

Official Newsmagazine of the California National Guard

GRIZZLY

First Across the Finish Line

**Greenfield Becomes
Golden State's First Female
Infantry Officer**

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COME HELL OR SWIFTWATER

Alpha Company, 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group Hone Their Rescue Skills

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Maj. Gen. David S. Baldwin
California Adjutant General

Protect the Force

Over the last few issues of the Grizzly I have written about the importance of lethality and training readiness. Both of those objectives lead into our number one strategic objective: combat readiness. We have done well in that area, while sustaining our ability to provide civil support to our state and nation.

The fires from last year have shown our ability to be adaptive to the emergency, where we have had to shift our response from primarily aviation focused operations to a much broader relief effort – Soldiers from the 140th Chemical Company helping to decontaminate first responders or Airmen of the 163rd Attack Wing providing real-time fire-ground intelligence to our agency partners. You have done all of this flawlessly and risen above all expectations.

As we move forward I need you to sustain those areas but also focus on taking care of each other -- Soldier and Airman care is paramount, we need to protect our force. We have done an amazing job with educating our force and shifting our focus from a reactive to proactive approach when it comes to social and societal issues that have had a deleterious effect on readiness. Your ability mitigate sexual harassment and sexual assaults through ongoing education has been commendable but even one instance as we move forward is one to many.

We have to do better and I know that collectively, with the

proper focus, we can meet this objective.

Be more than a good wing-man, do more than check up on your buddy. To my senior noncommissioned officers on the front lines - we must ensure our troops know that behaviors that can lead to sexual assault – telling of off-color jokes, celebrations where copious amounts of alcohol are involved – are not tolerated. We also need to foster a sense of trust in our subordinates. A trust that makes them feel like they can come to us when something happens. That we will hear them, will listen and will take appropriate action. To my commanders – make it known through your actions and words that sexual assault/harassment is not, and will not be tolerated at any level, from anyone. And to my junior Soldiers and Airman out there – don’t put yourselves into potentially dangerous situations, when you’re amongst your buddies, let it be clear that jokes of a sexual nature are not tolerated and if something does happen, help your buddy get the help they need and support them through this process.

Proactive leadership up and down the chain of command will help us mitigate situations before they become problems. Continue to learn all you can on this issue and be adaptive as needed and demanded by whatever situation you find yourself. I have seen you do this with our mission tasks, so now do it with this task, protect our force.

Life doesn’t stop for our Army and Air Guard families and employers when we order them to duty. Our new National Military strategy is asking for a more lethal and agile force to meet the security requirements for our state and nation. Our lethality is directly tied to the individual readiness of our service members and the resiliency of their families and employers who are also asked to serve as they are being called upon to adjust and sacrifice while working around their Guard members’ absence. This new reality necessitated discussions at our level on how we can better support Guard community and individual readiness.

The most rewarding part of this special duty as an Ambassador is that you are truly making a difference in people’s lives. By placing this emphasis on taking care of families and employers, our Soldiers and Airmen can focus their full attention on a combatant commander’s mission objectives. The only criteria to becoming an Ambassador is that you genuinely care about our people and understand that there is no single program that gets the job done for all those impacted by their military service. It’s the collective expertise, creativity, and experience of all of us that can ensure Soldiers, Airmen, as well as their families and employers are taken care of in these challenging times. CSMR’s quarterly Individual Readiness Centers operated by their Ambassadors will help us do that. I’m asking all senior NCOs to embrace this program by integrating their capabilities (i.e., Ambassadors manning Individual Readiness Centers) into your training activities and encouraging the use of their programs.

America’s all-volunteer military has prevailed during more than 17 continuous years of warfighting in some of the most formidable missions in our history. Our Soldiers and Airmen ask their families and employers to serve alongside them. They have faithfully answered the state and nation’s repeated calls to duty and accomplished sustained missions that would have decimated most forces. Throughout our proud history, the California National Guard has demonstrated character, competence and commitment. This new program holds the promise of helping those who have help us meet our mission requirements--our singularly most important lethal weapon... our troops. Individual readiness depends largely on the resilience of service members, family members, and employers. In general, resilience is an individual, family, organization, or employers’ ability to adapt to adverse stress effectively as measured by performance and well-being. These new efforts by the Joint Team will help us all maintain family and employer resiliency before, during, and after their duty is performed.

California’s ESGR, Setting a New Standard in Service Benefits Connectedness

Whether single or married with a family, working within a small business or at a large corporation, the first step in a successful deployment or sustaining a family’s membership in the Guard is knowing what resources are available to help families and their employers adapt to the challenges our Guard members face.

MG Baldwin has place emphasis on individual readiness from pre-deployment through homecoming. Individual readiness is a point of emphasis with all non-commissioned officers as they assist Soldiers and Airmen through all phases of their deployments. Pre-deployment individual readiness is also about retaining skilled Guard personnel. We do this by addressing issues that adversely affect their continued service--which is critical to achieving lethality.

The Joint Staff, led by the California State Military Reserve (CSMR), has teamed up with DoD’s California Committee for the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR), as well as the National Guard’s Employment Support Program (NGESP); Family Programs; Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP); and Work 4 Warriors (W4W) to field a new program referred to as the “CSMR Ambassadors Program.” These Ambassadors have been recruited and trained to help our NCO’s support the needs of their service members by establishing “Individual Readiness Centers”. These Individual Readiness Centers will operate on a quarterly basis at every armory and installation throughout the California Military Department once the program is fully matured. Ambassadors will promote the following programs: The two year pilot program established its value by significantly increasing the use of readiness resources



Chief Master Sgt.
Thomas L. James

Senior Enlisted Advisor



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California is the number one contributor of illegal marijuana in the nation. Our state receives a majority of the funding Congress recently appropriated to the U.S. Forest Service to specifically tackle this issue.

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California is the number one contributor of illegal marijuana in the nation. Our state receives a majority of the funding Congress recently appropriated to the U.S. Forest Service to specifically tackle this issue.

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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

Senior Airman Crystal Housman

A team of Green Berets from Alpha Company, 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group, California Army National Guard, train in swift water rescue techniques June 14, 2018, along the Colorado River near Blythe, California.

TRICKS

OF

THE

TRADE:

Swiftwater RESCUE

“These guys, their communication, the way they move together and the way they handle the situation is far and above what any of our other teams do.”

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SENIOR AIRMAN CRYSTAL HOUSMAN
California Military Department Public Affairs



BLYTHE, Calif. – When Capt. Andrew took his Green Beret combat dive team to Blythe for annual training this summer, he had one priority in mind: save lives here at home.

Andrew, a former U.S. Air Force pararescuer who also worked as a lifeguard on California's ocean beaches, knew his team's special forces (SF) training and equipment could be a tremendous asset the next time a major hurricane or flood hit California, or anywhere in the U.S. All the team needed was a little more training and a little more gear.

“We go through some of the most difficult dive training in the military,” said Andrew, who commands the California Army National Guard's Operational Detachment Alpha 9515, Alpha Company, 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group. “So we're capitalizing on those skills to extend the reach California National Guard into any kind of waterborne recovery mission, be it maritime or riverine or lake.”

“As an SF team, we don't just go out there and hunt bad guys downrange, you know, we have capabilities that when we're homeland we can help,” he said, noting that the Florida and Mississippi National Guards field waterborne rescue and recovery teams with their special forces soldiers.

In June, Andrew and his soldiers took to the water and took the first step toward becoming a deployable disaster response team.

For five days, instructors from Intrepid Maritime, a Rescue 3 International certified instruction company, put the team through its paces.

Using themselves as “live bait,” team members worked to keep one another from being swept downstream using rescue boards and ropes as they learned rescue techniques in fast-moving currents near the Palo Verde Dam on the Colorado River, which straddles California and Arizona.

Instructors infused hazard-recognition into each aspect of the training, giving Master Sgt. Alex, the team's noncommissioned officer in charge, a new respect for river operations.

“You don't know the hidden dangers of swift water, specifically to river-type rescues, and all the hidden

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A team of Green Berets from Alpha Company, 5th Battalion, 19th Special Forces Group, California Army National Guard, train in swift water rescue techniques June 14, 2018, along the Colorado River near Blythe, California.

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dangers that lurk below the water surface,” Alex said.

Conflicting currents caused by drop-offs from natural and man-made obstacles such as rocks and dams can be fatal, he said.

“The water drops off little bit, and it creates a washing machine tumbling effect that essentially will suck you down to the bottom,” Alex said. “The priority is for you the rescuer not to get yourself into a hazard.”

Downed trees and debris also present a hazard to rescue teams.

“In the river, especially in a flood, there’s a lot of obstacles in the water that can cause

entrapment,” Andrew said. “Once you get in entrapped in the river you’re in a lot of trouble.”

“That’s where a lot of the technical components with rescues comes in,” he said.

The team honed their rope skills in varying currents and depths before taking the gear onto their ‘Zodiac’-style boats. Once aboard, they conducted practice rescues at the base of the dam while battling the area’s strongest currents and most-dangerous waters.

Their performance impressed Jeremiah Field, Intrepid Maritime’s lead instructor, who challenged the soldiers all week with different scenarios to prove their skills.

“They did a great job,” Field said. “They jumped right in and adapted quickly.” Field, who has trained countless fire department and other rescue teams on the water, said the special forces team stands out among his students.

“We work with a lot of teams that have been working together for a long time and are well-established teams,” he said, “but these guys, their communication, the way they move together and the way they handle the situation is far and above what any of our other teams do.”

Special forces teams are perfectly positioned to perform disaster response work, Alex said.

“We have a core group of guys, a small a-team that are used to working with each other, self-reliant, won’t quit and can really fight through adversity, especially in a time like a natural disaster,” he said.

By week’s end, each soldier earned basic and advanced swift water rescue river and flood technician certification.

Field says the team will need some additional classroom training and may need to add rescue gear to their equipment cache before being classified as a Type I or II deployable asset by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), but having the individual certifications is a critical component.

“This is the first step to getting into the water side of urban search and rescue operations,” he said.

For Andrew, the team commander, anything is possible. He envisions integrating the team’s swift water rescue skills with California National Guard helicopters to save people who are pinned by debris or trapped in vehicles with water raging around them.

“I think putting that muscle behind it, we’re hoping to give California some really good options to employ the National Guard anywhere its needed.”

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Leslie R. Greenfield, right, receives a blue pin signifying completion of the Infantry Basic Officer Leadership Course (IBOLC) July 20 at Fort Benning, Georgia, and becoming the California Army National Guard's first female infantry officer. (U.S. Army photo provided by Ben Garrett)



Cal Guardsman becomes Golden State's first female infantry officer

By **LT. COL. JONATHAN MASAKI SHIROMA**
California Military Department Public Affairs

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — For 1st Lt. Leslie R. Greenfield, crossing the finish line is something that has literally been a huge part of her life. As an avid runner who has successfully completed 10 marathons including the Boston, she knows what it is like to train hard and to remain focused in order to complete a race.

On July 20, however, Greenfield crossed a different finish line: she became the first woman in the California Army National Guard to graduate from Infantry Basic Officer Leadership Course (IBOLC).

"This is very exciting for me and I am so happy to have had the opportunity just to attend IBOLC," said Greenfield during a recent telephone interview from Fort Benning, Georgia, the home of IBOLC. "There were days, I have to admit, that I questioned myself but I kept moving forward to reach my goal to graduate."

Only 38 women have graduated from the course since the Army opened all combat arms related occupations to women a few years ago. Greenfield was one of six females from class 04-18's 141 graduates to earn their blue cord. She knew that she would encounter some adversity from those who do not necessarily believe women belong in the infantry.

"Some men believe you should not be here," she explained. "You know you have to work to earn their respect more than just a guy coming in right off the street."

"This not something that I just decided to do without thinking about it," said Greenfield. "I knew it was going to be tough so I really researched what it was going to be like to make sure it was a good fit for me."

Coming to that decision involved asking those who had some insight into the infantry world. For that, Greenfield looked to fellow officers and to a number of non-commissioned officers within her CST. "I have been blessed with so many great mentors and talking to them about what to expect was my saving grace," she explained.

One such mentor was Sgt. 1st Class Justin Flood. Greenfield praises Flood for taking the time to explain what to expect. He also helped her improve in her marksmanship, taught her about what it takes to be an infantry leader and to speak words of confidence to inspire her to never quit.

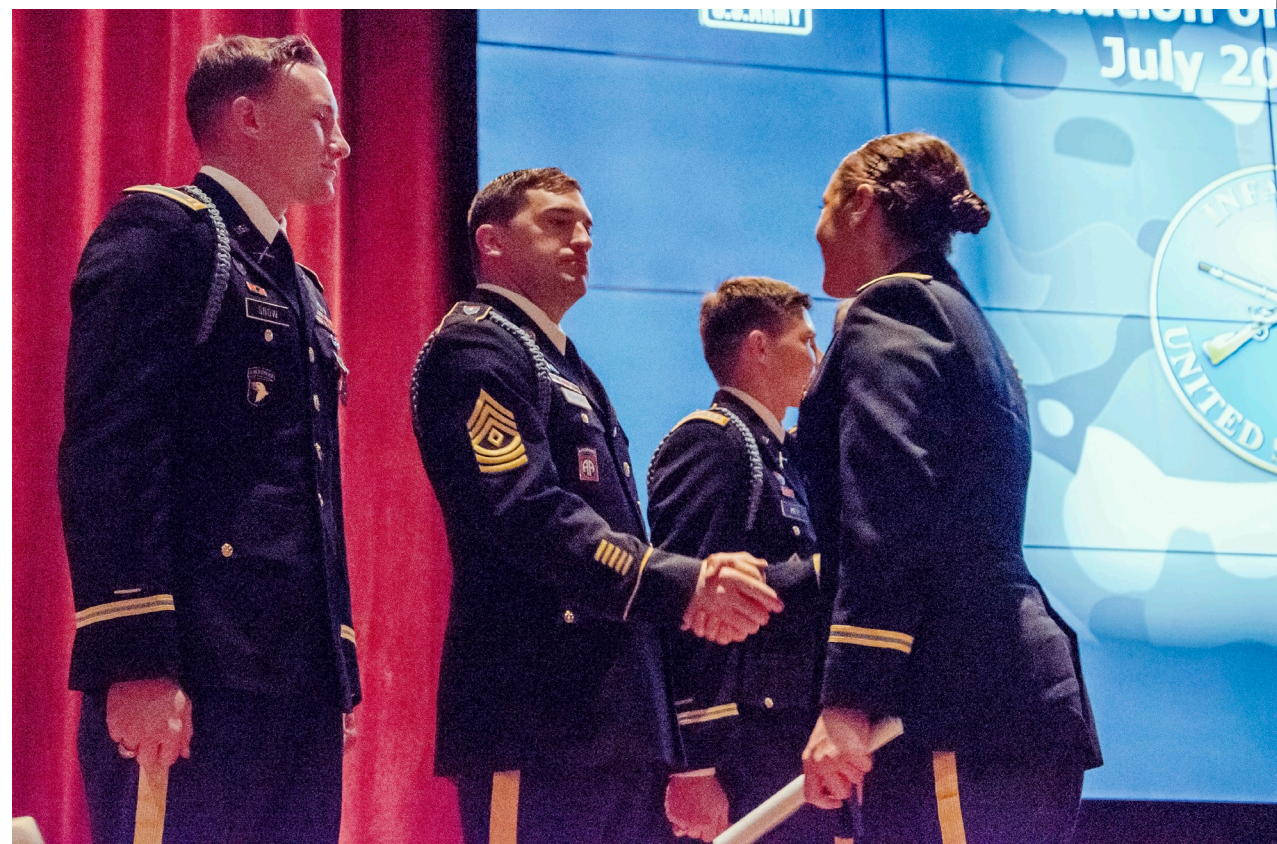
"The infantry is not for everyone, male or female," said Flood. "She (Greenfield) has the drive and I knew early that she would be that person who would take on that challenge."

Flood further explained that Greenfield did one specific thing that he said would ultimately lead to her success.

"She is not afraid to say I am not familiar with this, and I need some advice," said Flood. "I think all good leaders who ask for advice especially when they are not sure, will succeed."

Greenfield will begin her journey as an infantry officer as a platoon leader, Charlie Company, 185th Infantry Regiment.

"While monumental, graduating from IBOLC was a baby-step for the LT," said Flood. "Now comes the next test and I have full confidence Lt. Greenfield will clear the next hurdle on her way to becoming an outstanding officer."



U.S. Army Sgt. Jimmy Price and Spc. Pedro Sanchez, both motor transport operators with the 1498th Transportation Company, 224th Sustainment Brigade, California Army National Guard, check their trailer's basic issued items, before leaving on a convoy to Camp Roberts from Fort Irwin, California, June 14, 2018. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Jack J. Adamyk)



Making A Difference Every. Single. Day.

By Capt. Jan Bender
Special Operations Detachment North

*“Construction and destruction alike satisfy the will to power,
but construction is more difficult as a rule, and therefore gives
more satisfaction to the person who can achieve it.”
~ Bertrand Russell ~*

This quote, attributed to a renowned British philosopher and Nobel laureate, captures the essence of the difficult, but rewarding mission that the Soldiers of Special Operations Detachment-North (SOD-North) have been engaged in since they deployed to Afghanistan in early February of this year; to “construct” in support of the ongoing NATO-led, multinational Resolute Support Mission.

Their task: to train, advise, and assist the Afghan National Army Special Operations Command (ANASOC) in expanding their force rapidly and employing them effectively in the ongoing fight.

The Fight and the Origins of the Force

Afghanistan is roughly the size of the state of Texas with a population just under that of California. It has a complex culture with four predominant and distinctly different ethnicities each with countless tribal divisions. As a primarily mountainous and arid, land locked nation, bordered by Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, China and Pakistan it has long been considered the crossroads of Southwest Asia... and has been at the center of many conflicts. Since U.S. troops first deployed there following the terrorist attacks on 9/11, to eradicate Al Qaeda safe havens and stabilize the region, the fighting has ebbed and flowed. At times as many as 20 known terrorist groups have been active in the region, and the need for Afghanistan to develop their own organic Special Operations capability rapidly became clear.

Out of necessity, the first Afghan Commando battalions (kandaks) were organized in 2007 by selecting Soldiers from each of the regionally aligned conventional Afghan National Army (ANA) Corps, giving them advanced training and equipment, and then reorganizing and employing them as the U.S. Army does it's Rangers.

These initial elements of highly trained and motivated Commandos saw great success on the battlefield, as they partnered with U.S. Special Forces elements to hunt down the enemies of Afghanistan and terrorist networks that held global aspirations. As a result, the Commandos footprint and their legacy has expanded exponentially in the last decade; growing from a brigade sized element in 2007 to a division in 2010 and more recently to a standalone corps in late 2017.

Though they still make up less than eight percent of the total ANA, Afghanistan's Special Operations Forces conduct nearly 80% of the successful Afghan-led offensive combat operations.

However, as with any organization that experiences such rapid growth, there have been a few natural growing pains.

Enter SOD-North

As a unit designed to specialize in the command and control of Special Operations Forces, SOD-North was assigned to apply its expertise at the ANASOC-Special Operations Advisory Group (ANASOC-SOAG) with teams scattered across several outposts alongside ANASOC Forces around the Kabul region.

When SOD-N's team of roughly 40 Soldiers touched down in Afghanistan just months after ANASOC expanded from a division to a corps, there was no shortage of areas where Afghans could benefit from a seasoned mentor.

“We showed up with a really capable and experienced team and set to work,” said the Commander of SOD-North Lt. Col. Karl Johnson, who is serving as the ANASOC-SOAG Deputy Commander during this deployment. “Our maturity and Special Operations expertise were key to our successful integration into the SOAG and quickly forming meaningful connections with our Afghan counterparts”.

SOD-North Soldiers formed the core staff of the ANASOC-SOAG and were tasked with many

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of the key positions within the organization alongside coalition partners from Austria, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia, and Spain. Despite any initial cultural, lingual or doctrinal differences they found common ground and quickly fused as a team.

The mandate in late 2017 from the Afghan Ministry of Defense to expand ANASOC into a corps required an additional 10,000 Soldiers be added to the formation by 2021, in addition to a complete restructuring of elements nationwide. In the end, ANASOC needs to expand by more than 40 % to support its reorganization into four regionally aligned brigades, and a National Mission Brigade headquartered in Kabul.

“The major task of growing Afghan Special Operations capabilities is training new Soldiers to counter attrition and fulfill expansion requirements,” said SOD-North’s Command Sgt. Major Brian Beetham who has been serving as the ANASOC-SOAG’s Senior Enlisted Mentor to the ANASOC School of Excellence (SOE). “A further line of effort has been to refine the courses themselves to mature the force and to produce the best Commando possible. These efforts have involved the entire SOAG to some extent and fall most directly on the SOE.”

As the weight of the tasks required came to rest on the shoulders of his team, Beetham’s confidence grew, “Every command team concentrates on building the best team possible for this mission and it quickly became apparent to us that the Soldiers of SOD-North would exceed our expectations.”

ANASOC’s SOE has numerous lines of effort that SOD-North Soldiers contribute to directly.

The Commando Qualification Course (CDOQC) trains ANA Soldiers in basic Commando skills over a 14-week course. Ideally, the student is a multi-year veteran of the ANA, but due to growth requirements, some troops fresh out of initial training are accepted into the course. CDOQC teaches enhanced skills with individual and crew served weapons at the platoon level, dismounted patrolling, cordon and search, close quarters battle, and convoy operations. There are also survivability components including basic medical and counter improvised explosive device awareness. The graduates are ready to join the Commando Special Operations Kandaks and become a member of the most lethal Afghan formation on the battlefield.

During SOD-North’s mission, five cycles of CDOQC have trained over 4000 new Commandos. Mentors also reviewed the CDOQC curriculum, identified inefficiencies, and re-prioritized training events.

Though Commandos are the most prolific within the Afghan Special Operations community, the most elite are the Afghan Special Forces (ASF), modeled after U.S. Army Green Berets, their training is the most selective and intense.

The Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC) consists of a 15 week course that takes experienced Commandos and enhances their skills to provide agile expeditionary teams for employment with U.S. Special Forces and Afghan special and conventional units. SOD-North Soldiers mentored both the SFQC and the already formed ASF kandaks during the process of reconsolidating them within the ANASOC National Mission Brigade.

“For many of us [Green Berets] our previous deployments were much more operationally kinetic... and to be honest, more [adrenaline filled]. But this experience has introduced us to a litany of [big picture considerations]. We are training the trainers,” said SOD-North Sergeant 1st Class “V” who is serving as the SFQC- Special Operations Advisory Team (SOAT) Senior Enlisted Advisor. “No, we’re not kicking doors ourselves, but as mentors we’re focused on operational and strategic goals... and that is what Special Operations is all about. To train and advise a partner force... to enable them to defeat their adversaries. The elite Soldiers that graduate this course are Afghanistan’s greatest hope. We’ve come to take great

pride in that.”

In addition to facilitating the growth of the Corps through training new Afghan Commandos and ASF, the expansion has been further accelerated by the reassignment of already existing Mobile Strike Kandaks from conventional ANA Corps to ANASOC. The Mobile Strike Kandaks (MSK) are equipped with wheeled armored Mobile Strike Fighting Vehicles (MSFVs).

Although an existing formation, those kandaks are all programed to cycle through the CDOQC and then attend the Cobra Strike Maneuver Course (CSMC). The CSMC trains these newly minted commandos in a combined arms maneuver curriculum in order to maximize the formation’s lethality on the battlefield. CSMC training integrates Commando skill sets with the armored mobility and organic firepower of the MSFVs. SOD-North mentors helped establish the CSMC training center and were responsible for the execution of the inaugural course and follow on iterations. To date, two CSMC courses have been completed, training over 1000 Afghan Soldiers.

“It’s been extremely satisfying to witness the level of progression we’ve

“For many of us [Green Berets] our previous deployments were much more operationally kinetic... and to be honest, more [adrenaline filled]. But this experience has introduced us to a litany of [big picture considerations].”

Sgt. 1st Class “V”

SFQC- Special Operations Advisory Team (SOAT) Senior Enlisted Advisor.



seen in the Soldiers coming through our course,” said SOD-North Capt. Enrique Monreal who is serving in a mentor role as the Executive Officer of the CSMC-SOAT. “Although they’ve had these vehicles since 2011, many of them were not well trained in how to fight with or maintain them. Those skills are vital. When they graduate here they are going directly into the fight. We’ve gotten feedback from Afghan commanders in the field with great praise for their level of expertise. The Cobra Strike patch they leave here with is hard earned. It has been a very gratifying experience.”

Seeing the Enemy and Sustaining the Fight

The creation of the Corps brought more than just an expansion of maneuver elements, it also infused ANASOC with an intelligence capability that no other Afghan Army Corps possesses.

SOD-North’s intelligence Soldiers were responsible for mentoring ANASOC Commandos through the rigors of standing up the first Analytical Control Element (ACE) in all of Afghanistan. ANASOC’s ACE is a robust team of nearly 60 Commandos that mirrors a similar construct found in U.S. Army formations at the division level and higher.



“This is my first time serving in a [Special Operations] mentor capacity, but it has been a really meaningful tour,” said Bambo. “I was working alongside my Afghan counterparts when they issued out night vision gear for the first time to one of ANASOC’s MSKs and their Sergeant Major was nearly in tears... he knew the lives they would save. Moments like that really drive home the impact that we’re making here.”

Going All In: Leaving a Legacy

The Soldiers of SOD-North personally invested in their mission and quickly realized that before any success could be achieved as mentors, a sense of mutual trust and shared understanding had to be established with their Afghan counterparts.

“Taking the time to truly connect with our Afghan’s has been instrumental,” said Johnson. “Working daily on our rudimentary Dari and Pashtu-language skills, developing an understanding of their cultural and world views, emphasizing our common values and then coming to a shared vision of what Afghanistan’s future can hold, has been a journey. It has required patience and diligence, but what we’re accomplishing together is real.”

As the Soldiers of SOD-North reflect on all they have invested here and learned from the experience, they are looking forward to a strong finish and preparing to handoff this critical mission to their replacements.

During this mobilization SOD-North’s team has worked alongside not only NATO Coalition partners, but was integrated directly under a joint active-duty Special Forces chain of command. The experience has been illuminating and fulfilling for leaders at every level.

“Some people will go through their lives wondering if they made a difference. Our SOD-North teammates will not have that problem. The work they have done and the institution they have built will not only set the conditions for the Taliban to reconcile with the [Afghan] government, it will continue to ensure the safety of the United States, our citizens and our interests,” said Col. Darin Blatt, ANASOC-SOAG Commander. “Americans will sleep secure in their beds because of the legacy left by SOD-North. I cannot praise their team enough. Moreover, I want to personally thank the family members whose selfless efforts enabled SOD-North’s team to remain focused on the mission. I cannot express my gratitude for your sacrifice. Our nation is blessed to have you in its ranks. Thank you!”



Above: Commandos training to become Afghanistan’s newest Special Operations unit, the 6th Cobra Strike Kandak (CSK), take part in a live fire exercise near Kabul, Afghanistan, Apr. 30, 2018. The 6th CSK is the first of seven CSKs and provides a new level of mobility and firepower for the Commandos. Several SOD-N Soldiers mentor the leadership of this new and specialized course - photo by Martha Shaeffer. Left: A team member advises 6th CSK CDR on CSK employment tactics – photo by Capt. Jan Bender. Right: SOD-North Sergeant 1st Class Jason Leonard, an ANASOC-SOAG intelligence mentor, works with his Afghan interpreter to convey the tenants of basic intelligence work to a group of Commandos within the Afghan National Army Special Operations Corps’ (ANASOC) Intelligence Analysis Control Element ANASOC ACE - photo by Capt. Jan Bender. Bottom Right: Lieutenant General Bismillah Waziri, the ANASOC Commander addresses and inspires new Commando recruits on July 14, 2018 during an opening ceremony which kicked off the 14-week Commando Qualification course. Only approximately 790 new recruits remained after enduring a week long, grueling pre-selection process on Camp Commando, Afghanistan - photo by Master Sgt. Felix A. Figueroa.

“When trained, manned and properly equipped an ACE is designed to leverage all the intelligence disciplines to project predictive analysis in order to protect our warfighters and kill the enemy,” said SOD-North’s Master Sgt. Jessica Velasco, who previously worked within a U.S. Army ACE and is now serving as an ANASOC-SOAG intelligence mentor. “This has been a big leap for the Commandos that we’re working with, but they are fast learners. They have made tremendous gains in our time here and that momentum will no doubt carry on long after we’re gone.”

The expansion of the overall organization also created some unique demands in the administrative and logistics arena as well. SOD-North’s logistics Soldiers have worked hard to ensure that key ANASOC leaders understand the importance of having a proactive, flexible and robust sustainment team within ANASOC to fuel their arduous operational cycle.

SOD-North’s Warrant Officer 1, Tony Bambo, who is serving as an ANASOC-SOAG logistics mentor, worked daily with the ANASOC Corps logistics staff and traveled the country interacting with Afghan Commandos and emphasizing the importance of equipment accountability and regular maintenance.

2018 Carr and Mendocino Complex Fires



**The Cal Guard
Response**

GRIZZLY

Special Coverage





Top: California Army National Guardsmen from Bravo Company, 126th Aviation Battalion, work with Warren Giacomni of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to secure a 2,000-gallon water bucket July 29 at the Shasta District Fairgrounds. Shown: U.S. Army Spc. Kia Xiong, Sgt. 1st Class Douglas King, Spc. Gentry So'alo, Capt. Ben Bowman and Giacomni. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza) Center: Crew chief Sgt. Bryan Salazar presents HH-60M Medevac Black Hawk at Mountain Gate helibase Aug. 16, 2018. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Army Pfc. Andrea Torres). Bottom: U.S. Army Spcs. Rodavlas Manlicic and Mailo Gonzalez of the 870th Military Police Company, 185th Military Police Battalion, 49th Military Police Brigade, California Army National Guard, control a traffic point at an active intersection, July 29 in Redding, California, where the Carr Fire passed through and continued to expand. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza)

By Staff Sgt. Edward Siguenza
69th Public Affairs Detachment

REDDING, Calif. — First on scene are the California National Guard's precious assets, it's air power: the CH-47 Chinooks and HH-60 Black Hawks and their operating crew. Intelligence units are aboard. Later, the military police and engineers. Ground forces, such as artillerymen and cavalrymen, are on the way.

Cal Guard's forces are on the state battlefield again as the most threatful enemy in 2018 — the Carr Fire — bears down on this Northern California city. And it's coming quickly, faster than lots of previous wild fires.

"It's erratic. It's a fire that's unpredictable and extremely dangerous," said Scott McClean,

information officer of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), the brave agency at the helm of the fire storm. "We got (the Cal Guard) up and running quickly. We're expending our assets to the fullest. We need the Soldiers to supplement our emergency crews so we can contain this fire."

In less than a week the Carr Fire grew to nearly 90,000 acres and destroyed 500-plus structures. Thousands were ordered to evacuate. After six days, CAL FIRE contained less than 10 percent of it, and firefighters contemplated how it jumped an area of the Sacramento River that was wider than a football field.

"Like I said," McClean replied, "erratic." Cal Guard's air assets were mission ready at the Redding Municipal Airport but hampered by weather conditions. The huge fire sent up massive

smoke clouds, darkening the sky to where the sun is bright red when visible. At nighttime, wind carries ashes to other Shasta County cities to where parked vehicles were blanketed overnight.

Two military police units — the 270th and 870th — were rotating Soldiers at traffic points. The MPs were diverting traffic at roads blocked off to the public. On the first day, MPs were stationed at about a dozen areas. That number grew to nearly 24 sites the following day.

"We can take care of the TCPs (traffic control points) so that the sheriffs and local police can monitor the areas that are off limits," said 270th's Sgt. Gustavo Lucatero, a sheriff in his civilian life. "This is something we can do to help the community maintain order. People had to leave their homes due to the fire. We're all helping to keep the city safe."

Center, across the fold: U.S. Army Spc. Kia Xiong, front, of the California Army National Guard's Bravo Company, 126th Aviation Battalion, guides a 2,000-gallon water bucket into a CH-47 Chinook July 30 at the Shasta District Fairgrounds, Anderson, California. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza). Firefighters from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention (CAL FIRE) Task Force 4231 out of Modesto, California, rest July 29. The firefighters were on the last stages of a 24-hour response to put out fires. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza). Nevada and California National Guard assists with Mendocino Complex wildfire. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Malachi Mansfield). Sgt. Jesus Valencia and Spc. Cameron Hodges of the California Army National Guard's 270th Military Police Company, secure a checkpoint July 29 at the Keswick Dam in Redding, California, shortly after the Carr Fire passed through the area. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza).

The 49th's subordinate — the 578th Engineer Battalion — activated one of it's companies and drew troops from another unit. They have qualified heavy equipment operators who were projected to drive trailers, bulldozers and other transportation assets for this mission.

"We'll also be helping at traffic points," said U.S. Army 1st Sgt. Julian Navarro, first sergeant, 649th Engineer Company. "We'll be doing our best to help where we can."

Military police were running 12-hour shifts throughout Redding, checking identities and answering basic questions. Emergency and recovery agencies, like PG&E (private business Pacific Gas and Electric) were easily allowed through Cal Guard's checkpoints. But vehicles without significant recognition were often stopped, and Soldiers questioned driver's whereabouts.

"We're so glad the military's here. We're comfortable knowing our homes and businesses are safe," a Redding resident said as she passed a Cal Guard-manned checkpoint. "All I know is this fire is too big to control. Everyone's doing what they can."

"When the Army's here, that means it's pretty serious," Jerry J. Smith, also a Redding resident, added. "But it also means our city's protected. We're glad you're here."

Cal Guard's 185th Military Police Battalion situated itself at the Shasta District Fairgrounds in Anderson, California, and set up its operations center to coordinate all missions. The bulk of troops occupy the Shasta Speedway, an auto race track on the fairgrounds. Troops are housed in temporary shelters when not on mission.

"It's been a busy year for the (49th) brigade and

for the California National Guard overall," said Col. Robert Paoletti, 49th Military Police Brigade commander. "Our presence shows we're helping the community in this time of need. We're going to do our jobs professionally so local law enforcement can handle their responsibilities."

More than 500 Cal Guardsmen from the 143rd Infantry Regiment were training for hand crew missions. Teams will be reporting to Redding in the upcoming days, adding to Cal Guard's support for ground operations. The hand crews will work areas already burned by the Carr Fire, extinguishing hot spots to prevent fire flare ups.

Per CAL FIRE, from Jan. 1 to July 22, 2018, there have been about 3,400 fires that burned about 100,000 acres. There have been more than 4,000 California fires this year combined with the U.S. Forest Service.

Gen. Joseph Lengyel, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, speaks to the Soldiers, trained as hand crews, August 7 in Tehama County, California, in the midst of raging wildfires. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Lani Pascual)

The quick responding 270th Military Police

Story and Photos by Staff Sgt. Edward Siguenza
69th Public Affairs Detachment

REDDING, Calif. —This is an old, too familiar scene for the California Army National Guard's 270th Military Police Company.

The Sacramento-based unit is back on the state battlefield helping enforce law and order in the Carr Fire. Dozens of Soldiers are manning traffic points, diverting non-emergency vehicles in restricted areas. Others are serving as security forces at evacuation centers or response sites, making sure order is intact.

This is nothing new for Cal Guard's most relied unit — with respect to Cal Guard's air assets, which are always actively engaged every fire season. But for the 270th, it's been Cal Guard's busiest ground force for the past nine months due to all the raging wildfires igniting California.

"Oh yes, they're being called upon a lot," said U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Abraham Hinojosa, command sergeant major of the 185th Military Police Battalion that overseas the 270th's operation. "One, it's their location. Two, they're trained. They're always up on their training certifications. Their numbers are always good and that makes them easy to rely on."

Since the Tubbs Fire and Nuns Fire in Sonoma County, California, last October, it's been non-stop for the 270th as far as state activation. The unit provided law and order after the Tubbs Fire became California's most destructive wildfire all-time, destroying more than 5,600 structures.

After the Tubbs Fire came the Thomas Fire in December 2017. The 270th served the same purpose in the Santa Barbara-Ventura County blaze that scorched about 282,000 acres, becoming California's largest wildfire in history.



California Army National Guardsmen Sgt. Jesus Valencia and Spc. Cameron Hodges of the 270th Military Police Company, 185th Military Police Battalion, 49th Military Police Brigade, update a Shasta County sheriff July 31 at the Keswick Dam in Redding, California, one of nearly three dozen traffic control points manned by the military police on their first days of activation for the Carr Fire.

"We utilized those 17 days (in the Tubbs Fire) to conduct extensive training in order to meet many of our yearly objectives as well as develop the company tactical (standard operating procedure) that followed us into subsequent activations," said Capt. Brock Young, 270th commander. "On those activations, we continued to refine our processes, fixing holes in training, administration, and equipment readiness. We zeroed in on those small things M-Day Soldiers and leaders typically don't have the time to focus on, things like team building, leader development and extensive maintenance on our vehicles."

The Thomas Fire also destroyed more than 1,000 structures.

In early July the 270th was activated for the Klamathon Fire in Siskiyou County, near the Oregon border. It was a short mission as the blaze burned 38,000 acres, but hundreds of homes were threatened, thus the need for the 270th to help keep order.

And that leads to the current Carr Fire in Shasta County. The MPs are in familiar territory, helping local law enforcement keeping areas safe. Tens of thousands of Redding, California, residents evacuated their homes and are still not permitted to return. While Soldiers monitor traffic intersections, civilian authorities can respond to other needs.

"The 270th has a core of solid, dedicated and determined Soldiers who place the needs of the State mission above their own hardships," said Young. "The unit has never failed to accomplish its directed mission, although sometimes we do it with fewer Soldiers than we'd like to have. Emergency activations are always difficult and place heavy burdens on the Soldier. Family, childcare issues, work, civilian and military schools, these all have an effect when a Soldier is activated and sent somewhere."

The fire missions aren't all that keeps the 270th active. In February 2017, the Oroville Dam situation arose and the unit was activated to help in the evacuation of 188,000 Butte County, California, locals.

"The 270th is the quick response force (QRF) for Northern California," Hinojosa added. "They have a certain amount of hours to get a certain amount of their strength up and gone. They always do that."

"As the Northern California QRF, the 270th has been officially designated as the "Go To, Send First" unit," Young said. "In each and every activation from Oroville ... to Redding, the 270th has demonstrated that when called, we are professional Soldiers who get the job done."



Under a gray, smoky sky, U.S. Army Soldiers from the 270th Military Police Company, 185th Military Police Battalion, 49th Military Police Brigade, California Army National Guard, uplift a tent that'll be used as the unit's operation center during the Carr Fire in Shasta County, California, a blaze that consumed 110,000 acres in just over a week.



An airman from the California Air National Guard's 163d Reconnaissance Wing -- now the 163d Attack Wing -- marshals a U.S. Air Force MQ-1 Predator remotely piloted aircraft, Sept. 3, 2013, at Southern California Logistics Airport, in Victorville, California, before a mission to support civil authorities battling the Rim Fire in Tuolumne County, California. The fire was the first time a remotely piloted aircraft was used in wildland firefighting operations. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Stanley Thompson)

**“We saw things over the course of that fire
that you couldn’t have made up. “I don’t
think there’s a better intel resource at our
disposal right now.”**

Becoming a mainstay of wildland firefighting operations

By Senior Airman Crystal Housman
California Military Department Public Affairs

MARCH AIR RESERVE BASE, Calif. – Five years after a proof-of-concept mission to use the California Air National Guard’s remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) in support of domestic wildland firefighting operations, the MQ-9 Reaper has developed into a key asset in California’s fight against wildfires, including the Carr and Mendocino Complex Fires, which are currently burning in Northern California.

“It’s a technology I never thought I’d see,” said Jeremy Salizzoni, a fire technical specialist with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) who embedded with the Cal Guard’s 163d Attack Wing at March Air Reserve Base, California, during 2013’s devastating Rim Fire.

More than a quarter of a million acres burned in August 2013 as the Rim Fire raged in Tuolumne County, California, to become the state’s third largest wildfire on record, at the time. More than 100 structures were lost in the blaze, which took nine weeks to fully contain.

Eleven days after the Rim Fire started, the wing launched a first-of-its kind mission to overfly the fire with an MQ-1 Predator remotely piloted reconnaissance aircraft and beam back real-time video footage of the fire to Salizzoni and wing intelligence analysts working in an operations facility at March.

Through the Predator’s footage, Salizzoni, who was used to driving for hours through rugged terrain to access overlook points and put eyes on the leading edge of a fire, could see any area of the fire he wanted, in real time and without ever leaving the operations facility.

The remotely piloted aircraft’s thermal imaging camera provided a view of the fire unlike anything he’d ever seen. Traditional aerial assets are important, but

encounter limitations due to smoke, fuel, altitude and field of view, he said.

“It was such a dramatic change from anything I’d seen in my career,” Salizzoni said. “It was like being blind and then having vision in the blink of an eye.” Salizzoni and his colleagues knew they had a new tool in their firefighting toolbox.

“We saw things over the course of that fire that you couldn’t have made up,” he said. “I don’t think there’s a better intel resource at our disposal right now.”

During its eight-day emergency activation for the Rim Fire, the 163d Reconnaissance Wing — the unit’s name at the time — logged more than 150 hours of fire support and was credited with helping firefighters expedite containment.

In the five years since, the 163d has changed its name and the kind of airplane it flies, but one thing hasn’t changed: the wing’s dedication to domestic disaster response missions right here at home. The unit remains impassioned to innovate and provide first responders with instantaneous insight into what a fire is doing.

RPAs are no longer just trying to prove their worth, said U.S. Air Force Maj. Mike Baird, the senior intelligence officer at the 163d. The wing’s MQ-9 Reaper RPAs – a big-brother to the recently-retired Predators – are an in-demand incident awareness and assessment asset preferred by California’s civil authorities when disaster strikes.

The wing has supported more than 20 wildfires since 2013, but it takes more

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An aircrew from the 163d Attack Wing, California Air National Guard, fly an MQ-9 Reaper remotely piloted aircraft to the Mendocino Complex Fire in Northern California, Aug. 4, 2018, during a mission to support state agencies. The aircrew conducted fire perimeter scans and spot checks on the blaze, which encompasses the Ranch and River fires and continues to grow. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Crystal Housman)

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than just airplanes, Baird said. Keeping California safe takes a wing-wide effort.

“What we’ve been doing behind the scenes from maintenance and communications to refining our deployment and personnel processes has led up to our ability to provide an unprecedented level of MQ-9 support,” Baird said.

The wing provided real-time full motion video support over a number of fires in 2017, including California’s most destructive fire on record and also its largest fire to date. More than 5,600 structures were damaged and 22 lives were lost during the Tubbs Fire in Sonoma County in October. Two months later, in December, the Thomas Fire ravaged Ventura and Santa Barbara counties to become the state’s largest fire on record with more than 280,000 acres burned.

As each fire rages, the wing works to refine its techniques and procedures, and works to expand the detailed real-time incident awareness and assessment data it provides to incident commanders. Innovation on the fly is the name of the game.

An investment by James G. Clark, Director of Air Force Innovation, and Col. Chris McDonald from Disruptive Innovation Division in Clark’s office, helped the wing’s Hap Arnold Innovation Center develop a specialized network to push and pull data from RPAs and other data-generating assets from civilian and military organizations.

The network’s customizable data sets — coupled with the RPAs’ real-time thermal imagery — provides incident commanders and first responders a common operating picture they can access from anywhere, anytime.

RPAs proved “an opportunity for people to make tactical and objective based decisions on real time information,” Salizzoni said.

As the Rim Fire nears its fifth anniversary, RPAs

are once again in the sky, flying through smoke, to deliver data and protect Californians as wildfires ravage the state.

By July 31, the 163d was on its fifth fire of the summer.

Throughout July, the wing flew nearly 350 hours to support civil authorities working the County, Klamathon, Ferguson, Carr, Mendocino Complex, and Eel fires, and is credited with helping to protect thousands of structures in the process. The MQ-9 provided near real-time full motion video and frequent fire-line updates to decision makers determining where to build up future containment lines. It’s a marathon pace, but the wing’s airmen up for it, said 1st Lt. Frank Cruz, officer in charge of the 163d Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, whose unit provides direct support for the MQ-9’s around-the-clock fire operations to aid civil authorities.

“Everyone is 100% on board,” Cruz said. “They’re all-in.”



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Ge Xiong of the California Army National Guard’s Alpha Company, 1106th Theatre Aviation Support Maintenance Group (TASMG) and crew chief aboard a UH-60 Black Hawk, checks his 600-gallon water bucket prior to an Aug. 10 mission at the Mendocino Complex Fires in Lake, Colusa and Mendocino counties, California. Cal Guard helicopters dropped close to a half-million gallons of water in just over a week as the Ranch and River fires combined to become California’s largest wildfires in state history. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza)



U.S. Army engineers from the 32nd Multirole Bridge Company, 579th Engineer Battalion, 49th Military Police Brigade, California Army National Guard, dismantle a 100-foot temporary floating bridge July 14 that California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) agencies utilized for quicker, easier access to battle a Northern California wildfire early July at Cache Creek Regional Park, Yolo County, California. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Eddie Siguenza)



A Bridge Not Too Far

By Staff Sgt. Edward Siguenza
69th Public Affairs Detachment

CACHE CREEK REGIONAL PARK, Calif. — This was a mission about quickness for the California Army National Guard's 132nd Multirole Bridge Company.

First, there was the Pawnee Fire that erupted late June in Lake County, California, that scorched more than 15,000 acres. Then the Spring 2 Fire ignited a few days later, but that was extinguished after a modest 80 acres burned. Yet the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) stayed busy immediately as the County Fire erupted in Napa and Yolo counties, and CAL FIRE's urgency to move its assets to fight the latest blaze was heightened.

"If we went left or right, it would have taken us several hours to get to the fight," a CAL FIRE official stated. "But if we go up the middle, which we couldn't at the time, we would be on site a lot faster. That's why we called the Cal Guard. They helped us out a few years ago with the same thing."

As in 2015, Cal Guard's engineers quickly stepped forward. The Redding, California, unit constructed a 100-foot improved ribbon bridge (IRB) in the same location as three years ago, for the same purpose. The "go up the middle" effect allowed CAL FIRE and other California Office of Emergency (Cal OES) assets to quickly move heavy equipment and personnel to the wildfire.

The County Fire consumed more than 90,000 acres as of mid-July. It was destined for worse until emergency services contained it. The 132nd's efforts to build the bridge in a matter of hours contributed to the County Fire's containment.

"The main thing is quickness," said Jeremy Salizzoni, CAL FIRE captain and military liaison, in 2015. "We can't cut the fire off until all the lines are in. This bridge gives us faster access to the fire. We can get our bulldozers, equipment and people up there to fight it."

The temporary structure floated adjacent to a permanent concrete bridge that was deemed "zero tons," according to Steve Sahs, a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) senior bridge engineer/inspector, in his 2015 observation. It's passable for normal vehicles, but big, heavy equipment such as firetrucks and

bulldozers aren't permitted, Sahs explained.

Sahs said California has about 24,000 bridges. This bridge is one of about 10 in Cache Creek Regional Park.

"This has been closed since 2009 due to scour issues," he said, noting the bridge was built in 1930. "You can see it's old because it's made with square rebars."

The bridge was utilized for about a week, noted 132nd's Sgt. 1st Class Harley Ramirez. More than 650 vehicles and 1,200-plus personnel crossed it. Ramirez stationed his troops on a 24-hour safety watch. He credited the team for its productiveness, noting how quickly the bridge went up — and down — compared to three years ago.

"The water is a lot higher this year, along with a faster, moving current," said Sgt. Dillon Graben, who was part of the crew in 2015. "There were a lot of variables from the last time we did this."

"We had issues working in the tight areas, but this gave us hands-on experience on what to do and not," said Sgt. Ellie Ogsbury, a 2015 bridge returnee.

Three years ago the 132nd erected the bridge mainly for CAL FIRE to battle the Jerusalem and Rocky fires in Lake County. The Rocky Fire (approximately 70,000 acres) was one of the largest blazes that year, second only to the Valley Fire (76,000 acres) that occurred nearby.

"This definitely opened our eyes. It let us know the importance of what we do," added 132nd's Spc. Aaron W. Parker. "It's good to know what we did made a lot of difference."

The 132nd was part of Cal Guard's 49th Military Police Brigade's units to be activated so far in 2018. The 270th Military Police Company assisted law enforcers during the Siskiyou Fire near the California-Oregon border. More than 500 from Cal Guard's 144th Field Artillery Battalion were training for ground operations by mid-July, one of the earliest call ups for hand crews.

The County Fire, the key for the 132nd's activation, destroyed 20 buildings and injured one. More than 450 emergency personnel responded to it, majority of them utilizing the bridge.



A California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force team member cuts down illegal marijuana plants at an illicit grow site in the Sierra National Forest near Fresno, California, on August 21. The eradication efforts were part of Operation Forest Watch, a month-long, multi-agency effort targeting the disruption of illegal marijuana on public lands with the goal of preserving the environment and protecting our communities.

California Receives Federal Funds to Combat Illegal Marijuana on Public Lands

Story and Photos by
Sgt. Lani Pascual
Counterdrug Task Force
Public Affairs

On May 29, 2018, U.S. Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced heightened concerns regarding the continued damage to public lands from illegal marijuana grows during a press conference in Sacramento, California.

He was joined by federal, state, and local leaders to highlight a multi-agency effort to target the disruption of illicit cannabis grown in our national forests.

“Growing marijuana on federal public lands is, and has always been, illegal, and the destruction it wreaks on the environment

must be stopped,” said U.S. Attorney Scott. “My office is committed to raising awareness about this issue and joining with our partners to put an end to this profound problem.”

California is the number one contributor of illegal marijuana in the nation. Because of this, our state receives a majority of the funding Congress recently appropriated to the U.S. Forest Service to specifically tackle this issue. Operation Forest Watch was initiated with the goal of preserving the environment and protecting our communities.

Partner agencies include the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Forest Service and Law Enforcement Investigations, the Integral Ecology Research Center, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas program, several county sheriff’s departments and the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force.

CDTF supports partner agencies in the eradication and disruption of the supply and demand of illegal drugs. This includes using personnel and equipment for the reclamation of public lands, such as the removal of infrastructure used to divert public water to illegal cannabis crops.

In 2016, more than one million illicit marijuana plants removed in our state would have illegally used approximately 1.3 billion gallons of public water. This year, CDTF personnel removed 41,159 marijuana plants from 4,431 acres of public lands and pulled 136,357 feet of irrigation line from 39 separate illegal grows.

Perhaps more alarming than water diversion, even in this time of drought, is the new research showing the long-term effects of toxins used on these grows. Chemicals used as rodenticides and pesticides at these sites leech down into the land, water, wildlife, food chain, and even the end product.

Dr. Mourad Gabriel, Integral Ecology Research Center Director, regularly tests swabs from sprayers for toxic pesticides used on illegal marijuana grow sites. His agency’s research shows the need for attention to this issue.

Carbofuran, banned in California, is so deadly that only 1/8 teaspoon of the pesticide can kill a 300-pound black bear. On May 22, a black bear was spotted at an illicit marijuana grow site in the Sierra National Forest near Madera, California. Bite marks on a bottle of carbofuran, found at the same site, means the bear potentially died from exposure to the toxin. Studies show this chemical is present at more than 80 percent of illegal marijuana grows, up 5 percent from last year.

CDTF team members removed 1,557 pounds of pesticides from public lands as part of Operation Forest Watch in August 2018.

Along with dangerous poisons, trash and infrastructure from abandoned camps must be collected and removed, usually hauled out by helicopter in order to allow the land to return to its natural state. The magnitude of this compound problem calls for continued, joint-efforts to protect our lands and communities.

“We can’t even think about being successful unless we include all these agencies,” said Gabriel. “It would be too much for one agency to tackle alone.”

Maj. Gen. Matthew Beevers, Deputy Adjutant General of the California Military Department, spoke to the media during a second press conference about the results of Operation Forest Watch at McClellan Park in Sacramento, California, on August 28.

“In my 34 years of public service, I have never seen a more elegant or more sophisticated, whole of government approach to solving a very, very challenging and critical issue,” said Beevers. “The people need to see what these chemicals do to our national forests, what they do to our streams. We simply can’t do that alone, so we appreciate your support getting out there and taking those risks and getting that story. It’s a story that really, really needs to be told.”

Are We Out of the Woods Yet?

Story and Photos by 2nd Lt. Brianne M. Roudebush
Counterdrug Task Force Public Affairs

Perched at the top of a hill, Sgt. First Class Chris* uses binoculars and a map to track his students across the steep, brushy terrain at the land navigation course on Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, February 14.

Officers from the San Diego and Los Angeles Drug Enforcement Administration field divisions, the San Diego Police Department, the San Diego Sheriff’s Department and the San Diego Sheriff’s Department SWAT team attended the three-day course.

Chris, a senior weapons sergeant with the California Army National Guard 19th Special Forces Group and a ground tactical member of the Counterdrug Task Force, developed the land navigation course after identifying an operational gap among the law enforcement officers CDTF supports.

“To my knowledge, law enforcement officers don’t have an institutional training facility that teaches them to be a rural-based cop,” Chris said. “The unique thing about CDTF is that we can bring these military skill-sets and experiences to our law enforcement partners.”

The course teaches basic land navigation principles including: map and compass reading, terrain association, route planning, latitude and longitude formats, and proper GPS use.

“Most of the illicit outdoor marijuana eradication operations are on public lands,” Chris continued. “There are generally no roads that lead directly into the grow site, so we have to conduct some sort of dismounted navigation to the location.”

A Los Angeles DEA agent taking the course recalled a time where his team had to do a significant amount of land navigation in order to arrive at their objective.

“I was just following the other guys up through serious brush - getting all cut up and tearing up our clothes,” he said. “If I had this training before that, it would have been so much easier.”

Chris said the feedback he has received has been extremely positive. He places a strong emphasis on the practical application - ensuring students spend a majority of the course outside the classroom.

“I can show guys all day long what a hill looks like on a map,” he said. “But it really clicks when they actually walk it.”

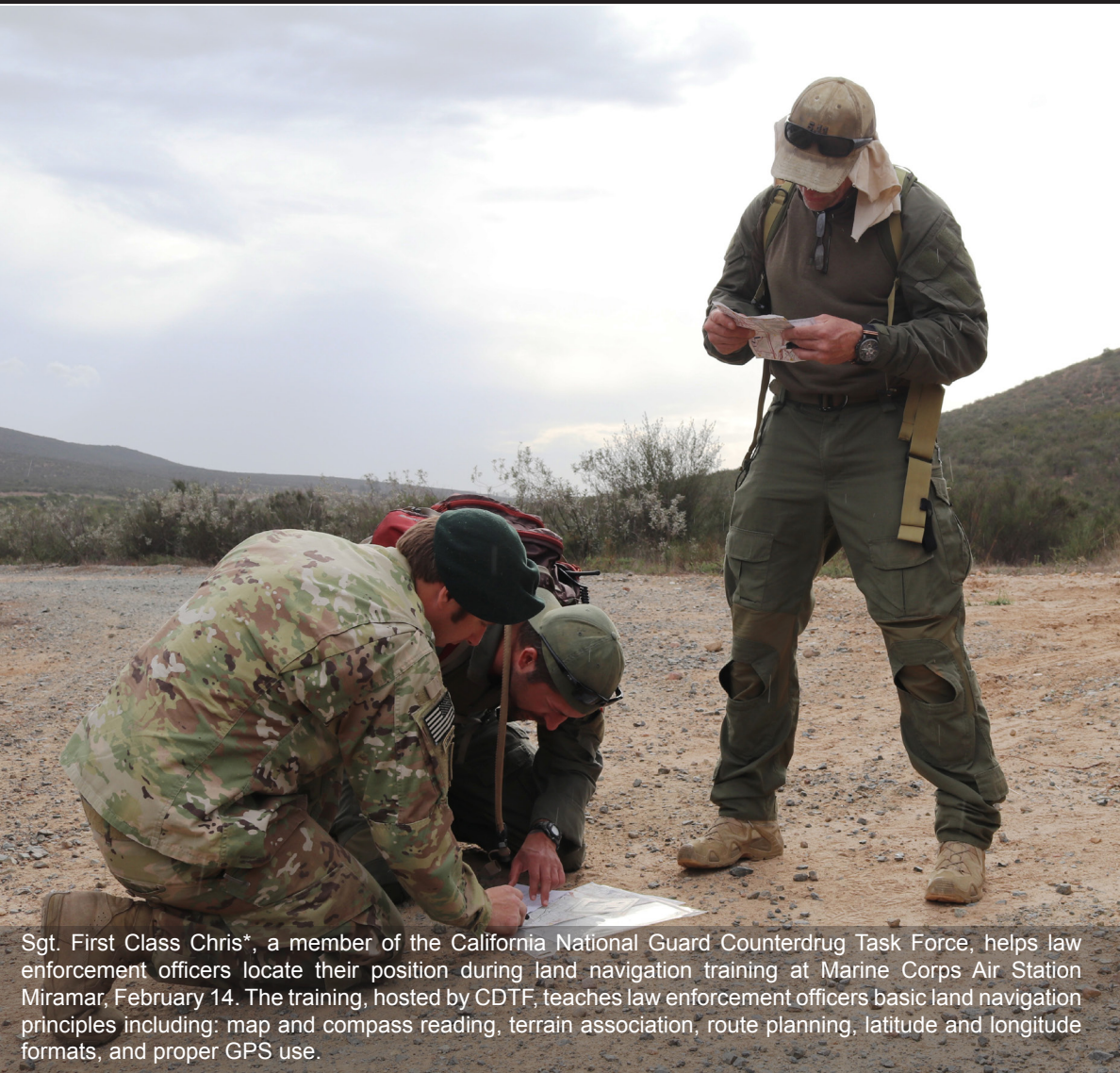
The DEA agent echoed these sentiments, adding, “Covering the basic material so we understand it and then quickly going to the field to apply it really reinforces the information. It sticks in your head because then you have personal experience with it.”

Chris also developed an intermediate land navigation course that officers who have completed the basic course can attend. The intermediate course builds upon the basic skills and teaches officers how to create their own maps.

“The officers are not usually going to have military-quality maps to use on their operations,” Chris explained. “I teach them how to make the maps themselves with tools they will have at their disposal to use when they prepare for a mission.”

Chris said he enjoys teaching these classes because he likes being able to pass on his knowledge.

“Seeing people catch on to what I’m teaching and become more proficient until they can eventually do it on their own is very



Sgt. First Class Chris*, a member of the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force, helps law enforcement officers locate their position during land navigation training at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, February 14. The training, hosted by CDTF, teaches law enforcement officers basic land navigation principles including: map and compass reading, terrain association, route planning, latitude and longitude formats, and proper GPS use.

fulfilling,” he said.

As an infantryman who went straight to Iraq after Basic Combat Training, Chris said most of his land navigation skills are self-taught.

“When I decided to try out for SF, I knew that land nav was a big part of what the Special Forces does, a part of their mantra, and also a part of the selection process,” he said. “I went out and set up my own land nav course and got hopelessly lost for a few hours. I ended up not even going to work that day because I spent all night trying to figure out where I was at.”

Not one to be deterred, Chris continued to practice and by the time he got to Special Force Assessment Selection, he breezed right through the land navigation test. Now it is something that he genuinely enjoys.

“I think it’s really cool that instead of following a trail, let’s go hike and find a point,” he said.

*Full name withheld in accordance with 19th Special Forces Group policy.



Staff Sgt. Howard Schwenke, a member of the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force, shoots an azimuth alongside partner law enforcement officers during land navigation training at Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, February 14.

New York, California, and Alaska Air Guard Airmen team up to rescue North Carolina residents

By Eric Durr and Capt. Michael O'Hagan
New York National Guard

LUMBERTON, North Carolina—The initial call from the local emergency operations center was that there were “ten plus one” people cut off at a farm by flood waters who needed to be evacuated on Monday, Sept. 17.

By the time the Pararescue Airmen from New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing and the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing and the California Air Guard's 129th Wing were finished with the mission, they had evacuated 15 people from their homes to a nearby fire station.

The mission, said Capt. Mark Joseloff, a Combat Rescue Officer assigned to the 106th Rescue Wing's 103rd Rescue Squadron, was a perfect example of the Guard's small rescue community working well together.

The plan was for two HH-60 Pave Hawk rescue helicopters—one from California carrying Alaska Air National Guard pararescuemen—and one from New York's 106th Rescue Wing—to head out to the farm together.

Air Guardsmen from Alaska, New York, California, Kentucky and Oregon are working together as elements of a 181-person Air Guard rescue team based at Naval Air Station Oceana, located outside Virginia Beach as they respond to the effects of Hurricane Florence.

The California/Alaska bird left a little later, Joseloff recalled, so the New York Airmen got there first.

What they saw were a lot of wet marshy areas and what was clearly a turkey farm surrounded by flood waters, said Tech Sgt. Ryan Dush, a 103rd Rescue Squadron Pararescueman.

Their destination was a farm house along a road. The house was dry but one end of the road was flooded and at the other end was a sink hole with an SUV tipping into it, remembered Staff Sgt. Griffin Elzey.

The HH-60 came to a hover and Elzey and Dush were lowered down to the ground using the HH-60's hoist. Their job was to assess the situation, find out who was there and what help they needed, Joseloff said.

What the two Airmen found was a house full of primarily Spanish speaking people, five kids and two sets of parents and grandparents: 14 in all. One of the girls spoke English and helped communicate.

They were dry, but they were running out of food and were worried about the kids. They were ready to leave, Elzey said.

They could have hoisted the civilians up into the helicopter, but there were powerlines nearby. That could have made the hoist operation risky, he and Dush said.

Instead they opted to have the Pave Hawk land at a field about a quarter mile away. The extra safety more than made up for the walk, the two men said.

The people in the house also directed them to a nearby house where the couple lived; a man and a woman in their 60s. He was taking care of the turkey farm and she was a nurse.

The man wanted his wife to get on the helicopter, Dush said. He stayed to look after the farm.

By this time, the Alaska HH-60 had arrived and the two aircraft landed together. They worked together seamlessly to divide up the passengers; six on the New York aircraft and nine on the Alaska HH-60, Joseloff said.

The kids were overwhelmed by the whole thing at first, but by the time they landed at the local fire station, the kids were loving it, Dush said.

The parents, though, “had a look of despair,” Joseloff remembered.

“At one point the father reached over and held his son's hand for at least three-quarters of the transfer as if to say, “there, there, it will be all right,” he said.

“I'm happy we were able to help but I am sorry for the family,” Joseloff added.

There was no drama in this mission, Joseloff said, but that is because the Air Guard Pararescue community works so well together.

“Pararescue is very small in the Air Force. You tend to know each other personally or you are familiar with the name,” he said. “Everybody just checks their ego at the door.”

“The truth is our job is easy,” Joseloff said. “Making the save is very enthralling. What I really admire is the people behind all this making it happen.”

“Rescue is a team sport,” Joseloff said.

Without the logistics, people, maintainers, planners, other support staff, crew and the pilots, the Pararescuemen and Combat Rescue Officers couldn't do their jobs, he emphasized.

“When someone comes up and gives you a hug or says thank you out there and they see you, they don't see the whole story played out behind the scenes,” Dush said. “I wish there was a way to convey that to everybody.”



Grizzly Top Shot



Layla Harrington, a candidate in Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy's Class 22 Firehawks Platoon, climbs a rope ladder, July 19, 2018, to start her ascent of the Orange County Ropes Course in Anaheim, California. The ropes course gives candidates an opportunity to push themselves both mentally and physically, build confidence and start working as a team while still in the acclimation phase of the challenge program. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Crystal Housman)

Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy Graduates 21st class

Story and Photos by
Senior Airmen Crystal Housman
California Military Department Public Affairs

LOS ALAMITOS, Calif. – One by one, their names were called. Wearing gray fatigues and black combat boots, they crossed the stage as signs waved and the crowd cheered.

Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy, one of three National Guard ChalleNGe programs in California, presented high school diplomas or certificates of phase completion to 154 Southern California youth during a commencement ceremony for the academy's twenty-first class, June 9, 2018, at Cottonwood Church in Los Alamitos.

Rep. Grace Napolitano, of California's 32nd district, and Rep. Lou Correa, of California's 46th district, shook hands with each graduate on stage after delivering keynote remarks to the near-capacity crowd.

"You have made such supreme sacrifice in turning your lives around," Napolitano told the cadets. "You have opportunities and possibilities for your future that only you can measure."

"You've got to look forward and never look back," she said. "Don't let anybody ever tell you that you can't achieve; the mere fact that you graduated shows you can achieve anything you set your mind to."

For each of the Class 21 cadets, the ceremony signified the completion of their five-and-a-half-month residential and academic phase of the voluntary youth challenge program. The cadets, who arrived at the academy campus at Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos, in January, now move on to a year-long post-residential mentoring phase to become challenge alumni. Considered "at-risk," at the beginning of the year, the cadets are now leaner – one cadet lost nearly 60 pounds -- and more focused, more confident, and better prepared for the road ahead. "Each cadet served in a leadership position; they learned to lead and follow their peers," said California State Military Reserve Col. Denise Varner, who serves as Sunburst's director. "They learned the values of discipline, honor, integrity, and commitment."

For Cadet Nancy Ruelas, who struggled with family problems and lost her grandfather in the weeks before starting Sunburst, the program offered a path to graduation and her future.

"I saw no point in going to school," Ruelas said

during her commencement speech. "I was so far behind that all my family saw was a failure." Ruelas finished Sunburst's residential and academic program with a 4.0 grade point average.

"Sunburst was me taking back control..." she said proudly to the packed auditorium. "I have a path to college, and I'm on my way to becoming the teacher I've always dreamt of being."

For Ruelas and 27 other cadets, the ceremony marked the completion of something even bigger: high school.

Through a partnership with the Orange County Department of Education, Sunburst cadets were able to attend high school during the day, while working on physical fitness, life skills, team building, and goal setting activities before and after school.

Each cadet earned at least 65 high school credits, totaling more than 10,000 credits earned by the class since they arrived in January. For some, those credits were the final push they needed to earn a high school diploma or high school equivalency credential.

"I feel overwhelmed, but I feel ready," said high school graduate Cadet Chelsea Hammond.

Hammond, who got the keys to her first apartment the day before graduation, plans to enroll in junior college and, later, serve in the U.S. Navy. "I'm excited for the opportunities that are being presented to me, and I'm going to take full advantage of them," Hammond said.

Nearly two dozen of the cadets were dual-matriculated at Sunburst and Golden West College in Huntington Beach where they earned college credit in multimedia or math. Some earned credits in both.

Sunburst was founded in 2008 and is celebrating its tenth anniversary year. The academy graduates two classes annually, in June and December.

The National Guard ChalleNGe Program started nationally in 1993. Now in its 25th year, the program has 40 sites nationwide, including three in California, and has impacted the lives of more than 145,000 students.



Top: Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy Cadet and new high school graduate Chelsea Hammond gets a hug following the academy's Class 21 commencement ceremony, June 9, 2018, in Los Alamitos, California. More than 150 cadets in the academy's 21st class walked the stage to receive certificates of completion for the 5.5 month residential phase of the 17.5 month National Guard Challenge Program. Residential phase graduates now enter into a yearlong mentorship phase to finish the program. Left: New high school graduates and Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy cadets gather on stage with their diplomas in hand. Center: Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy cadets gather for photos following the academy's Class 21 commencement ceremony. Right: Sunburst Youth Challenge Academy Class 21 Cadet Cruz puts her hands in the air after receiving a certificate of residential and academic phase completion during the class commencement ceremony.



German Army Lt. Col. Tino Kohlmann, Operational Capabilities Concept Evaluation Director, leads an evaluator education class at the International Peacekeeping and Security Centre in Yavoriv, Ukraine, Sept 10, 2018. The 34 trainees in the class were working to become certified OCC evaluators during an evaluation of the Ukrainian military interoperability capacity. (U.S. Army National Guard photos by Army Spec. Amy Carle)

OCC Evaluators in action in Ukraine

YAVORIV, Ukraine –Operational Capabilities Concept evaluators and trainees from 17 nations gathered at the International Peacekeeping and Security Centre in Yavoriv, Sept. 10, 2018, to evaluate the Ukrainian military’s interoperability capacity.

The OCC evaluation, which was scheduled during the Ukraine-hosted Rapid Trident exercise, is part of a program to improve the levels of interoperability, operational capabilities of NATO partner nations and to enhance the relationship between these countries and the NATO Alliance.

Through a robust feedback cycle, the OCC program also helps supports transformation of the armed forces of partner nations, said Norwegian Air Force Lt. Col. Tommy Hirsti, the OCC Course Director.

“The NATO officers and partner officers are working shoulder to shoulder, learning about culture and respecting culture,” Hirsti said. “The aim is to make sure the work we are doing contributes to peace and security.”

During the evaluation, multinational evaluators review and compare operation orders, standard operating procedures and mission briefs against NATO standards and will evaluate the Ukrainian military along these standards, said Azerbaijan Army Lt. Col. Anar Eyvazov, the Officer of Primary Responsibility for the evaluation. In parallel, 34 multinational trainees will also be undergoing certification to become official Operational Capabilities Concept evaluators.

“The importance of this course is that we support partner

nations and for the NATO command structure to have the required evaluators,” Eyvazov said. “Each nation has developed a pool of evaluators in accordance with NATO standards.”

The program is both tactical and strategic, said United States Air Force Lt. Col Dai H. Cho, Staff Officer at Joint Force Command Brunssum. Cho said that the evaluation can help spur strategic reform in partnering nations and that NATO will reciprocate as long as countries like Ukraine want to engage.

Rapid Trident is an annual, multinational exercise that serves as the validation for Ukraine’s military training program. It also provides a good environment for the evaluation, Cho said.

“Rapid Trident has been going on for several years and speaks to the partnership with member countries and our partners,” Cho said. “We’re here for NATO evaluation, and Rapid Trident provides us an excellent framework to conduct the evaluation in as realistic a setting as possible. That’s the true value for us, from a NATO standpoint.”

The international partnership between military forces is an important theme echoed by all the leadership involved with the evaluation.

“The cooperation between NATO and Ukraine is at a high level and we appreciate that they continue to declare units to the OCC, and they are willing to host events like this,” Hirst said. “Our host nation’s support is vital and excellent. We are a small part of Rapid Trident, but we’ve had great support to fulfill our needs.”

Checking in with Mr. Kevin Park - Alaska National Guard HRO

Courtesy Submission
Human Resources Office

Forget the saying, “You can never go home again.” It’s possible, and Mr. Kevin L. Park, former California Military Department Human Resources Officer (HRO), did just that!

After working for the CMD for eight years, he headed back to the Land of the Midnight Sun last year to become the HRO for the Alaskan National Guard (AKNG).

When he heard that Park was returning to Alaska in the capacity of HRO,

Lt. Col. Christopher J. Weaver, AKNG Deputy Staff Judge Advocate (and former CMD Deputy Staff Judge Advocate), said the news was “Huge ---like seeing Denali on a clear day! It’s really important to have people who know the complicated personnel system of the National Guard. Kevin coming back to Alaska will ensure the Guard of the Last Frontier is first in personnel matters!”

Almost one year has passed since Park left the CMD. He said his move went smoothly, but it was a challenge to jump right back into the start of a long, cold winter.

Park compared his return to the AKNG to a family reunion.

“I spent 15 years with the Alaska Guard, and a

number of people I knew eight years ago are still in the Guard. It was like seeing family I hadn’t seen in years!”

Park described his time as “amazing” at theCMD, where he started out as an Army Classification Specialist. In this job, he coordinated the successful processing of approximately 1,200 SF-52 Requests for Personnel Actions. He also conducted an Army Organizational Review for position management and organizational structure in which he reviewed 240 Army Technician positions.

Next, Park served as a Supervisory HR Specialist. In this capacity, he worked with National Guard Bureau (NGB) to establish a 10 percent retention incentive for Camp San Luis Obispo Technicians. During this time, he also implemented significant HR programs to include a Staffing Vacancy Announcement (VA) log and helped systemize the Enlisted Qualification Retention Board process for Technicians.

Following this position, Park became Deputy HRO. He led the active processing of approximately 12,000 personnel actions; oversaw the rewrite of seven California National Guard Fulltime Personnel Regulations; and initiated a collaborative bridge between unit leaders and the HR Office.

“I really enjoyed these HR unit visits. During this time, some HR staff would visit sites to meet

our customers in the field. It was a valuable experience that brought the customer experience to another level,” Park noted.

As Deputy HRO, he also created the CMD’s first Federal Employees Compensation Act counsel and spearheaded approval of critically needed Office of Personnel Management Special Salary Rates for the 144th Fighter Wing, the 129th Rescue Wing, and the Theater Aviation Sustainment Maintenance Group.

Park’s California career culminated in his selection as HRO, in which he effectively managed a technician pay budget of \$91,000,000, successfully established a fully electronic statewide personnel action program, and improved VA hiring timelines from 181 to 102 days. Additionally, NGB/J1 hand selected him to serve on policy development steering groups for retention incentives and T5/32 conversion. NGB identified the California Technician Incentive Program as a model for other states to follow, largely due to Park’s contributions and leadership.

“I think my greatest accomplishment as the Deputy HRO and HRO has been creating a climate where HR employees and our customers are valued,” Park said adding, “Always value people. Everyone is valuable and important.”

Park admitted that he does not miss is the fast HR pace, as the CMD is the largest full time force in the National Guard.

“Sometimes the pace was so fast in the office, it was hard to keep up and give each customer the attention they deserved,” he said.

Park said he has no regrets in returning to the Land of the Noon Day Moon. For him, family comes first, as one of his daughters and her family reside there. His wife, Carmen, was born and raised in Alaska, so they have other family and friends in the area. He has other ties there, as well. Born and raised in San Diego, California, Park joined the Air Force when he was 17 years old and militarily retired from the Alaska Air National Guard in 2007.

He said he misses California’s weather and all the things to do in here, but what does he miss the most?

“The people of the CMD!” he said.

His employees and colleagues felt the same towards him, as evident from the speeches at his going away luncheon, where one was hard pressed to find a dry eye in the room.

Capt. William L. Anderson, State Equal Employment Manager for the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Department, said, “Mr. Park has been one of the few leaders I’ve had the privilege to work both with and for--- for many years.”

He continued by saying that anyone can be a manager or supervisor, but not many portray the values and attributes of a leader.

The rest of the EEO Dept agreed that Park will definitely leave a void. They will especially miss little things like looking out the window and seeing him as a familiar part of the landscape, dressed in a suit and tie on his almost daily walks, as he returned for lunch with his Subway sandwich bag.

With some quiet reflection, Mr. Paul J. Anderson, a then CMD Supervisory HR Specialist who has since also returned to work at the AKNG, summed it up best by saying, “Mr. Park always did what was best both for management and technicians. He affected the lives of so many people who will never know the positive impact he had. Simply put, he cared and will be missed!”





Two Wheels and A PRAYER

A helicopter crew from the Stockton Army Aviation Flight Facility had their aircraft configured and was prepared to head out to fight California wildfires the next morning when they were notified to reconfigure their aircraft with a hoist and prepare for a rescue mission on Mount Ritter instead.

By **LAUREN HALL**
California Military Department Public Affairs

The afternoon of Sunday, August 12 started off great for two friends who set out for a fun day of hiking on Mount Ritter. But things took a turn for the worse when suddenly, disaster struck as one of the hikers, a 22-year-old female, lost her footing and slid nearly 100 feet down the mountain's steep, rocky terrain. She was badly injured and was incapacitated, having received multiple lacerations on her head, face and legs from the fall.

Luckily, her companion was not injured and was able to call the Mono County Sheriff's Office for help. The information was quickly relayed to the Madera County Sheriff's Office and a helicopter with rescue crew was on its way to help rescue the injured woman and her friend, who were found on the side of the mountain at an altitude of more than 12,000 feet. A ground crew was also heading up the mountain to help the hikers.

Unfortunately, the helicopter was unable to complete the rescue due to the high altitude. Additional resources were needed in order to gain access to the pair of hikers... and nightfall was quickly approaching.

The Madera County Sheriff's Office reached out to California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) for assistance with the rescue. Cal OES then contacted the California National Guard requesting an aircraft with hoist capability and the ability to fly at more than 12,000 feet in order to reach the stranded hikers.

Meanwhile, the Mono County Sheriff's Office contacted Naval Air Station Fallon in Nevada for help with the rescue by sending a Seahawk helicopter to pick up a Mono County Search and Rescue team and drop them as close as possible to the injured woman.

The Navy Seahawk helicopter crew picked up the team of Mono County Search and Rescue personnel and dropped them off on Mount Ritter at an altitude of about 9,600 feet and just a little over a mile away from where the injured woman was waiting. The team, along with the Madera County's ground team, reached the woman and her friend around 1:00 a.m. and immediately assessed her injuries and provided necessary medical treatment.

But the rescue was far from over and couldn't be completed until the next morning. So everyone - including the Mono County Search and Rescue team, the ground team from Madera County and the two hikers - settled in for the night. The California National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter and crew from the Stockton Army Aviation Flight Facility would be heading their way soon.

The Cal Guard Chinook and crew arrived on the scene in the morning, prepared for the most difficult rescue. The victim had fallen quite a distance and received multiple injuries and there was concern about the extent of those injuries.

"We always prepare for each rescue to be the most difficult. This time, Air Force pararescuemen (PJs) from the 131st Rescue Squadron at Moffett

Federal Airfield were tasked to go with us. We usually take our own medics, but in this case, we were directed to take rescue techs from the Air Force who are qualified in difficult rescue situations," said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Joe Rosamond, the pilot in command.

Rosamond said he and his crew, pilot 1st Lt. Trent Borges, flight engineer Sgt. 1st Class Doug King, crew chief Sgt. Kyle Reeves and the four Air Force PJs from Moffett were prepared for a hoist rescue, but it wasn't needed. Instead, the crew was able to do a two wheel landing which is routine, according to Rosamond, and allows them to get into small spaces.

"We were prepared for a hoist rescue, but we were able to get in and out of there in about two minutes by conducting a two wheel landing," he said. "We showed up, landed a two wheel landing on the side of the mountain and the injured hiker was walked onto the aircraft. As soon as she was onboard, we took off. It ended up being one of the easiest rescues I've ever done."



The crew flew the injured hiker, her friend and the rescue personnel to Lee Vining Airport where they transferred the injured woman to a Care Flight Air Ambulance to be flown to Renown Hospital for additional medical care.

Once the injured woman was on her way to the hospital, the Cal Guard aircraft and crew headed back to the Stockton Army Aviation Flight Facility where they reconfigured their aircraft to fight wildfires and headed to Redding where they were based for seven days battling wildfires in Modoc National Forest before finally being called back to get some much needed and well deserved crew rest.



Platoons within 1st Squadron, 18th Cavalry Regiment conducted platoon live fire exercises, Oct. 13, 2018 integrating snipers as part of their mission. (U.S. Army photo by Lt. Col. Jeremy Hopkins.)



Citizen-Soldier: Hispanic guardsman uses culture to train, advise and assist Afghan counterparts

By STAFF SGT. NEYSA CANFIELD

2nd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division Public Affairs

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan – At two-years old, U.S. Army Capt. Vincent Garcia said he remembers helping his mother as she would go from house to house providing cleaning services.

“My mother was born in Guadalajara, Mexico and my father was born in California but raised in Mexico, so they mainly spoke Spanish,” said Garcia. “My mother would take me with her to clean houses so I could translate for her.”

Garcia, the youngest of six children, said he grew up learning the importance of Family and communities helping each other.

“I have a big Family and we always had something going on ... we had parties for anything, we used it as a way bring everyone together and have fun,” he said. “My Family was and has been supportive of all my decisions my entire life, they are very important to me.”

As a teenager in East Los Angeles, Garcia said he relied on school activities and his education in order to stay out of trouble.

“I was in the scouts, I was a member of the boys club, I was a jock and a musician,” said Garcia. “Being an athlete and a musician forced me to focus on my academics, I had to do well in order to be eligible to perform, and that’s how I survived East Los Angeles.”

After graduating from high school and California State University Northridge, Garcia landed a well-paying information technology job, but after the attacks of 9/11 he was inspired to join the California Army National Guard by his brother.

“My brother was prior service and after the attacks hearing him talk about serving his country again inspired me to want to join as well,” he explained. “He left the service after his first contract and I’m still here, I found I enjoyed the military and loved being part of it.”

With 15 years of service under his belt, Garcia is currently on his third deployment and is serving as an advisor in the Provincial Civil Advising Team for Train, Advise and Assist Command-South.

“I advise the operations and logistic representatives for the Afghan National Army, and the four district chief of police and chief of security,” said Garcia. “My priority is to help them overcome any challenges they may encounter and open lines of communication with higher headquarters like Resolute Support to help them accomplish their missions.”

Garcia, who is a field artillery officer in the California National Guard, said he continues to work in the information technology community when he is not in uniform and that he enjoys having two different careers.

“Being in the IT world I think I have gained some experience that has helped me ‘think out of the box’ when making decision instead



U.S. Army Capt. Vicente Garcia, a field artillery officer from the California National Guard, is currently serving as an advisor in the Provincial Civil Advising Team for Train, Advise and Assist Command-South. (Courtesy photo)



U.S. Army Capt. Vicente Garcia, far right, poses for a group photo, Aug. 8 in Pasab, Afghanistan with three district chiefs of police during an expeditionary advisory package at Zharay Province in Afghanistan. (Courtesy photo)

of just thinking in that military perspective,” said Garcia. “As guard Soldiers we have the advantage of having two different worlds which give us different experiences.”

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Kincy C. Clark, the senior advisor for the PCAT, said he is grateful to have a committed guardsmen like Garcia who emulates the term Citizen Soldier.

“He came into the role of an advisor with technical, computer and sales skills that he was able to obtain in his civilian career and it’s allowing him to communicate with our Afghan partners well during our key leader engagements,” he explained. “He has been doing well and I know he will continue to help the team enhance the capabilities of our Afghan partners.”

Yet although Garcia’s knowledge and experience have helped him in his mission as an advisor, Clark said Garcia’s Hispanic background has helped him better understand his counterparts.

“While there are clear differences between the Hispanic and Afghan culture, they share the prioritization of Family and were it sits in their culture,” said Clark. “His understanding and awareness of how Family can be a priority in someone’s life above other things I think helps him understand how they ultimately make decisions.”

Yudh Abhyas 2018

California Army National Guard's 100th Troop Command returns to India

Combined Arms Exercise spotlights the unique partnership between the United States and India

By LT. COL. JONATHAN MASAKI SHIROMA
California Military Department Public Affairs

If any word could capture the essence of the Yudh Abhyas (YA) 2018 combined exercise between India and the United States, it would be Namaste. In the Indian language, Namaste, in one translation means "I respect you and you respect me." More than 700 Soldiers from both the United States (including 23 service members from the Troop Command) and India experienced "Namaste" as they spent 21 days together training side-by-side from September 16-29, 2018 in Chaubattia, India.

"We've been welcomed with open arms by our Indian counterparts," said Col. Zac Delwiche, Commander of the 100th Troop Command. "They're gracious hosts and I am impressed by how courteous they are," he said.

YA was a combined exercise that is designed to improve bilateral readiness, cooperation and interoperability between the two countries. There were two key training events running parallel to each other to include a field training exercise (FTX) with ground combat units as well a command training exercise (CPX) where a higher command exchanges knowledge and develop staff planning proficiencies between the U.S. and India. (The Troop Command was involved with the latter)

"It is important for the California Army National Guard to remain involved with YA because it keeps our Soldiers involved in a geo-political climate and this type of training differs greatly from other key training platforms such as Hohenfels and JRTC" said Delwiche.

"The interaction has been great and learning from others in the same profession." said Lt. Col. Philip Thomas, 100th Troop Command

Executive Officer. "I have seen a lot of similarities, looking at a lot of different perspectives and techniques we can use in the future." U.S. counterparts in the Indian Army also agree the training between both countries is of utmost importance.

"It's great to have the United States here since it is a super power," said Lt. Col. Amar Deep Singh Rawat, a public affairs officer in the Indian Army. "The U.S. is very realistic and they know their tactics and techniques very well and that is a good thing to learn from," added Rawat.

Beyond the here and now, however, both U.S. and Indian military leaders agree that YA paves the wave for future engagements between the two countries.

"What is done here may serve as the foundation for future and much more difficult exercises," said Major General Kalbinder Singh, the Commander of the 6th Mountain Division, one of the key Indian components involved in the YA exercise.

"It is strategically important for the United States to develop and foster this relationship with our Indian friends especially in this region," said Major General David S. Baldwin, the Adjutant General of the California National Guard who had a chance to observe this year's exercise.

Next year, YA will likely be held in the United States again and the following year, the exercise will return to India. In the next few years, the exercise may actually take place here in the Golden State which will further enhance the relationship between the two countries.

"The California National Guard has participated in this exercise for over ten years now, we are very proud of our partnership with the Indian Army," said Baldwin, "we've learned a lot together, we continue to grow together and we're looking forward to hosting this exercise in California in the near future."

"What is done here may serve as the foundation for future and much more difficult exercises,"



Indian army soldiers exit a house after clearing it during a cordon and search demonstration Sept. 25, 2018, at Chaubattia Military Station, India. This was part of Exercise Yudh Abhyas 18, a bilateral training scenario designed to foster a shared tactical and technical understanding between the partnered military organizations. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Samuel Northrup)



Scott takes command of 195th Operations Group

By Staff Sgt. Richard D. Lewis
195th Wing Public Affairs

VAN NUYS AIR NATIONAL GUARD STATION, Calif. – Airmen come first. That is the message from the 195th Operations Group's newest leader. Lt Col James Scott assumed command from the previous commander, and current commander of the 195th Wing at Beale, Col Douglas Hire in a ceremony in Van Nuys Aug 5, 2018.

"Col Scott is a natural born leader," said Col Hire, shortly before exchanging the command flag. "He's also a natural born mentor."

In his previous assignment as commander of the 148th Space Operations Squadron, Vandenberg Air Force Base, Lt Col Scott distinguished himself by leading his team to a 99.4% mission-effectiveness rate for the Protected Space Operations Center while performing command and control operations of the Milstar satellite constellation.

Colonel Scott attributes such mission success to the airmen he leads.

"People come first," says Scott, who now commands the 195th OG, Hybrid Operations Group, also known as the 'HOG's.'

The new "top hog" recently shared his vision on how the OG can bring home the bacon and cut the fat, in a group all-call held in July. Lt Col Scott spoke about his expectations, which include readiness, discipline and taking care of airmen.

"You are either green and growing or ripe and rotten," said Scott.

The 195th OG is made up of four squadrons, the 147th Combat Communications Squadron, the 146th Space Operations Squadron, the 216th Space Control Squadron and the 261st Cyberspace Operations Squadron.

"I'm going to focus on the '3 P's'— people, process and product," said Scott. "It's gotta be good. It's gotta be what they [warfighters] need."

The colonel says if airmen are not moving forward they are growing stale. He wants to ensure sufficient leadership attention is placed on investing in people, at all levels. Airmen care, he says, involves the "livelihood of airmen," which of course includes pay; but also incorporates fitness, training, travel and recognition for a job well done.

Lt Col Scott says to improve our leadership core, we have to identify our leadership lid – those limitations or 'blind spots' leaders may or may not be aware of. After taking care of people, he says the group can focus on process.

"I'll move the rocks," the colonel said, "I'll make them better."

So what are Lt Col Scott's expectations for his airmen?

"Do and give your best, integrity always and take ownership," Scott says. "We are the militia – be ready. We are warfighters first."





Racing to Sustain the Chaplains Fund

One Lap at a Time

By Chief Master Sgt. Thomas James
Senior Enlisted Advisor, California National Guard

For decades Commanders and First Sergeants challenged with crises affecting their Soldiers and families have sought benevolent aid offered through the Sergeants Major Association of California (SMA) commonly referred to as Chaplain Aid.

With even the simplest of information, SMA administrators would rapidly cut a check frequently up to \$500 dollars directly to utility companies, airline agents, landlords or other billing entities at a time when few would argue of the impasse in quality of family life.

Most significantly, SMA assistance reached the point of need within 72 hours. This important program began to face headwinds several years ago due to declining SMA membership and donors who lost service contracts with the Department of Defense. However, life continues to happen and unanticipated events create unforecasted needs within our ranks. Needs that the Chaplain Aid assistance continue to meet. So why would the SMA turn their backs on California Service members with an apparent loss of resources?

Meet retired Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Williams, race car driver, mechanic, engine builder, owner, and SMA sponsor. In addition, he happens to be the SMA President and lead administrator.

Through a blending of passions for Service members and racing, Terry quickly became the lifeline for the Chaplains Fund. There for all to see, he proudly declares his commitment to Soldiers and Airmen on space that could be used to

generate sponsorship dollars that might improve his car's performance or pay for his pit crew. But this is not the direction Williams is willing to go. He remains content to race toward the front of the pack knowing his joy for speed generates assistance to the families of the California National Guard. Wherever he is racing, spectators seek him out and ask about the Chaplains Fund and the role of the Sergeants Major Association of California. Interest is now beginning to sustain the Chaplains Fund for the foreseeable future.

The Sergeants Major Assn. of CA, Inc. is a 501(c)(19) corporation filled with volunteers and is open to Senior NCOs from all services in pay grades E7 - E9, active or retired. If you would like to know more about Williams' efforts or what the SMA is doing these days, I invite you to contact him at smaofca.president@gmail.com. Once he is out from behind the wheel or under the car, I am certain he will return your call.





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Col. Pete Cross, Chief of Staff, 40th Infantry Division, Train, Advise, Assist Command - South returns from a trip outside the wire.

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