Task Force Medevac. "He's also what we would call a PT stud," referring to Sullivan's strength at physical training, or PT, and his consistently high scores in the Army Physical Fitness Test.

With hard work and dedication, the Guard can provide an affordable and fulfilling way to become a licensed pilot. Sullivan plans to apply at the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical College to further his education in his chosen craft.

"I wanted to be a pilot as long as I could remember," Sullivan said. "That's what I told the recruiter when I first went into the office, and this is how he told me I could do it."

The California National Guard currently has a critical need for warrant officers, especially in the following MOS fields:

915A – Automotive Maintenance Warrant Officer
255A – Information Services Technician
255N – Network Management Technician

If you are interested in becoming a warrant officer, call Northern California Warrant Officer Strength Manager CW2 Illeya Ringo at 916-862-3034, illeya.c.ringo@mail.mil; or Southern California Warrant Officer Strength Manager CW2 Edward Ortega at 562-936-1767, eduardo.ortega@mail.mil.

Top enlisted Airman talks leadership

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

Did you know March was Women's History Month?

Each year, March gives us an opportunity to take a look around us and learn something from the women leaders we work with. I had a chance to do just that with the highest ranking enlisted leader in the California Air National Guard, a woman who has served our great Air Force for almost 40 years. Chief Master Sgt. Cindy L. Downing is the state command chief of the California Air National Guard. She advises the California National Guard commander on all matters affecting training, health, and morale and welfare of all California Air National Guard Airmen.

Downing said what most inspires her are the Airmen of the California Air National Guard. "Watching our young Airmen giving 110 percent to everything we ask them to do is humbling," she said. "As I go around the state, I'm in awe at the talents of these Airmen. Each wing has a unique mission and every day they work to get these missions accomplished."

Much like other monthly observances, Woman's History Month has different meanings for different people. Many people believe the purpose of Woman's History Month is to honor those women who have come before us and have made a difference, to learn about someone different than ourselves and to celebrate women and our heritage.

"Diversity means that we are all different in some way, and it is these differences that make us great," said Downing.

Downing enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in September 1976 and served on active duty for eight years as an administration specialist. In 1985 she joined the Washington Air National Guard as a personnel specialist, and in January 1986 she joined the California Air National Guard as a financial man-

agement specialist. Before assuming her current position, Downing was the force support squadron superintendent at the 144th Fighter Wing.

Women were first allowed to join the Air Force in 1948, serving in a separate organization, called Women in the Air Force (WAF). The Air Force inactivated the WAF in June of 1976. Downing entered the Air Force just months after the change.

"When I joined in 1976, females were discharged for pregnancies," she said. "They changed the rules shortly after that and in 1978 when I was pregnant we weren't discharged, but there were no maternity uniforms; we wore civilian maternity clothes. Along those lines, we now give leave to both mom and dad for births and adoptions."

Downing explained that in the Air National Guard the most significant change she has seen is the acceptance of female maintainers at the fighter wing. "I spent 25 years at the 144th Fighter Wing and for the first 10 years I witnessed the male maintainers belittle and harass the small number of females in maintenance. Many women would leave or cross train instead of deal with what were referred to as 'ole brown shoes,' indicating they had been in the military since the combat boots were brown. I applaud these females for breaking the barriers. Today, Airmen work side by side, fully supporting each other.

"Another significant change is the respect that men and woman in the Air Force and Air National Guard give each other," said Downing. "I believe we truly treat each other as professionals working equally side by side."

Why did Downing join the Air Force, and why later the Air National Guard?

"I joined the Air Force because I couldn't afford college," she said. "Back in the late 70s, school counselors didn't encourage folks to go to college unless your family

had money. It is much different for our young folks today."

Downing said she switched over to the Air Guard because it allowed her to remain in her hometown where she was raising infant twin sons.

What motivates her?

"What motivates me are my daily challenges," she said. "I love working Airmen issues, keeping oversight on their quality of life within the California Air National Guard. My entire career I have worked in support of Airmen; finance, personnel, readiness and now as the command chief. Helping folks has always been important to me."

A highlight of her career was being selected as the state command chief. "To be the highest enlisted member in one of the largest states in the nation—it is very humbling. I have been entrusted with the welfare of so many Airmen. The pride I feel at the mention of California at the national level is that of a parent when their children succeed. Being the California command chief feels awesome. It is such an honor and a big responsibility."

Downing said, "The most rewarding part of my career has been to see the growth in my Airmen. ... Over the years we watch them mature into these amazing young professionals, working hard and living by the Air Force core values. It is humbling to think you had a small hand in that—so rewarding.

Whom does she most admire?

"I most admire my mother who is now 87. She raised 14 children without ever having her morals and values waiver. She instilled in us a great work ethic as well as many internal survival instincts. She is the strongest woman I know!"

When asked what she did to be successful in her career she explained, "I be-



Chief Master Sgt. Cindy L. Downing

lieve I was successful in my career because I always believed in the United States Air Force—I have a tremendous loyalty to my employer. Also, I never turned down any training; I wasn't always thrilled to go, but I tried to keep an open mind—and I always tried to take something away from the training, usually always learning something new. I also believe another reason I was successful was that I always respected my bosses and co-workers—always looking forward to change because that meant that we were moving forward."

Downing advised women in the Air Guard to strive to be team players, which will lead to the players on the team treating them with respect. "Always be professional, live the core values that are the foundation of who we are—both personally and professionally. Set long and short term goals while always being flexible."

Downing said female Airmen should attempt to give 100 percent to both their fami-

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Sailing brings peace of mind to widow



Monique Phommasy took part in a free two-day sailing certification course, April 10-11, hosted by the Navy Gold Star Program, morale and welfare recreation programs, and Army Survivor Outreach Services (SOS).

Photo courtesy of SOS

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

San Diego's blue and sunny skies provided the perfect backdrop to a day out on the seas for military spouses who have lost a loved one.

Monique Phommasy, the widow of California Army National Guard Spc. Thithavy Tony Phommasy of the 79th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), was among the widows who participated in a free two-day sailing certification course Apr. 10-11.

"The experience was a good opportunity to meet others who are going through the same things as you and can relate," Phommasy said. "Seeing, hearing and experiencing other's situations helps."

The sailing class was held at Fiddler's Cove Marina in Coronado and was sponsored by Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR), Navy Gold Star Program and the Army

Survivor Outreach Services (SOS). Military widows from around San Diego were invited to take part in the course.

"These events are ways to provide the spouses with support to cope with the loss of their loved one, where they can make a connection with other survivors, and to ensure them that they still belong to the military family," said Vito Valdez, Army Survivor Outreach Services Support Coordinator.

Phommasy said that it was fun to try sailing and that she found it to be very peaceful out on the ocean.

"It was much like a driving test but on the water. On the first day, it was hard to learn how to control the sailboat as it was windy and we were moving fast. By the second day, you started to get the hang of it. Although I didn't pass the written test with the terminology, I plan to go back and try it again. Two days just isn't long enough. I

am smart and got this!" Phommasy said.

The course included topics such as who has the right of way on the water, the mechanics of the sailboat, how to tie the boat up and when to use certain knots.

"We had a luncheon during the two day course and listened to others share about their loved ones. It was nice, but hard at the same time. I don't know... something hit me and I couldn't share. It has been five years (since I lost my husband) and it is still hard," she said.

"I keep myself busy by trying new things," said Phommasy. "My son and I are learning taekwondo together. It is a blessing to have him and to learn new things together is very meaningful."

If you are interested in taking part in more programs and activities to bring surviving spouses and families together please contact Vito Valdez, the Survivor Outreach Coordinator at (858) 573-7055.

'Leadership' from 16

lies and their careers. "Family is important to the Air Force—we invest a lot of resources in support of our families. I believe that we have our professional family and our immediate family. At times we have to put more energy into one or the other, but we need to stay focused and keep both a priority."

She credits her husband, Win Downing, with being a great

mentor to her. He retired 10 years ago after 34 years of service. Her husband was the 144th Fighter Wing command chief for three years prior to retiring. "He was a born leader that engaged the entire wing on the changing Air Guard. I saw this in action and have to say it was very impressive. After 9/11 he was the first [Air National Guard command chief master sergeant] to go to Bagram, Afghanistan. He improved the quality of life of our troops to include getting beds to sleep on, gym equipment and decent meals. I am

very proud of his accomplishments."

When asked about the future of women in the military, Downing said, "I'm excited women are continuing to move forward. We've had them promoted to four-star generals—that is amazing. The number of females in leadership positions increases daily. They are open to change and think strategically. Our impact is felt every day as we meet mission requirements."

Air Guardsmen have a brush with kindness

Airmen from the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing's Aircraft Maintenance Squadron repair a mobile home on their own time with Habitat for Humanity Riverside's A Brush with Kindness program

By MASTER SGT. JULIE AVEY
San Diego Regional Public Affairs

It was the first weekend of spring and Airmen from the California Air National Guard, 163rd Reconnaissance Wing, Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, were on a mission to give back to their community.

Together these wingmen descended onto a mobile home, ready to volunteer with Riverside's Habitat for Humanity's A Brush with Kindness program.

"We were focused on giving back to Moreno Valley," said Tech Sgt. Nick Hulsey of the 163rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. "Helping with these events puts us back out in the community. We're not just a warfighting machine."

Habitat for Humanity Riverside's A Brush with Kindness program teams up with volunteers and is an exterior home preservation service that offers painting, landscaping and exterior minor repair services for homeowners in need. They help low-income homeowners impacted by age, disability or family circumstances, who struggle to maintain the exterior of their homes.

"Seeing the smiles on those being helped and meeting the volunteers who give out

of the kindness of their hearts is what makes the experience," said Daniel Anchondo, project coordinator.

Several paint buckets, tarps and paint brushes were distributed across the property to spruce up the mobile home by these citizen Airmen.

"We see each other one weekend a month and some of us work together every day," Hulsey said. "This is a good way to hang out in a different environment and out of uniform. I like knowing the people I work with don't mind coming out to help with these projects and are willing to give back."

With only a few hands, these Airmen were able to accomplish a painting project in a matter of a day. The Airmen worked half in the sun and half in the shade but none of them seemed to mind.

"It feels good to give back after a deployment. It opens your eyes," said Staff Sgt. Wilfredo Rivera, who recently returned from a deployment.

"Bringing everyone out to accomplish a project feels great," said Senior Master Sgt. Paul Witt. "I'm all about the team building and if we can help the community out, even a bigger high five."

One Airmen said he wanted to come back to California after serving on active duty overseas.

"I'm happy to be serving in my state... it feels good," said Tech Sgt. Marzan Loreto, who is from Northern California. "I like helping others whenever I can."

For some, it was their first time volunteering, while others had helped out at homeless shelters for Christmas or Easter, and many had done a lot of volunteering throughout their career. There were different levels of volunteer experience, but all agreed it was a rewarding experience.

"It's nice that we all get along and come out and do things like this," said Senior Airman Kristopher Speir. "We're giving to someone else, but we get time together as well."

One of the Airmen volunteering was expecting the birth of his baby at any time. He was very enthusiastic about volunteering with his wingmen even though he had some excitement of his own at home.

"Volunteering feels good," said Staff Sgt. Mario Sanchez. "It brings us closer as we're not just coworkers, we're something more than that. I think everyone should take time out to volunteer."



Staff Sgt. Wilfredo Rivera, from the 163rd Reconnaissance Wing, Aircraft Maintenance Weapons shop, helped paint a mobile home this spring with habitat for humanity Riverside's A Brush with Kindness program. Photo by Master Sgt. Julie Avey

ON YOUR RADAR ... service member benefits and information you should know



NGAC provides Cal Guard insurance benefits

The National Guard Association of California (NGAC) provides every member of the California National Guard a \$1,000 State Sponsored Life Insurance (SSLI) policy at no cost to the member. In the past two years, NGAC has paid out \$39,000 in no-cost life insurance benefits to the survivors of California National Guard members.

The SSLI program also provides additional insurance coverage at reasonable premiums. In the past two years, this program has paid the survivors of California National Guard members \$445,101. "NGAC's top priority is support of the troops and families of the California National Guard. For the families of our Soldiers and Airmen, these benefits can be critically important in helping to address unforeseen expenses during a very traumatic period," said NGAC President John Haramalis.

Effective April 1, the SSLI benefit became available to you through life insurance underwritten by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, which is highly rated for financial strength by the major rating agencies (see www.metlife.com for ratings details). MetLife is an industry leader in life insurance as well as other benefits,

which will now be available to members of the California National Guard. "As one of the largest global providers of insurance and benefit programs, MetLife is proud to offer this service to the men and women of the California National Guard", said MetLife SVP James Galli. MetLife is committed to providing products and services to the military market.

California National Guard members can fund supplemental SSLI coverage through the convenience of payroll deductions from their drill pay. Spousal coverage is also available, and SSLI may be continued when a service member leaves active military service and kept until age 70.

It is important for California National Guard members to attend their unit's benefit briefings so they can designate the beneficiaries for their no-cost SSLI benefit.

Future benefit briefings, which are held every 12 to 18 months for every California National Guard unit, will include the Met Life group program.

For questions regarding SSLI, please contact the NGAC Administrator at 1-800-462-7441.

High Water Bridge to re-open

By **CAPT. JASON SWEENEY**
California Military Department Public Affairs

Getting to the training ranges at Camp Roberts is about to get a whole lot easier.

After being closed down six years ago, the High Water Bridge is set for a grand re-opening in late June. The re-opening of the bridge will allow troops to reduce the roundtrip to and from the ranges by about an hour.

"It's all about training and the opportunity to train," said Sgt. Maj. Joseph Menard, a project manager for the California Military Department's Facilities and Engineering Department.

The High Water Bridge, which crosses the Nacimiento River, is the most direct route between the training ranges and the main post. But in 2009, the bridge was closed when it became too deteriorated to safely use.

The bridge's substructure of columns and supports remained primarily intact, but the superstructure—the roadway that vehicles drive on—had severely decayed.

Since the bridge was closed, Soldiers traveling to the ranges have had to take a detour two miles down the river to the Low Water Bridge. But that is set to change when the High Water Bridge renovation is complet-

ed. The renovation began on Dec. 8 and is now in its final stages.

The repair work is being done by Wysong Construction out of Atascadero, California. The total cost of the repairs amounts to \$3.06 million.

In September 2014, Rep. Sam Farr, D-Carmel, secured \$2.9 million to pay for the bulk of the project. The balance came from California National Guard operations and maintenance funding.

"Essentially, we put a whole new deck on the bridge leaving the vertical supports in place," Menard said. "This means the ranges will now be more accessible thereby maximizing available training time. The bridge will also provide dismounted access to the ranges."

In addition, a water pipe will be built over the bridge to carry potable water to the ranges.

"Currently, there's just non-potable water over there," Menard said.

A telecommunications fiber optic line will also run over the bridge which will allow for better range intercommunication and instant updating of weapons qualification scores.

Once complete, the bridge will be a one-



LEFT:The High Water Bridge on Camp Roberts was closed in 2009 due to severe deterioration. **RIGHT:** The renovation of the bridge began on Dec. 8 and is now in its final stages. The bridge is set to re-open in June. **Photos by Suzi Thomas**



way Class 40 bridge, meaning it can handle 40-ton vehicles. It will have a 6-foot wide separated walkway for dismounts. The larger Low Water Bridge is a Class 70 bridge that can handle even heavier loads.

Col. (CA) Walter Goodwater, a project manager for the Facilities and Engineering Department, said it takes 20 to 30 minutes to walk from the barracks to Range 5 using the High Water Bridge.

"The bridge will now give commanders the ability to road march to the ranges in a reasonable amount of time," he said.

Goodwater added that the bridge also reduces the time for a rapid emergency response to the range complexes. "The bridge was originally built in 1941," Goodwater

said. "It was the first bridge upstream on the Nacimiento."

The bridge was originally built by the 1st Battalion, 19th Engineers from Fort Ord as part of the initial construction of Camp Roberts. Goodwater said it was built with a durable design—the same design used by Julius Caesar to cross the Rhine River nearly 2,000 years ago.

Goodwater credited the command team at Camp Roberts, Rep. Farr, California National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. David Baldwin, the Facilities and Engineering Department and the Camp Roberts Environmental Department for making the re-opening possible.

"It was definitely a team effort," he said.

Ardent Sentry builds unity of effort for earthquake response

By **BRANDON HONIG**
California Military Department Public Affairs

When the big one strikes – and experts tell us it's only a matter of time – your local first responders won't be enough. Even after they call in the National Guard and federal civilian agencies, people may be hurt, desperate and lacking necessities because of the chaos all around.

At times like those, the full weight of the U.S. military can be called upon, including active duty and Reserve forces aligned under a National Guard commander. That Guard officer – known as a dual-status commander (DSC) – will oversee all military personnel from the various components that respond to the disaster.

"If something terrible happens, it's good to know how much in the area of resources would be coming to the people of California," said Brig. Gen. Nate Reddicks, the Southern California (DSC) in recent earthquake-response exercise Ardent Sentry 2015. "In addition to civilian agencies and National Guard forces, active duty and Reserve troops may come to our aid, and my role as dual-status commander enables us to ensure proper coordination and maximize efficiency."

"Unity of effort" was a commonly heard refrain at Ardent Sentry, which ran May 11-15, and it showed in the results. Col. John Cushman, deputy director for Reserve forces at North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) and U.S. Northern Command (NORTHCOM), said the coordination between NORAD/NORTHCOM and the California National Guard was "perfect" during Ardent Sentry.

He noted that in 2.5 years in his current position at NORAD/NORTHCOM, he has been to California more than a dozen times for exercises and planning, and these types of drills are crucial for ensuring a seamless response in a real-world emergency.

"We need to have a trusted partnership when we come to



Military members and civilian emergency-response agency personnel on Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos respond to a fictional 7.8-magnitude earthquake during exercise Ardent Sentry, held May 11-15. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class (CA) Robert Davison

help," Cushman said. "Establishing relationships [before disaster strikes] is critically important because it helps everybody know, 'I remember and trust you, and we know how to support one another.'"

Ardent Sentry is an annual exercise designed by NORAD/NORTHCOM to test the integration of its forces with federal, state and local emergency responders, but Ardent Sentry is not a one-sided exchange.

"NORTHCOM brought a lot to the table," said Sgt. 1st Class Jessica Velasco, who served as noncommissioned officer in charge of intelligence for the Cal Guard's 40th Infantry Division during the exercise. "They've done this many times, and their knowledge, guidance and feedback helped in a lot of ways.

"No amount of preparation will [prevent] the catastrophic effects of an event like this, but [Ardent Sentry] will put Soldiers in a better position to respond and help the people of California."

Ardent Sentry was a command post exercise, with notional

troop movements all over the state coordinated by units at the Cal Guard's Joint Force Headquarters in Sacramento and its Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos in Orange County. Their response to the fictional 7.8-magnitude earthquake in Southern California included the call-up of nearly 13,000 Cal Guard members, with neighboring states prepared to provide an additional 3,000 Guard troops within 24 hours.

Cal Guard Soldiers manned more than 100 traffic-control points on major roadways, and they provided security at Southern California ports and at 25 distribution points where FEMA was handing out food and water. Additionally, 19 Cal Guard helicopters were put into action to conduct search-and-rescue missions and extract survivors from the rubble.

FEMA was just one of several civilian agencies working hand-in-hand with military responders during Ardent Sentry. As is the case in any emergency in California, the Governor's Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) took the lead.

"Cal OES continues to work with our local, state, federal, private sector and nonprofit partners to make sure every possible resource is committed to address [survivors'] needs," Lee Dorey of Cal OES told reporters at a mock press conference during Ardent Sentry. "All of those organizations ... are with us side-by-side working together closely to ensure that we're safely and securely addressing all the needs of those who were impacted."

Reddicks noted that the Ardent Sentry scenario was designed to test and challenge the participating military and civilian agencies, but nothing can truly simulate the real thing.

"At one point in the exercise, we had 72,000 people unaccounted for," he said. "That's the kind of thing that fits neatly on a piece of paper, but in a real-life situation, it's hard to imagine how you get your mind around it. So that just makes it even more important that we are prepared to execute when the need arises, and we need to continue practicing."



A 163rd Reconnaissance Wing MQ-1 Predator is parked on the flight line at Southern California Logistics Airport in Victorville, Calif., Jan. 7, 2012. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Effrain Lopez

Work for Warriors marks anniversary

The Cal Guard's Work for Warriors employment initiative celebrated its third year of operation at an event in San Diego aboard the USS Midway on March 14.

Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin, the adjutant general of the Cal Guard, spoke aboard the Midway to a group of Work for Warriors' employer-partners, representatives from several military branches and guests, including Speaker of the State Assembly Toni Atkins.

The event recognized the support of the Cal Guard's partners in the private sector and the state government for the Work for Warriors program.

Work for Warriors was founded with a goal of finding 1,000 jobs for Cal Guard members over five years.

"That was a totally unrealistic goal — 1,000 people — given the unemployment rate, given the state of the economy, given the other problems that we faced," Baldwin said. "But with the hard work of the Soldiers and Airmen and civilians that are on our team, and through the partnerships we've developed, we have now placed over 4,000 Soldiers and Airmen."

For more info on the initiative, call 916-854-4426, or email apply@workforwarriors.org.

Moffett Field gets new pararescue facility

Members of the California Air National Guard's 129th Rescue Wing officially unveiled a new 48,750-square-foot Pararescue Training Facility on April 20 at Moffett Federal Airfield in Mountain View.

Wing Commander Col. Gregory F. Jones and Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-Calif.) were joined in a ribbon-cutting ceremony by Brig. Gen. Matthew Beevers, Deputy Adjutant General of the California National Guard.

"The new Pararescue Training Facility will provide a cutting-edge operations and administrative structure for our Guardian Angels based here at Moffett Federal Airfield," said Jones. "Bottom line, the building will dramatically increase our readiness to respond on behalf of California residents."

Construction on the facility began in January 2013 and was completed in April. The building is now home to the 131st Rescue Squadron's Guardian Angels, who are pararescue-men trained to rescue civilian and military personnel by land, air or sea.

Two Cal Guard Airmen receive national honors

Two California Air National Guardsmen from the 129th Rescue Wing received national honors from the Air National Guard in April.

Master Sgt. Sally J. Ford, 129th Mission Support Group First Sergeant, was selected the First Sergeant of the Year for 2015. Technical Sgt. Kevin B. Centinaje, 129th Recruiting Office, was selected the National Rookie Recruiter of the Year for 2015.

DID YOU KNOW...

there are several agencies that deal with Soldier and Airman grievances external to the Inspector General's office?

Outside of internal controls and inspections, your Inspector General works for the commander on many issues and primarily investigates cases dealing with reprisal, improper mental health evaluation referrals; and for the Air Force IG, restriction. Some other IG appropriate issues include violations of law, regulation, instruction, policy, procedures, gross mismanagement, as well as fraud, waste, and abuse.

While your Inspector General is always willing to answer any questions and offer guidance when necessary, there are often many issues brought to the IG that are referred to other agencies for resolution. Matters that are not Army IG appropriate include nonsupport of family members, private indebtedness, contractor activities not of Army interest, hazardous work conditions, equal opportunity complaints, criminal allegations and redress available through other means (courts-martial actions, non-judicial punishment, officer and NCO evaluation reports, pending and type of discharge, etc.). For the Air Force, matters not IG appropriate include correction of military records, appeal of performance reports, equal opportunity issues, punishment under UCMJ, administrative separations, civilian complaints, letters of counseling/reprimand or Article-15s (other than discrimination or reprisal), unprofessional relationships, civil matters, medical care, unsafe working conditions and Commander-Directed Investigation (CDI). Nonetheless, you are always welcome to speak with your IG, even if your issue involves one of the "non-IG" matters mentioned above.

Per AR 20-1 and AFI 90-301, the IG's primary duty is to be the "eyes and ears" of the commander. The IG is charged with keeping the commander informed of potential areas of concern and developing trends. The IG works for the commander as an honest broker in the resolution of complaints. When an IG complaint is filed, the IG is responsible for looking into, and possibly investigating, all sides of the story, not just the complainants'.

What does this mean for you? If you don't know who to speak to, start with your first line supervisor or your commander. If your issue is with your immediate supervisor, then speak with the next level supervisor or commander. If you are uncomfortable with speaking with anyone in your chain of command, you are always welcome to speak with your IG.

Bottom line, you can always speak to your IG, regardless of whether or not you've already spoken with anyone in your chain of command. If you have any questions, the Army Division or Air Wing Inspector General is available during Unit Training Assemblies, and the JFHQ State Inspector General's office is available full time.



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California Army National Guard medics, crew chiefs and pilots from Task Force Medevac train for this year's wildfire season in a UH-60 Black Hawk at Folsom Lake, Folsom, on April 2, 2015. California Guard members are expected to play a key role with other state agencies in controlling blazes across the state this season. Photo by Sgt. Ian Kummer

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