

# GMG



Green Mountain Guard | Spring 2016





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## ON THE COVER



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Logan Blacklock, a scout with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, maneuvers through the woods during a reconnaissance training mission on Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., June 6, 2016. Blacklock's company is participating in multiple training events over the next two weeks as part of their annual training. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



# IN & AROUND VTARNG



**LEFT:** U.S. Army Spc. Craig Smith, left and Spc. Matthew Leighton, right, both mortermen with Bravo Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, take cover while firing a mortar at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site (CEATS), Jericho, Vt., June 7, 2016. More than 380 Soldiers from the 3rd Battalion are completing their annual training over the next two weeks at CEATS. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)

**BELOW:** U.S. Army Sgt. James Hance, a metal worker with the 131st Engineers, Vermont National Guard, grinds protruding metal on a trailer at Camp Johnson, Colchester, Vt., July 7, 2016. As a full-time federal technician, Hance works at the Allied Trades portion of the Combined Support Maintenance Shop and restores, refits and repairs equipment used by the National Guard. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Avery Cunningham)



**ABOVE:** U.S. Army Pfc. Troy Anger and Spc. Michael Capen, both assigned to Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, treat a simulated injury on a soldier, at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., June 12, 2016. The Soldiers are participating in a casualty assessment and evacuation exercise as part of their annual training. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



**LEFT:** U.S. Soldiers from Alpha Company, 186th Brigade Support Battalion, Vermont National Guard, prepare a water trailer to be attached to a UH-60 Blackhawk, at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., May 25, 2016. The Soldiers are conducting sling-load exercises in order to become more familiarized with operations as part of their annual training. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



# IN & AROUND VTANG



**LEFT:** U.S. Air Force Capt. Justin Schwartz of the 158th Fighter Wing, holds an American flag while Tech. Sgt. Keith Ashline salutes during a retreat ceremony at the Burlington International Airport, South Burlington Vt., June 9, 2016. Retreat is traditionally a military musical ceremony carried out at sunset, originating in the playing of drums and bugles to tell soldiers to return to camp for the night. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Jeffrey Tatro)

**BELOW:** U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Mark Wood with the 158th Fighter Wing Maintenance Squadron, adjusts a pressure manifold during lift bag training at the Burlington International Airport, South Burlington, Vt., June 9, 2016. Lift bag training is conducted during a Crash, Damaged, Disabled Aircraft Recovery training where team members utilize a system of specialized airbags and tethering cables to raise the simulated disabled aircraft. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Jeffrey Tatro)



**ABOVE:** U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Jeff Palmer, with 134th Fighter Squadron, 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard, taxis underneath a water arch after his final flight as an F-16 pilot at the Burlington International Airport, South Burlington, Vt., June 15, 2016. Palmer has over a decade in the Military and 2,700 hours in the F-16. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Jeffrey Tatro)



**LEFT:** U.S. Air Force Airmen with the Munitions Squadron, 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont National Guard, use a hoist to load a GBU-12 inert bomb onto a conveyer at the Burlington International Airport, South Burlington, Vt., June 4, 2016. As part of Exercise Maple Lightning II, the munitions flight built 143 inert bombs for pilot training to remain current with combat munition training requirements. (Courtesy photo by Airman 1st Class Evanna Dober)





U.S. Army Sgt. Carlton Quenneville, crew chief, Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), helps guide the HH-60M MEDEVAC Black Hawk Helicopter into position during Defense and Support of Civil Authorities training at the Army Aviation Support Facility, South Burlington, Vt. April 2, 2016. The training is preparation for Vigilant Guard, a national level emergency response exercise.

# Aviation Conducts Domestic Operations Training

Story & Photos by Spc. Avery Cunningham, 172nd PAD

SOUTH BURLINGTON, Vt. - Hurricane Irene affected many states on the East Coast including Vermont in 2011. The storm caused flooding and was responsible for an estimated \$6.5 billion in total losses in the United States according to the National Weather Service. The National Guard was prepared for the disaster, and in response thousands of National Guard Soldiers and Airmen swiftly mobilized to support civilian authorities.

The Vermont National Guard will host “Vigilant Guard - Vermont 2016” at Camp Johnson, Colchester, Vermont. It is a national level emergency response exercise sponsored by the National Guard and United States Northern Command. Federal, state, and local agencies will train together to improve cooperation and prepare to respond to a man-made or natural disaster, special event or other domestic emergency in a collaborative effort.

To prepare, Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance) started conducting Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) missions from the Army Aviation Support Facility, South Burlington, Vt., April 2, 2016.

The DSCA training involved lowering a medic on a hoist to assist a crashed pilot, raising the casualty into the aircraft with the hoist, and responding to a mass casualty scenario with other medevacs.

“We’re doing aerial medevac DSCA training in preparation for Vigilant Guard,” said Capt. James Lewandowski, forward support medevac platoon leader, C/3-126th AVN (AA).

The unit will participate in faster versions of the simulated missions during Vigilant Guard.

“We’re practicing, working out the bugs, perfecting our techniques, so that when we do the real DSCA mission and perform with the rest of the state, all of our operating procedures are solid, and we have a good battle rhythm,” said Lewandowski.

The company is taking an approach that builds up to the main event. “We’re using the crawl-walk-run method,” said Lewandowski. The first phase, crawl, is receiving basic training on operations.

“Crawl means we go very slowly, an instructor will teach and show how something is done,” said Sgt. Carlton Quenneville, crew chief, C/3-126th AVN (AA).

The next phase, which they conducted over the weekend, is walking. This part of the method requires utilizing what they learned in the crawl phase.

“Most of the training we do is the walk phase where we’re trying to show all those new things,” said Quenneville. “Today is the culmination, actually showing all the stuff



U.S. Army Sgt. Carlton Quenneville, right, a crew chief with Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), helps Staff Sgt. Stephen Trala, left, a flight medic, prepare to descend by the hoist during Defense and Support of Civil Authorities training at the Army Aviation Support Facility, South Burlington, Vt. April 2, 2016.

we’ve learned and done, putting it into action, and actually doing what we’ve trained for.”

From that phase, they will progress to a quicker, full speed pace. “The run phase is the big exercises like our annual training or Vigilant Guard where we’ve combined with the ground guys, other states, and other agencies, with multiple sites going at once,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Robert Couture, line medevac pilot, C/3-126th AVN (AA).

Their training, in the walking phase, had an emphasis on accuracy as opposed to speed.”There is more deliberate planning, teaching us to slow down and go assist in a non-combat area,” said Couture.

Following the procedures carefully highlights any difficulty the crew may have with the aircraft or operations. “We definitely found areas that stumped us a little bit or were unique situations, but every mission is a unique situation. There are no two missions alike,” said Quenneville. “By doing it today, we were able to keep our proficiency up and actually work as a team.”

The teamwork extends outside the scope of the crew of a single helicopter to all the units as one. “This has given us the opportunity to do a lot of flying and really perfecting our skillsets and practice as a team,” said Lewandowski. “There is nothing better than collective training.”

The crawl-walk-run approach by the aviation unit has proven a success with the training running smoothly and missions being achieved. “It went very well, everyone was safe, and we were able to get the mission accomplished,” said Couture





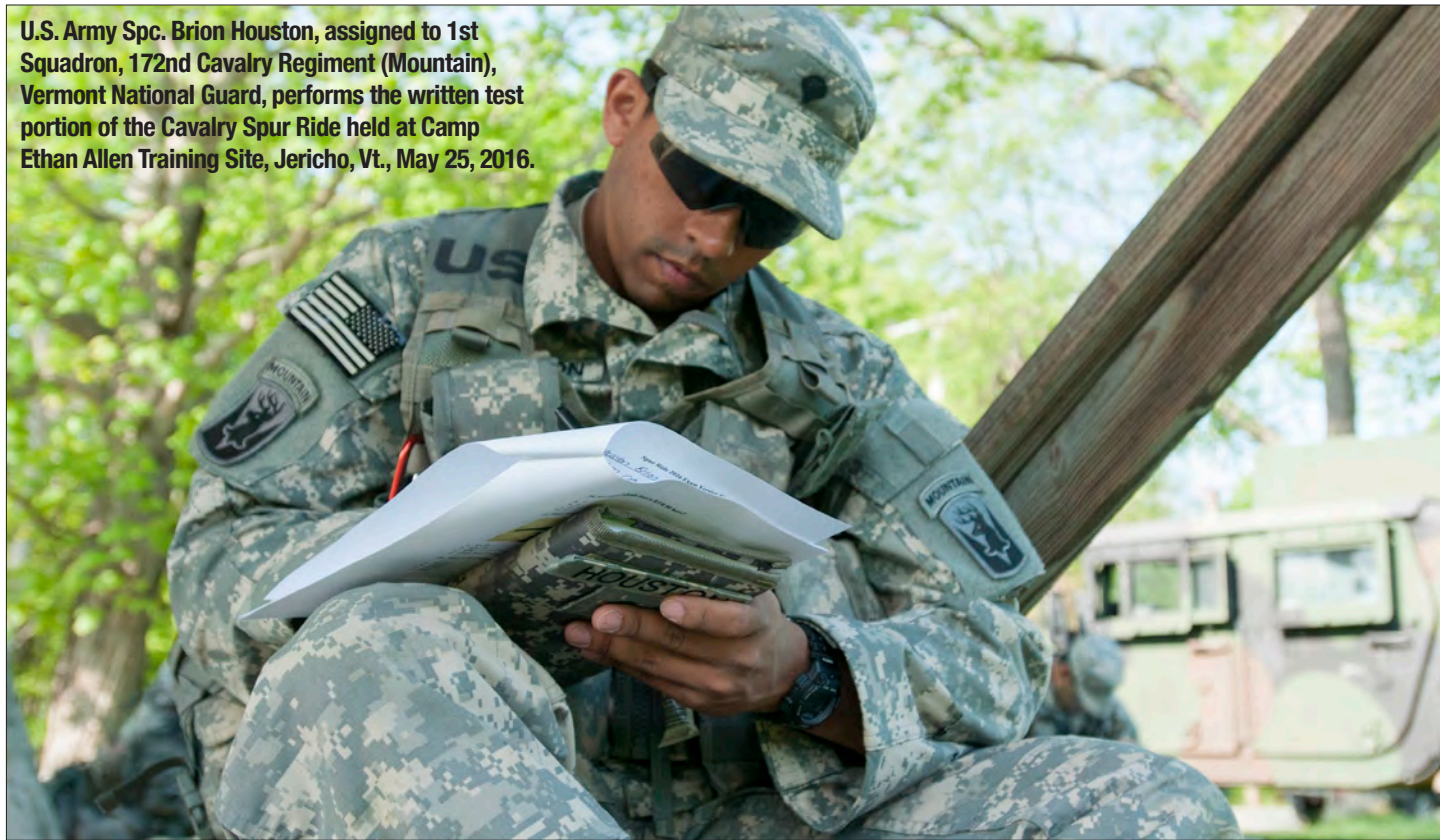
U.S. Soldiers assigned to 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, exit a CH-47 Chinook helicopter at the end of the Cavalry Spur Ride held at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., May 25, 2016. Soldiers participated in the event to test their skills and knowledge, while building unit cohesion. (U.S. Army National Guard Photo by Spc. Avery Cunningham)



# Cavalry Embarks on Spur Ride

Story & Photos by Spc. Avery Cunningham, JFHQ

U.S. Army Spc. Brion Houston, assigned to 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, performs the written test portion of the Cavalry Spur Ride held at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., May 25, 2016.



JERICHO, Vt. - Soldiers with the 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain) and the attached Delta Company, 186th Brigade Support Battalion, Vermont Army National Guard, conducted a Spur Ride at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vermont, May 25. The Spur Ride is an evaluation of the skills each cavalry Soldier has to know which includes eight miles of ruck marching, casualty care, claymore setup, a written test, mountain skills evaluation, stress shoot, weapon systems knowledge and an equipment layout.

“All of the skills we’re testing here today are skills they needed to train on anyway as part of their job, whether they’re a truck driver, mechanic or a cavalry scout,” said Lt. Col. Leonard Poirer, commander, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain).

The event has its roots in a long history dating back to the horse mounted cavalry. Riders who were not skilled were unable to wear the spurs because

it made the horse overactive, and they could not control the horse, said Poirer. Once a rider demonstrated a higher level of horsemanship he earned the right to wear the spurs.

“So someone that did well enough in the PT (Physical Training) event, moves through the foot movements fast enough and scores well enough on the task evaluations, will earn their spurs,” said Poirer.

The weight of the event is not lost on the Soldiers in the unit. “It’s important to maintain your history, and to remind Soldiers of where we came from and to motivate them to want to be better and be proficient in these tasks and build camaraderie,” said Sgt. Cassandra Scott, assigned to Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain).

Moreover, the event promotes unit cohesion and Soldier readiness.

“It’s a way to build camaraderie, esprit de corps, pride in the unit, and

it’s a way for Soldiers to prove themselves and prove that they have the basic skills and knowledge as well as the determination and initiative to be successful cavalry troopers,” said Poirer.

While it does offer Soldiers the chance to prove themselves, it also reveals the skills they need to improve.

“It will definitely point out flaws that we as individual Soldiers have,” said Scott. “It will bring to light the skills that we need to practice to be more proficient on.”

Despite shining a light on what they need to work on, the Soldiers aren’t disconcerted.

“The vast majority of Soldiers are motivated to do it,” said Poirer. “It’s been successful overall, it’s been well received by the Soldiers.”

“It reminds me why I love the Vermont National Guard and being part of the Cavalry,” said Scott.



Top Left: U.S. Army Spc. Nicholas Carmichael, assigned to Charlie Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, ruck marches up Castle Trail during the movements portion of the Cavalry Spur Ride held at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., May 25, 2016.

Right: A U.S. Soldier assigned to 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, uses a rope to lower himself during the mountain-skills portion of the Cavalry Spur Ride held at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., May 25, 2016.

Center: U.S. Army Spc. Chad Cameron, assigned to Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, pulls a litter during the casualty care portion of the Cavalry Spur Ride held at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., May 25, 2016.

Bottom: A U.S. Soldier assigned to 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, fires at his targets during the stress shoot portion of the Cavalry Spur Ride held at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., May 25, 2016.





U.S. Army Spc. Steve Spinazola, assigned to Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, moves through the woods at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., June 15, 2016. Spinazola is running through an assault lane as part of a buddy-team exercise, during the unit's two-week annual training. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)



# Soldiers & Airmen Conduct Simulated Search and Rescue Operations

Story & Photos by Spc. Avery Cunningham, JFHQ

**SOUTH BURLINGTON, Vt. -** The Airman's Creed says, "I will never leave an Airman behind." True to their creed, pilots with the 134th Fighter Squadron, 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard, conducted training focused on recovering downed pilots. The Airmen trained in search and rescue operations in Vermont and New York for two weeks, finishing the exercises April 29, 2016.

An HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter with Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), Vermont Army National Guard, simulated rescuing a stranded pilot while F-16s from the 134th FS, 158th FW, escorted the Black Hawk along its route, said Maj. Dan McGuire, an F-16 pilot who simulated the downed pilot in the scenario.

"We supported the Air Guard with their search and rescue training by providing them with a lift asset to drop them off and pick them up, and they escorted us in," said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Aaron Mongeon, a Black Hawk pilot, C/3-126th AVN (AA).

An F-16 communicates with the pilot on the ground and provides aerial support while the other F-16 escorts the helicopter into the area while looking for threats to the helicopter, said Capt. Phil Francis, F-16 pilot, 134th FS, 158th FW.

The downed pilot finds his location using equipment from the aircraft. "We plot our position via GPS and visual TACANs (tactical air navigation system)," said McGuire.

Once the pilot knows his location, he is able to relay it to the F-16s in the air. "We find the pilot by talking with him on the radio and we also communicate via signals, anything from things we put on the ground to signal flares and smoke," said Francis.

The moment the pilot is located the on-scene commander directs the rescue operation. The on-scene commander coordinates with the pilot on the ground, the helicopter and escort forces to ensure the safe pick-up of the pilot, said McGuire.

If any of the service members in the area spots a potential threat, the on-scene commander coordinates between the different forces to avoid or neutralize it.

"I was able to coordinate with the F-16s, and they were able to relay to the [Black Hawk] to amend their route of flight, to avoid an error and delay the pick-up until that threat was neutralized," said McGuire.

The threats are eliminated so the helicopter can safely perform its duty. The F-16 pilots shot down simulated anti-aircraft missiles so the Black Hawk could pick up the people on the ground unharmed, said Mongeon.

After the F-16s eliminate all threats, the helicopter makes it way to the downed pilot. "We would give them the exact coordinates of where the guy is on the ground, and the helicopter would pick him up," said Francis.

From that point the Black Hawk makes it way back to the base, escorted by the F-16s, and completes the mission, marking an end for the exercise. "It was a great exercise; the weather cooperated, and we are really glad we could do a joint Air and Army Guard exercise," said Francis.

Working together, the different forces learned one another's different techniques and strategies. "It's a good experience to see what their procedures and tactics are," said Mongeon. "I think everyone comes out better because of it."

The service members successfully met all their goals.

"It went great," said Francis. "We met our training objective of becoming familiar with the rescore (rescue and escort operation) and the initial on-scene commander role, and we also met our objective of integrating with the Vermont Army National Guard."



Clockwise from Top: A U.S. Army HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter with Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), Vermont Army National Guard, lands at Moores Landing Strip at Clare, New York, April 29, 2016. Soldiers with C/3-126th AVN (AA) participated with pilots from the 134th Fighter Squadron, 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard, in a combat search and rescue exercise.

U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Travis Dagoon, flight management, 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard, uses a smoke signal to indicate his location to an HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter for evacuation during Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) training in Clare, New York, April 29, 2016.

U.S. Army Sgt. Carlton Quenneville, crew chief, Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), Vermont Army National Guard, monitors the outside area during an HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter flight April 29, 2016.

U.S. Air Force Maj. Dan McGuire, pilot, 134th Fighter Squadron, 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard, communicates with F-16 pilots during Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) training in Clare, New York, April 29, 2016.

U.S. Army Sgt. Shannon Haskell, crew chief, Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), Vermont Army National Guard, ensures that service members exit the HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter safely during a combat search and rescue exercise at Clare, New York, April 29, 2016.





# The Journey of a VTANG Airman toward U.S. Citizenship

Story & Photo by Staff Sgt. Victoria Greenia, 158th FW

SOUTH BURLINGTON, Vt. - Airman 1st Class Mahat Abdullahi “fully committed” himself to the U.S. May 11 when he took the oath that made him a United States citizen, but said the day he really felt like he became an American was nearly two years earlier when he took a different oath –one to defend the Constitution of the United States.

The 21-year-old services technician at the Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG) said that both oaths were stepping stones to his dream of becoming a policeman, and he deeply appreciates the strong camaraderie he has found with his Wingmen at the base.

On the day he was sworn in he said he felt that kinship even stronger as Guard members showed up to witness the moment.

“It shocked me and made me proud to be a Green Mountain Boy,” he said. “To see that people would drive an hour and a half to see me swear in means a lot. That’s why I said it’s a family.”

Abdullahi was born in Somalia but his family moved to Kenya when he was a baby. There at a refugee camp he grew into a young man, garnering fond memories of playing soccer and hanging out with friends. When he was about 11 years old, however, his mother had the chance to take him and his five siblings to the United States and said yes.

Although Abdullahi spoke no English, he was excited about the move. At the refugee camp, he said, you had what you needed to survive, but you wouldn’t have much opportunities. He believed the United States would be a place to create a very different life for himself.

Like most kids do, he learned English and adapted to the new culture he and his family were thrust into. When older and in high school, a police officer spoke to his class. It was then he realized his life path would lead him to public service. He set his goal toward becoming a policeman, but there were still steps to take – his American citizenship being one.

He later talked with a recruiter for the VTANG and felt that serving the country would only be a bonus toward his goal. Although not yet an American citizen, in May of 2014 he raised his hand and took the oath that made him a member of the United States military.

At first his mother didn’t understand why he would make such a commitment to a place that wasn’t his homeland. Overtime, she has come to accept this part of her son, as Abdullahi has not only settled himself into Guard life, but has come to see Guard members as family members.



**U.S. Air Force Airman 1st Class Mahat Abdullahi, 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard (VTANG), poses for a photo outside the dining facility at the base June 7, 2016. Abdullahi, who has been a services technician for two years with the VTANG, took the oath to become a United States citizen May 11, 2016..**

“We go out every Saturday night of drill,” he said. “We get together, share a meal and have a good time. Knowing that every drill I am going to see these people outside of work and communicate with them about subjects other than work is really nice.”

He added that the last few months have been rough for him but that the Airmen in the Services Flight have been right there in solidarity.

“I wouldn’t have gone this far without the members of the services flight,” he said. “They are a very supportive and close-knit family.”

Joining the Guard is a perfect of example of those opportunities he knew the U.S. would offer him when he came as a young child. He said more people should take advantage of joining the military because it can teach skills that will help them move into other professional sector. For Abdullahi, the VTANG is likely to be a career complementing his dream career of policing.

# SWEAT a New Initiative for the Vermont National Guard

Story & Photos by Sgt. Heidi Kroll, 172nd PAD

NORTHFIELD, Vt. - Sweating is what a group of Soldiers were doing as they completed their diagnostic Army physical fitness test (APFT) as part of in-processing for the SWEAT (Soldier Wellness Education and Training) program.

A new training initiative for the Vermont Army National Guard, SWEAT consists of several different physical fitness-training styles, in addition to providing nutritional training for those who have struggled with their weight.

The training also includes several in depth classroom sessions focusing on proper stretching and creating a realistic personal exercise plan. Soldiers will also receive all 14 blocks of Master Resiliency Training (MRT) training, which will be focused on helping them hurdle roadblocks that inhibit their physical training (PT).

MRT will help each Soldiers identify and address some of the roadblocks that are holding them back. Creating goals and exercise plans will help them to realize the impact that a good PT plan can have on their health.

“I have never talked to anyone in regards to nutrition,” said Spc. Chelsea Delphia, administrative assistant, Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 186th Brigade Support Battalion. “I am super excited to talk to someone about it.”

“Nutrition is more than half of this, how to eat, even purchasing food is huge,” said Tech. Sgt. Travis Voyer, a trained for the National Guard Biathlon team. “They will be taught which foods affect their metabolism, assist in weight loss, and increase energy to support PT.”

“Two weeks of doing nothing but PT is a great step to start on your path to success,” said Spc Raymond Gratton, truck driver, 186th Brigade Special Troops Battalion. “I am looking forward to the classroom portion more; to learn how to make a PT plan.”

Even though Guardsmen drill one weekend a month, they are responsible for their own PT in order to maintain readiness between their drills. SWEAT participants are taught time management skills and how to create a successful training plan that meets their fitness needs.

“We only get to see the Soldier two times a month to do PT, so getting two weeks to teach someone how to train their bodies is really unique,” said Voyer.

While this is the first time the SWEAT program has been conducted in Vermont, cadre will utilize the after-actions reports to evaluate the program and make necessary changes for the next course.



**TOP: U.S. Soldiers complete the two-mile run, part of the in-processing for the Soldier Wellness Education and Training program (SWEAT) in Northfield Vt., May 14, 2016.**

**U.S. Army Sgt Shawn Curavoo, a physical therapy assistant, Charlie Company 186th Brigade Support Battalion, does push ups under the watchful eye of Staff Sgt. Nathaniel Reynolds, Medic, Medical Detachment, Vermont Army National Guard, during in-processing army physical fitness test to the Soldier Wellness Education and Training program (SWEAT) at Northfield Vt., May 14, 2016.**

Physical readiness is just as important as mental readiness, and having Soldiers armed with both physical and resiliency skills, will enable them to lead those that may struggle in the future. In two weeks, these Soldiers will be taking the APFT again to see the progress they have made.

“I have 38 trainers that are going to go back to their unit and help out the other soldiers in the organization,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Toby Quick, Vermont State Sergeant Major. “They will share and talk with other Soldiers about what they learned.”



# VTANG Professional Development Trip to NYC

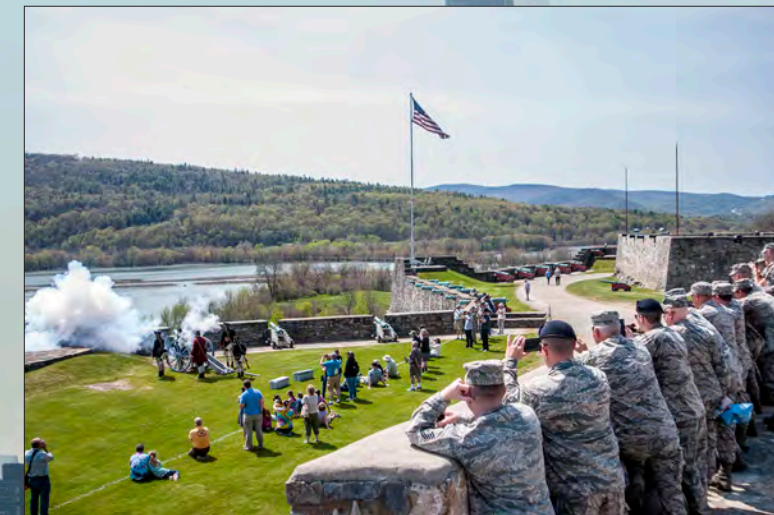


From TOP: U.S. Airmen and Soldiers of the Vermont Air and Army National Guard pose for a group photo in front of a World War II memorial in Manhattan, N.Y., May 11, 2016. As a part of a professional development trip, members of the Vermont Air and Army National Guard toured various monuments including the Statue of liberty, Ellis Island, and the 9/11 memorial and museum. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Jeffrey Tatro)

U.S. Air Force Col. David Smith vice commander of the 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard, presents a plaque to U.S. Coast Guard Capt. Michael Day on Ft. Wadsworth, Staten Island, N.Y., May 9, 2016. Day spoke to Airmen and Soldiers of the Vermont Air and Army National Guard as a part of a professional development trip. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Jeffrey Tatro)



U.S. Soldiers and Airman of the Vermont Air and Army National Guard watch a revolutionary war reenactment at Ft. Ticonderoga, New York, May 12, 2016. As a part of a professional development trip, members of the Vermont Air and Army National Guard toured various monuments including the Statue of liberty, Ellis Island, and the 9/11 memorial and museum. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Chelsea Clark)





# Recruit Sustainment Company Trains with Other Units

Story & Photos by Spc. Avery Cunningham, 172nd PAD

JERICH0, Vt. - The Recruit Sustainment Program is the first step into military life for most National Guardsmen. The program is designed to teach Soldiers basic level tasks to make them successful in Basic Combat Training and Advanced Individual Training. To further that effort, the cadre and commanders of the Recruit Sustainment Company attempt to involve other units in their training.

Soldiers with RSC, Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), and Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont Army National Guard, trained together at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site.

The integration of forces started with training from C/3-126th AVN (AA) for the RSC and A/3-172nd INF (MTN) Soldiers and continued onto instruction from the infantry on moving and working together as a unit. Throughout the process the RSC Soldiers are mentored and introduced to different roles and duties. Training together promotes cohesion between the units and gives the Soldiers the experience and confidence they need to unify as one force in the field.

“Anytime we can integrate the units around Vermont with the RSP it really brings that connection, from the unit level down to the newest Soldier levels,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jared Doohen, Recruit Sustainment Company cadre.

The Soldiers with C/3-126th AVN (AA) trained the RSC and A/3-172nd INF (MTN) on medevac procedures involving an HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter.

“We were able to get Soldiers actual time applying what they learned and loading Soldiers and injured Soldiers onto the aircraft,” said Doohen.

The training teaches the Soldiers how to evacuate casualties to the Black Hawk in emergency situations. They practiced transmitting a 9-line medevac request and approaching a Black Hawk with its rotors running.

“This prepares them so they’re not going to freeze when something like this happens,” said Pfc. Tyler Law, infantryman, Alpha Company, 3rd battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain).

After completing the training, the Soldiers from the RSC and A/3-172nd INF (MTN) marched to another location to go over squad attack and movements.

“We’ve got the RSP Soldiers out here with us today so they can get an idea of what an infantry unit does in a combat scenario,” said Law.

The Soldiers were able to practice skills in real time using paintball guns.

“We’re taking them through squad level tactics, and the paintball



**U.S. Army Sgt. Jamie Eastman, crew chief, Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), Vermont Army National Guard, briefs Recruit Sustainment Company (RSC) and Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain) Soldiers on safety and proper procedures for HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter training at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt. May 14, 2016.**

has an element of realism,” said Doohen. “Paintball gives them something to think about and it makes it more enjoyable. They’re actually having to understand muzzle awareness, how to clear a weapon, when to shoot, when not to shoot, rules of engagement. It integrates that full Soldier skills and warrior tasks into their training.”

As part of the integration, the infantry Soldiers mentored the RSC Soldiers throughout the event, teaching them basic Soldier skills.

“It’s a good feeling being able to be a mentor for these new recruits,” said Law. “I want to send down the best information I can, so that when these guys go through basic or when they get to their units, they’re not going to be thrown off and surprised.”

In brief, the training with the different units is an introduction to unit specialties and inner workings.

“It brings that whole picture together for the Soldier,” said Doohen. “It gives recruits from different MOS’s (Military Occupational Specialties) a chance to taste what its like to be in the infantry, aviation, or whatever units we have integrated that month.”

Moreover, the hands-on experience presents the Soldiers with skills they can apply later in their career.

“The more we can teach them and set them up for success, the better the Soldier is going to accomplish the mission and represent Vermont well,” said Doohen. “The RSP is setting them up for success for Basic Combat Training and AIT. The state does a great job helping us and supporting us and we’d like to continue the effort, especially with the units around the state.”



**A U.S. Army Soldier with Alpha Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont Army National Guard, checks his ammo for a situation report during squad attack training with paintball equipment at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vt. May 14, 2016. The A/3-172nd INF (MTN) taught the Recruit Sustainment Company Soldiers infantry tactics and trained them to move and work together as a unit.**



# TALON 3 Training at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site

Story & Photos by Sgt. Heidi Kroll, 172nd PAD

JERICHO, Vt. - Alpha Company, Engineers, Special Troops Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) was able to begin training with the TALON 3 at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., on April 2, 2016. The unit is scheduled to receive the TALON 4 in 2017.

The TALON 3 is a lightweight, unmanned, tracked military. The robot is developed to protect warfighters and first responders against explosive threats. Soldiers can remotely control a TALON 3 robot from up to 1000 feet away. Alpha Co. will soon be using the TALON 4 to replace Soldiers when they are investigating improvised explosive devices (IED), mines, and anything suspicious in their area of operations.

“The TALON 4 will be another tool in our toolbox to help counteract an IED,” said Vaughan. Today was a day of learning the controls and how to use the robot to pick up and move objects. These skills will be critical when it comes to interacting with an IED.

“To spot an IED and pick it up, or pick up explosives, it was tricky and touchy,” said Spc. Eric Beck, combat engineer. Smiles were on many faces as the Soldiers moved mortar shells, ammunition boxes, and used the TALON 3 to pass empty canisters to other Soldiers.

When the unit receives the TALON 4, they will be able to deploy the robot to investigate objects that have taken the lives Soldiers in the past. With this robot threats can be identified at a distance, assessed, and appropriately neutralized.

The unit also participated in two different IED lanes. In preparation, Alpha Co. was taught a class on the components of an IED, where they may be located, and the correct response upon positive identification. Squads were given the mission to attend a Key Leader Engagement (KLE) meeting and needed to focus on arriving safely. Each training iteration consisted of one squad departing on Humvees and a second squad would hiking 500 meters through the trees to a remote location.

While maneuvering to the KLE, the Soldiers had to block out the snow flying through the air and the mud under their feet in order to use their new skills to search the ground for indicators of IEDs. Indicators of IEDs may include things such as disturbed earth on the road or suspicious devices along the roadway. If the squad failed to identify the simulated IED, it was alerted by a training simulation round.

“We are definitely a unit that loves to be outside, the morale goes up every time we get to come out and do hands on training,” said Brown.

This motivational training reminds the Soldiers why they joined the Army, and what they want to do when they come to drill, said Vaughan.



**U.S. Army Pfc. Jay Panes, combat engineer, Alpha Company, Special Troops Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain) Vermont National Guard, learns the controls of a TALON 3 robot, at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., April 2, 2016. The TALON 3 is used for counter improvised explosive device surveying and the unit is set to receive the TALON 4 in 2017.**



**U.S. Army Pfc. Jay Panes, combat engineer, Alpha Company, Special Troops Battalion, 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, controls a TALON 3 robot, at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., April 2, 2016. This training was familiarization with the TALON 3 controls to pick up, carry a canister, and pass it to another Soldier.**

# Recruit Sustainment Program Prepares Soldiers

Story & Photos by Spc. Avery Cunningham, 172nd PAD

For many Soldiers, basic training is a pivotal starting point in their military career. In basic training, recruits are taught how to be a Soldier in the U.S. Army and are prepared mentally and physically for their careers. Not everyone makes it through basic training; those who don't are called “training pipeline losses.”

To prevent these losses, the Army National Guard designed the Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) to prepare and educate Soldiers for the realities of basic training. Since instituting the program the number of guardsmen discharged during training has reduced.

“What we've done in RSP is we have a controlled environment where the instructors and cadre members are well trained to educate recruits on what they need to focus on for Basic Training,” said Capt. John Lescure, Recruit Sustainment Company commander, Vermont National Guard. “They learn how to wear a uniform, they learn the rank, they learn how they're supposed to get paid, and they learn the programs the military has initiated.”

“A lot of the skills I learned here I used right off the bat and it helped set me apart,” said Pfc. Zebulon Benoit, a Soldier with the Recruit Sustainment Company who has completed his training. Because of the program, Benoit was a step ahead of his peers.

The program is focused on all aspects of the basic training experience. “We try to manage that expectation and make sure they're prepared for the emotional stress that they're going to feel at basic training, and the physical stress that they're going to encounter,” said Lescure.

The exercises at the RSP help to further skills that make a Soldier successful. “We do a lot of team building exercises,” said Pvt. Hunter Brouillette, a soldier with the Recruit Sustainment Company. “Since I started coming here I learned to work in teams.”

Though the program focuses on teaching Soldiers the necessary skills and attitude for excelling in basic, it is also the Soldiers' first introduction to life in the National Guard. “All they've done up to that point is work with a recruiter, go to MEPS (Medical Entrance Processing Station) and that may be all they know of the military,” said Lescure.

So the RSP is structured to introduce Soldiers to what is available to them and what jobs there are in the National Guard. “No matter what their MOS (Military Occupational Specialty) is we're going to tell them a little bit about that, so they can remain excited while at basic training about coming back to the unit they're going to be assigned to,” said Lescure.

Despite the effectiveness of the program, there is still a way for Soldiers to improve. “The more questions you ask, the



**TOP: U.S. Army Pvt. Hunter Brouillette, squad leader, Recruit Sustainment Company, Vermont Army National Guard, conducts Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System training during drill at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., April 23, 2016.**

**A U.S. Army Soldier with the Recruit Sustainment Company, Vermont Army National Guard, performs the push-up event of the Army Physical Fitness Test during drill at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., April 23, 2016.**

more you're going to learn. The more you learn, the better prepared you are for when you get there,” said Benoit.

Giving Soldiers the opportunity to see outside of the Recruit Sustainment Program helps give them the motivation to finish training. “We've seen a lot of unit commanders, unit first sergeants, platoon sergeants, platoon leaders, come and visit RSP, and we really encourage that because we want these recruits to understand what they're coming back to after they go to basic training and AIT (Advanced Individual Training),” says Lescure. “What really keeps them going is knowing the unit they're going to go to when they get back.”





An F-16 Fighting Falcon assigned to the 134th Fighter Squadron, 158th Fighter Wing, Vermont Air National Guard, takes off during exercise Maple Lightning, at the Burlington International Airport, June 7, 2016. The intent was to exercise the ability to activate and deploy 18 aircraft, personnel and equipment in a compressed timeframe. The wing had to work together to assess the readiness of aircraft, personnel and equipment. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Airman 1st Class Jeffrey Tatro)



# Potential Recruits Observe the Guard for a Day

Story & Photograph by Spc. Avery Cunningham, JFHQ

Potential recruits from all over the state of Vermont visited Camp Ethan Allen Training Site in Jericho, Vermont, May 21, as part of a recruiting event called an “Open Training Day.” They arrived to observe the Vermont Army National Guard cavalry units in action during their electives training day.

“Open training day, in general, is an opportunity for these potential recruits to fall in with the Soldiers and do some training to the extent allowed by our JAG (Judge Advocate General),” said Capt. Mathew E. Hefner, squadron plans officer, Headquarters, Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain). “It’s a far more inclusive way to look at what we actually do in the cavalry.”

The potential recruits observed the 1st Squadron, 172nd conducting training that gave the Soldiers a chance to participate in a multitude of training events to increase their proficiency in different basic and cavalry skills including combat life saving, rifle marksmanship, mortar firing and forward observing. They also had the opportunity to view the Army Mountain Warfare School in action and check out an HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter with Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance).

“It’s just an entirely different experience than looking at a video or reading it in a brochure,” said Hefner.

Observing the Soldiers gives the potential recruits an opportunity to see what the guard actually does outside of looking at ads.

“They gets to see what it looks like when a 120 mm mortar hits, they get to see what’s involved in setting up the gun line,” said Hefner. “It’s just a far more inclusive way to look at what we actually do in the cavalry.”

“Because we’re here, we get to see what they’re actually doing, get to visually experience what they’re experiencing and get a better taste of what we’d be joining, the community and type of people you’d be around,” said Victoria Flanagan, a potential recruit. Witnessing training offers an in-depth view into the military world. It gives them a realistic perception of the training they’d be doing if they joined the Vermont Army National Guard.

“It gave us a unique opportunity to give these potential recruits a good understanding of all the things we do as a cavalry squadron,” said Hefner.

This new understanding fostered by the guard is part of the objective of the Open Training Day. The goal is to get the best-educated recruits that know what they’re getting into, said Hefner.

It’s a special occasion for the potential recruits to see the guard conduct mortar fire, geometry, and other aspects of their training not always shown in media, said Flanagan. There’s a multiple step process to achieve a task that goes beyond the end result. It takes a team, work and unity.

Ultimately, the Open Training Day was able to show the potential recruits the Vermont National Guard and allowed Soldiers to explain, through words and actions, what it is that they accomplish in the guard.

“It gets you a lot of exposure to see what the National Guard is all about and to see the real people who are part of it,” said Flanagan.

In addition to showing the potential recruits the character of the Soldiers in the guard and the guard itself, the training also revealed the different career possibilities recruits can chase.

“I’ve been exploring a lot of branches and a lot of different opportunities, and the National Guard is very open and flexible to what you want to do as a career,” said Flanagan. “There are so many job opportunities and ways you can go, and I think there is a place for everybody in the National Guard.”



**TOP:** U.S. Soldiers assigned to Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), Vermont Army National Guard, show potential recruits an HH-60M Black Hawk while speaking with them about being in the Vermont National Guard, Camp Ethan Allen Training Site (CEATS), Jericho, Vt., May 21, 2016.

**LEFT:** U.S. Army Pfc. Cody Bedard, a mortar man assigned to Alpha Troop, 1st Squadron, 172nd Cavalry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, speaks to potential recruits about the role of mortar men in the Army at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site (CEATS), Jericho, Vt., May 21, 2016.

**CENTER:** U.S. Army Capt. Jason Beams, Army Mountain Warfare School training division chief, Vermont National Guard, speaks with potential recruits about the school and its role in the Army at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site (CEATS), Jericho, Vt., May 21, 2016.

**RIGHT:** U.S. Army Spc. Michael Trombly, crew chief, Charlie Company, 3rd Battalion, 126th Aviation Regiment (Air Ambulance), Vermont National Guard, speaks with potential recruits about aviation and its role in the Army at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site (CEATS), Jericho, Vt., May 21, 2016.



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Logan Blacklock, a scout with Headquarters, Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 172nd Infantry Regiment (Mountain), Vermont National Guard, maneuvers through the woods during a reconnaissance training mission on Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho, Vt., June 6, 2016. Multiple companies from the 86th Infantry Brigade Combat Team are participating in multiple training events over the course of the next two weeks as part of their annual training. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Sarah Mattison)

