



Peacemaker

The official magazine of the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)

Summer 2011

Storming Normandy

USACAPOC(A) remembers the fallen

Finding the best warrior

Stand up and say good-bye

British paratroopers receive U.S. training

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On the cover: Maj. Gen. David N. Blackledge leads paratroopers of Task Force Normandy into St. Mere-Eglise behind three veterans of the 508th Parachute infantry Regiment who parachuted on June 5, and 6, 1944 onto the beaches of Normandy and battled enemy fire.

U.S. Army photo by Lt. Col. Gerald Ostlund

Soldiers participating in USACAPOC(A)'s Best Warrior Competition pose for a photograph after a 10k ruck march at Fort Bragg on June 23, 2011.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Amanda Smolinski

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Sgt. 1st Class Michael Grant, a native of Jackson, Mich., and team medic for Alpha Company, 489th Civil Affairs Battalion, waits for buddy aid after a simulated attack by enemy indirect fire at a village near Contingency Operating Location Victory, Fort Dix, N.J., June 18, 2011.

U.S. Army photo by Spc. Katie Summerhill



GOT NEWS?

We need your help finding the best stories, the best Soldiers, and the best units doing what USACAPOC(A) is known for. If your unit is doing something amazing, one of your Soldiers is setting an example for the rest of your command, or your unit is conducting some out of the ordinary Civil Affairs or Military Information Support Operations training or missions, let us know. If your event has already taken place, send us some photos with identifying information— we'll give you the byline. Email your pitch or some photos to: usacapoc-pao@cie.army.mil



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A father and daughter hug good-bye before he deploys with the 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion.
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Amanda Smolinski



Commanding General

Maj. Gen. David N. Blackledge

September 11, 2011 marks the 10th Anniversary of the worst attack on American soil in our nation’s history. I don’t need to tell you how heavily involved our Soldiers have been in the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, operations in the Horn of Africa, South and Central America and countless places in between. Our units and Soldiers are the most deployed forces in the Army Reserve, and proudly doing the nation’s work.

On the following pages, you’ll read about one of our units paying tribute to our collective sacrifices at Ground Zero — certainly one of the most visible and memorable ways our Soldiers honor those who’ve gone before us. But, know that every one of our Soldiers who serve honorably, contribute to the team and mission, and take care of each other, also pays tribute

to all who suffered and died on 9/11 and have served our country. On one hand, this isn’t an easy time to serve our country. The nation has expected a lot of us, as most of you are intimately aware, with multiple deployments, increased requirements, and very high expectations. On the other hand, there is no greater time to serve in uniform, for it is in a time of war that our nation most depends on its Soldiers. We are getting to do the jobs we love, directly contributing to the strategic objectives of our nation’s major operations and national security. I’m proud of each and every one of you, the sacrifices you and your Families have made, and the tremendous spirit you display each and every day.

Thank you for your continued service to our great nation.



Command Sergeant Major

Command Sgt. Maj. Dale R. Blosser

I’m a Soldier. I’ve been a Soldier for more than 30 years. In that time, I’ve been there, done that. But, I’ve never been more proud than I am now as the Command Sergeant Major of USACAPOC(A). Like you, I have tremendous pride in wearing the uniform and serving my country. Many times over the past few months, I’ve met countless Soldiers of our command who have impressed me — not an easy thing to do.

Some of these Soldiers are included in the pages that follow — particularly those Soldiers who competed in our Best Warrior Competition at Fort Bragg in May. This was a tough event, and they gave it their all. But, like any competition, there can only be one winner — well, in this case two: one NCO and one Junior Enlisted Soldier of the Year. Pfc.

Justin Arrington, from the 450th CA Battalion, and Staff Sgt. Brett Klatt, from the 401st CA Battalion were the two at the top of a list of tremendous competitors. These Soldiers went on to compete at the Army Reserve competition, and performed admirably in the event.

These Soldiers represented the best of our units. They live the Army Values, are technically and tactically proficient in their warrior tasks and MOS skills, and have demonstrated strong leadership characteristics. They didn’t get there without working hard, holding themselves to a higher standard — something that I expect from every Soldier in USACAPOC(A).

Keep moving forward.



From Afghanistan to New York

404th Civil Affairs Battalion returns 9/11 flag to Ground Zero

Story by Sgt. 1st Class
Andy Yoshimura
USACAPOC(A) PAO Staff

NEW YORK -- Nine minutes and 11 seconds. The mission of one Command Sergeant Major was simple: fly a U.S. flag over every operating base she could during her deployment to Afghanistan.

The flag, once flown over the World Trade Center site in New York, would fly at each location for nine minutes and 11 seconds.

Command Sgt. Maj. Michelle Fournier, the command sergeant major of the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion out of Fort Dix, N.J., accomplished that mission and returned the flag to its WTC Ground Zero home in Manhattan, N.Y., July 20.

Fournier raised the flag over the WTC site one last time for nine minutes and 11 seconds with her Soldiers and construction crews in a solemn ceremony before folding and turning it over to the WTC site manager. The flag will be placed in the new museum under construction there.

The flag’s journey started March 1, 2010 when Soldiers of the 404th went to Ground Zero to acquire the flag from the port authority prior to their deployment to Afghanistan.

“The intent of taking the flag to Afghanistan was to show that we stand tall as American people here and sharing it with the American and coalition forces overseas,” said Fournier. “We attempted to fly it in many locations that we could.”

The Ground Zero flag was flown at 38 locations, each time for nine minutes



U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andy Yoshimura
Staff Sgt. Phillip McNair, a human resource specialist of the 404th Civil Affairs Battalion folds a U.S. flag just after it was raised at Ground Zero, the base of the World Trade Center. This flag has flown in over 30 different locations in Afghanistan and for the last time here at Ground Zero on July 20th, 2011.

and eleven seconds in remembrance of all those killed on Sept. 11, 2001. More than 700 U.S. and coalition service members participated in the ceremonies.

Fournier personally brought back the flag to its original home, the Ground Zero construction site. Soldiers from the 404th and the Regional Training Center

East from Fort Dix, N.J. participated in the final honors ceremony.

Sgt. Anthony DiDonato, a civil affairs specialist in the 404th, had the honor to raise and lower the flag for the last time before retiring the colors. Didonato also was present for its first hoist overseas at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.

Didonato compared the two ceremonies. “Both places were meaningful as I lost a few friends there in Afghanistan and here it was a deeper feeling to participate in this ceremony at Ground Zero.”

The flag was then folded in its traditional triangular shape, displaying the stars that had shined in both countries.

“It’s all about tradition,” said Staff Sgt. Phillip McNair, a human resource specialist for the 404th, who assisted in folding the flag. “It is a blessing that I am part of this service. It’s about serving my country and being in the Army.”

Port Authority officials are now safeguarding the flag and a collage of photos from each location for its future display at a museum at Ground Zero.

One of a command sergeant major’s duties is to keep and safeguard the colors of the unit to which he or she is assigned. Fournier, a California Highway Patrol deputy from Palmdale, Calif., had to take care of two flags while deployed to Afghanistan.

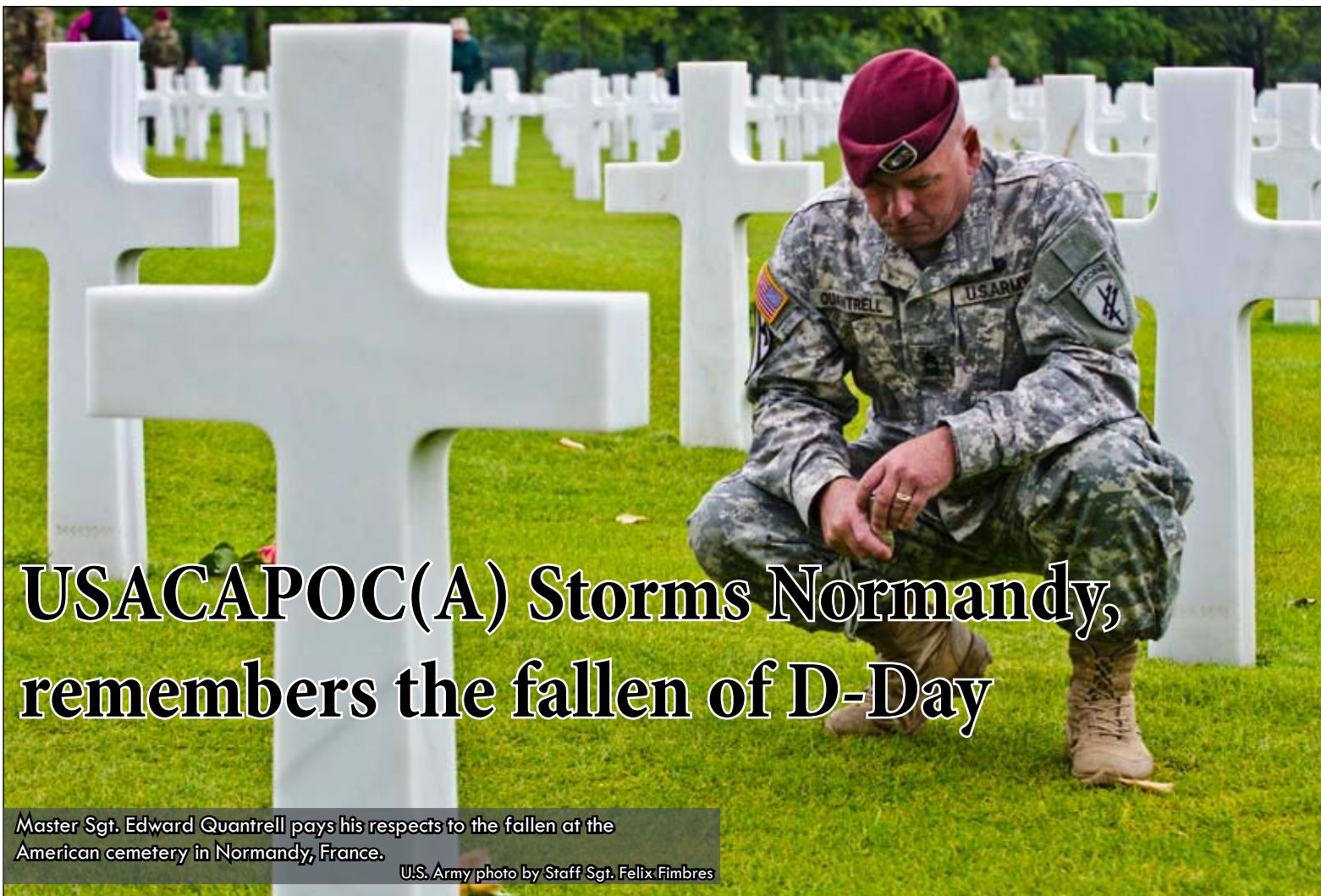
“It means a lot to me. Sept. 11 was a very somber day,” said Fournier.

“The flag represents the strength of the American people and the strength of the coalition forces. We stand together united against the war on terrorism.”

“The intent of taking the flag to Afghanistan was to show that we stand tall as American people...”

—Command Sgt. Maj. Michelle Fournier
404th CA. BN.

For more photos,
visit
<http://on.fb.me/pH7xQ8>



USACAPOC(A) Storms Normandy, remembers the fallen of D-Day

Master Sgt. Edward Quantrell pays his respects to the fallen at the American cemetery in Normandy, France. U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres

Story by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres
USACAPOC(A) PAO Staff

ST. MERE EGLISE, France-- "This is just a light mist," Chief Warrant Officer Four Mike Rich yelled to a few hundred Paratroopers standing on the tarmac in Cherbourg, France, as the dark skies above them began to open. "We're going to drive on with the training, and if it gets too wet we'll load back onto the buses."

This was no ordinary jump and the determination to execute the mission could be felt in the air. These paratroopers, from five countries, were about to make the jump of a lifetime -- an airborne operation onto a drop zone just outside St. Mere Eglise, France, June 5 -- just as their airborne forefathers did 67 years earlier before D-Day 1944.

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The main event of Operation Airborne Normandy was in jeopardy. Rich, the air officer for Task Force Normandy and the airborne standards officer for the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) was trying to remain hopeful.

A few minutes later, the assembled paratroopers remained undaunted as they were forced back onto buses to wait for the rain to subside, which gave them time to reflect on their mission.

"In a lot of ways the conditions here today are exactly what my father faced 67 years ago," said Capt. Ted Jacobs, whose father participated in Operation Overlord, the D-Day invasion.

Jacobs was one of 150 Army Reserve Paratroopers from

the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) and the 824th, 421st and 861st Quartermaster Companies who traveled thousands of miles aboard C-130's to participate in commemorations of the D-Day invasion that hastened the fall of Nazi Germany.

Annual ceremonies are hosted in all of the key cities throughout Normandy. Army Reserve paratroopers, along with contingents from the 82nd Airborne Division, 101st Airborne Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team participated in each one.

USACAPOC(A) has been a major participant in the planning and execution of the commemoration activities over the past three years and provides color guards, formations

of paratroopers and key mission planners.

Paratroopers from the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Holland also participated in the commemoration events. All told, there were more than 500 paratroopers on the mission: conduct joint airborne training and honor our veterans for their heroic actions on D-Day 1944.

Civilians from across Europe descend on the small towns of

"I feel honored to have the opportunity to come out here and meet them [D-Day veterans] face-to-face and shake their hands and say thank you."

—Sgt. Nathaniel Bier
7th PSYOP Group

Normandy, often wearing vintage and replica uniforms and driving restored vehicles of all sorts, from 1943 Harley military motorcycles to fully outfitted ambulances. Many make coming to Normandy a yearly pilgrimage.

Soldiers were selected from across USACAPOC(A) to participate in this once-in-a-lifetime training event. Picking just 150 Soldiers from more than 12,000 in the command is no easy task.

"I brought my Best Warriors," said 7th PSYOP Group Command Sgt. Maj. Philip Houseworth. "They did a great job at the CAPOC Best Warrior Competition and I thought they should be here for this."

One of those selected by Houseworth was Sgt. Nathaniel Bier.

"I'm real emotional right now," Bier said while on Utah Beach. Having just heard a speech about the sacrifices that took place on the ground on which he was now standing, Bier found it hard to hold back his emotions.

"I feel honored to have the opportunity to come out here and meet them [D-Day veterans] face-to-face and shake their hands and say thank

you," said Bier, whose grandfather participated in the D-Day invasion. "That is one of the best things I will always remember about this trip."

Lance Cpl. James White, a team leader with 4th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment of the U.K.'s Royal army, was one of 15 British paratroopers given the opportunity to join USACAPOC(A) as it toured a number of key battlegrounds including Pegasus Bridge, an example of a

perfectly executed Airborne mission by British paratroopers on D-Day.

"This is part of our history," said White, "so you learn about it when you join the Battalion. It's nice to come here and be on the ground, and put yourself in the position of these Soldiers. I'm really looking forward

to jumping [into Normandy], I love jumping."

White, just a few days earlier had been slated to jump alongside his American comrades in England, but high-winds grounded that portion of the operation. USACAPOC(A) coordinated training with the 4th Battalion Parachute Regiment and the Royal air force in order to train its paratroopers on exiting a British aircraft with British jumpmasters.

Meanwhile, American jumpmasters were to conduct Airborne Operations with British Paratroopers on board American C-130's.

Having scrubbed the jump in the U.K., the paratroopers on the wet tarmac in Cherbourg were even more antsy than normal to get the mission going. But, they never lost sight of what was really important.

"It's disappointing we didn't get to jump, but that's not why we're here," said Spc. Kristen Tobey, a Military Information Support Operations Soldier with USACAPOC(A) Headquarters and Headquarters

Continued on Pg. 10



WWII Veteran, Sgt. Maj. Raymond Sylvester, regales Paratroopers from the U.S. Army Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) at the American cemetery in Normandy, France. U.S. Army photo by Lt. Col. Gerlad Ostlund

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Company. “We’re here to remember the sacrifices that were made.”

But the outlook was still grim. Having waited out the downpour, completed sustained airborne training -- a refresher on exiting, parachuting, landing, and emergency techniques -- these paratroopers loaded into the airplanes and waited for good news.

And wait they did. For five hours they sat fully rigged and ready to go. But unlike the airborne operations of 67 years ago, this jump was not meant to be.

“This is the exact same thing that happened on D-Day, the only difference is that we won’t be able to come back at 2 a.m. and complete the mission,” said Staff Sgt. Christina Hipenbecker, one of USACAPOC(A)’s jumpmasters.

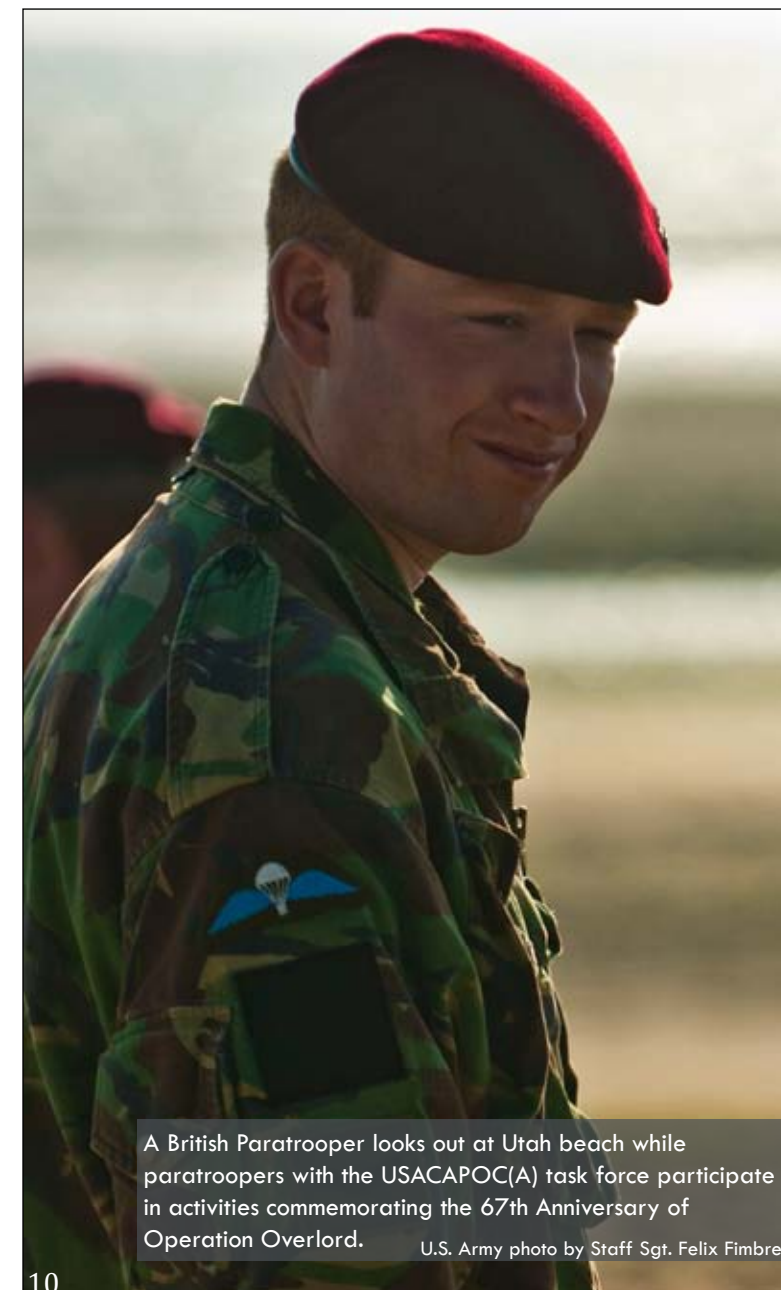
“We sent an aircraft to see if the pilots could find a hole in the ceiling, but they could not find one. We would

have loved to jump, but the risk of getting someone hurt for a training mission, just isn’t worth it,” Hipenbecker concluded.

Regardless, these paratroopers were still able to complete the real mission -- honor the sacrifices of World War II Soldiers and show respect to those who paved the way for the successful invasion of France.

“Just being here means a lot in the airborne community, this is our Mecca,” said Chief Warrant Officer Five Tom Travis, the commander of the USASOC(A) Flight Detachment.

For the full story, and additional photos, visit
<http://bit.ly/q6TOPB>.



A British Paratrooper looks out at Utah beach while paratroopers with the USACAPOC(A) task force participate in activities commemorating the 67th Anniversary of Operation Overlord.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres



Senator John Kerry salutes during a remembrance ceremony at Utah Beach.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres

What it is all about:

Meeting Sgt. Maj. Raymond Sylvester

Story and photo by Lt. Col. Gerald Ostlund
USACAPOC (A) Public Affairs Officer

There we were at the 67th Anniversary of Operation Overlord. Some 300 plus Army Paratroopers, including 120 from the Army Reserve’s USACAPOC(A), a group of Army Reserve Riggers, and our French, British, Dutch and German paratrooper comrades assembled in St. Mere Eglise in early June to commemorate the D-Day landings. We had taken staff rides to the important locations where so many gave their lives for our freedom -- and we’d participated in a number of ceremonies in towns throughout the region.

It was all very inspiring and emotional -- yes, even the toughest of our paratroopers got a little quieter, stood off by themselves, and a few even openly expressed their awe at being on hallowed ground.

But the highlight of the trip for me was meeting Raymond Sylvester -- a survivor of the D-Day landings.

Raymond, a mortar man in the Chemical Corps on 6 June 1944, attended a ceremony at the American Cemetery at Omaha Beach on June 4, 2011 where I, along with about 20 from our group got the chance to meet him. He stayed after the ceremony to talk with whoever wanted to chat, and I asked him if he’d mind taking a picture with some of our paratroopers.

He said he’d be delighted.

We took the standard “formation shot” with Raymond wearing his Sgt. Maj. Insignia on his uniform (hope I can still wear mine at that age -- and have it still fit). All of us pulled out our cameras and had our group shot taken about two-dozen times.

Then something amazing happened -- there was a lull, so I asked Raymond a simple question -- “when did you come ashore?”

He smiled and opened up, telling us his story. He came up Utah -- right where BG Roosevelt assaulted the beach. He was on the second wave. He pulled some pictures out of his old “pinks and browns” (what they called the brown jacket and pants which had a pink look) and told us a story for each. There was the burned out German troop carrier in Brittany, the charred German Soldier half way out of his tank in the east of France.

What happened next was even better. The Cemetery staff asked us to form an impromptu formation and to be part of a ceremony to lay a Dutch wreath at the memorial. We quickly did, and we asked Sgt. Maj. Sylvester into our formation -- front row center. His presence with us was very poignant for all who witnessed the quiet ceremony.

I told Raymond I was honored to meet him. He, without hesitation, told me he was in wonderment and said, “I don’t know why you guys make such a big deal out of me. I’m honored to meet each of you.”



Sgt. Maj. Raymond Sylvester takes a group photo with Soldiers from USACAPOC(A) in Normandy, France.

U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres

Soldiers compete to be Best Warrior

USACAPOC(A) puts troops to the ultimate test of skill and will

Story by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells
USACAPOC(A) PAO Staff

FORT BRAGG, N.C. -- More than a dozen determined Soldiers from around the country came together at Fort Bragg, N.C. to compete in the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne)'s Best Warrior Competition, May 9 through 12. Even with the unpredictability of North Carolina's weather, these Soldiers were physically and mentally up for any challenge.

Throughout the demanding four-day competition, competitors for both categories (noncommissioned officer and Soldier) endured rain and high humidity, at least at those not from the South, while performing their best at a physical fitness test, a grueling command sergeant major board, weapons qualification, an obstacle course, a 10K ruck-march, testing of basic warrior tasks, night and day land navigation and combatives.

For Pfc. Justin Arrington, representing the 352nd Civil Affairs Command out of Fort Meade, Md., completing these daunting tasks was something that he learned from other, more experienced Soldiers from his home unit, the



Pfc. Justin Arrington competes in a 10k road march during the USACAPOC(A) Best Warrior competition.
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres

450th Civil Affairs Battalion in Riverdale, Md.

"I had to go through the strengths of my unit and took on multiple mentors," explained Arrington. "I worked (with people) who were particularly good at PT (physical training) and when it came to marksmanship I did the same. Since we are from the (Washington) D.C. area, we have some federal law enforcement people in the unit and obviously it's a breadth of knowledge that I can use."

Learning from others' experiences helped Arrington along the way; which he credits to his successful win.

Arrington was announced the USACAPOC(A) Best Warrior in the Soldier Category at an awards ceremony, May 12. He advanced to the next level, the U.S. Army Reserve Command's Best Warrior Competition.

"First, I'd like to thank everyone who has helped me to get to this point. Next, I'm ready to learn the secrets to the other competitors (from this competition) who beat me in the individual events. There's always room for improvement," said Arrington. "It's definitely a great feeling to represent my unit at the next level."

Arrington is a senior at The American University and is majoring in U.S. Foreign Policy and International Relations. As a Mandarin Chinese speaker, he has lived and worked in China teaching English to local children.

Originally from Bethesda, Md., Arrington, a civil affairs specialist, joined the Army at the age of 24 to serve and gain experience in U.S. foreign policy.

Arrington wasn't the only 352nd CACOM Soldier to represent USACAPOC(A) at the USARC competition; he was joined by Staff Sgt. Bret Klatt who won the noncommissioned officer category.

Shocked by his win, Klatt's first thought was how he would tell his pregnant wife about competing at USARC.

"Well, I have to first wait for my wife's shock to die down," laughed Klatt, whose wife is due to have the couple's second son soon. "But she'll be very proud of me and this should be interesting (waiting for the baby) and training."

Klatt, a Rochester, N.Y., native, joined the Army at 18 years old, following in his family's tradition. A civil affairs team sergeant for the 401st Civil Affairs Battalion out of Webster, N.Y., Klatt deployed to Afghanistan in 2002 and to Iraq in 2007. He earned a Retail Business Management degree from Genesee Community College and works in merchandising for Home Depot.

"I'm extremely proud that I get to represent my unit

"It's hard work, but it's worth it. You learn about your weaknesses and strengths, and you definitely come out a better person."

—Staff Sgt. Brett Klatt
352nd CACOM

(at USARC)," said Klatt. "It's hard work, but it's worth it. You learn about your weaknesses and strengths, and you definitely come out a better person."

"(These Soldiers) volunteered to put themselves through this competition. They're coming out here to prove not only to us that they are very capable of doing this, but proving to themselves as well," said Command Sgt.

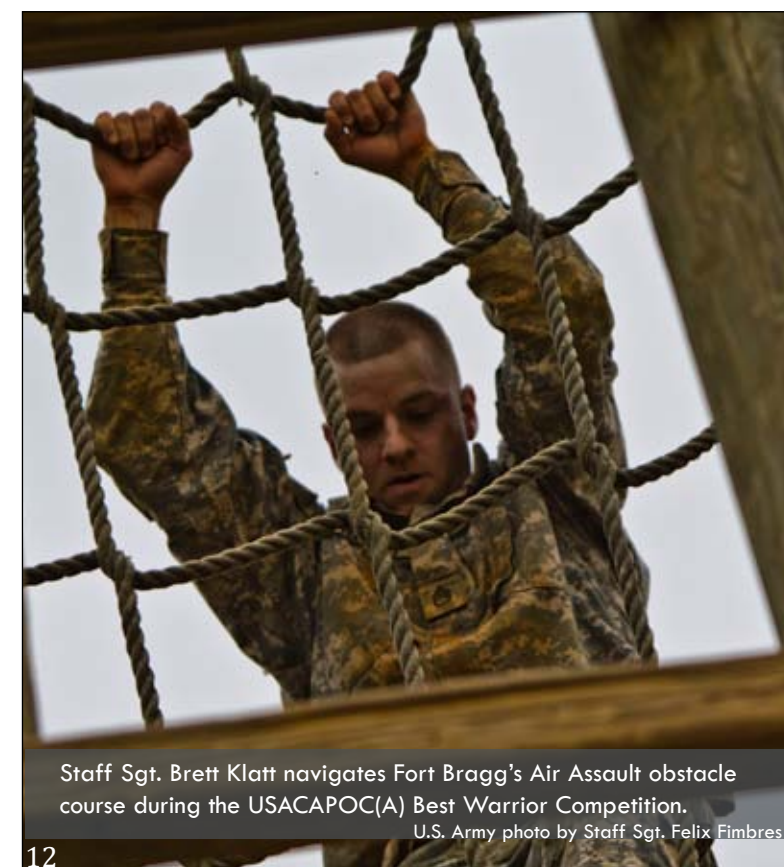


Sgt. Leah Serrano, 443rd Civil Affairs Battalion, shoots her M4 for accuracy during the mystery event at the USACAPOC(A) Best Warrior Competition.
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Sharilyn Wells

Maj. Dale R. Blosser, USACAPOC(A) command sergeant major. "They will be going up against other Soldiers with just as much drive and determination as themselves (at the USARC competition); it's going to be tough, but we are very proud of our Soldiers. At the end of the day there can only be two winners, but they continue to go on. My hat's off to

them and congratulate them because I know they've put their whole hearts into this competition and will continue to do so."

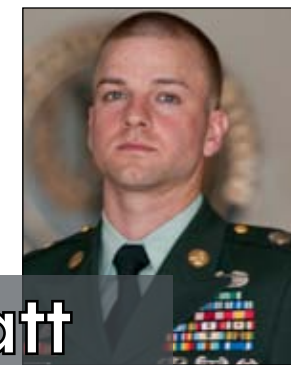
Both Arrington and Klatt represented USACAPOC(A) at the USARC Best Warrior Competition held at Fort McCoy, Wis., but were edged out by other competitors.



Staff Sgt. Brett Klatt navigates Fort Bragg's Air Assault obstacle course during the USACAPOC(A) Best Warrior Competition.
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres



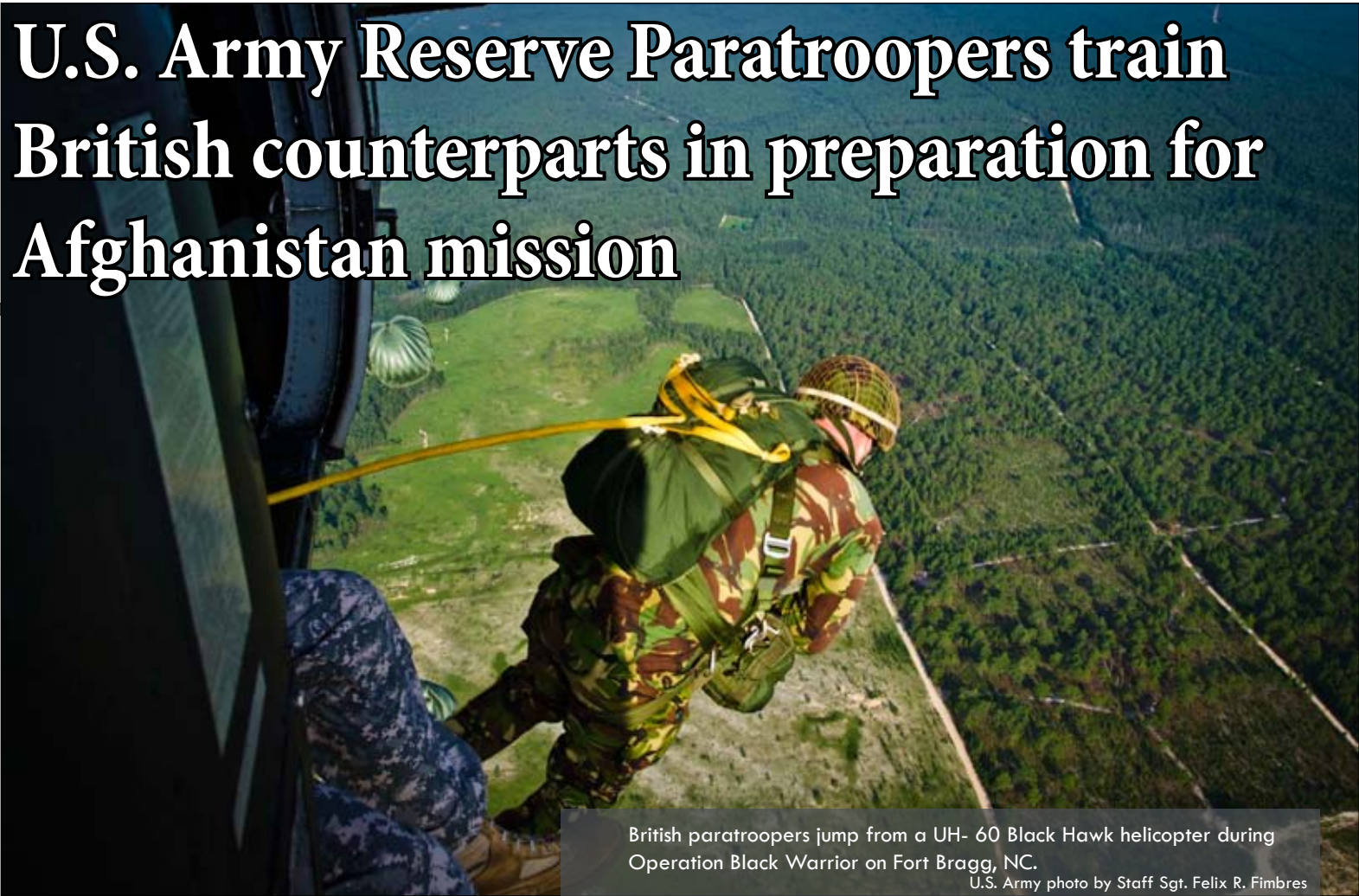
Arrington



Klatt

For the full story and more pictures visit <http://bit.ly/oXHVQz>

U.S. Army Reserve Paratroopers train British counterparts in preparation for Afghanistan mission



British paratroopers jump from a UH- 60 Black Hawk helicopter during Operation Black Warrior on Fort Bragg, NC.
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres

Story by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres
USACAPOC(A) PAO Staff

FORT BRAGG, N.C. - Intense heat, check. Grueling training, check. Twenty-four paratroopers from across the pond, check.

Soldiers from the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) hosted their airborne brothers from the United Kingdom's 4th Battalion Parachute Regiment for two weeks in July, to help prepare the allied paratroopers for their upcoming mission to Afghanistan.

Even though temperatures spiked to more than 100 degrees and felt more like 120, these two reserve units enjoyed the clear skies while cementing their friendship with multiple joint airborne operations, weapon qualifications, combat

sustainability training, and more.

While the heat was a challenge, it provided the 4th Para, as the unit is known informally, a great opportunity to train with their American counterparts.

"The nice thing about coming here is that while we aspire to this type of training, you guys have more assets, and dare I say it, you have better weather than we do," said Capt. Paul Finn, commander of the 4th Para element.

"The training value for us, it's incredible, because you have the assets and the weather. We have nine guys who weren't para qualified because the weather in the U.K. didn't allow them. The aircraft were there, they've done their jumps, but they were two jumps short. But coming out here, it allows them to get on the jumps and get qualified," said Finn.

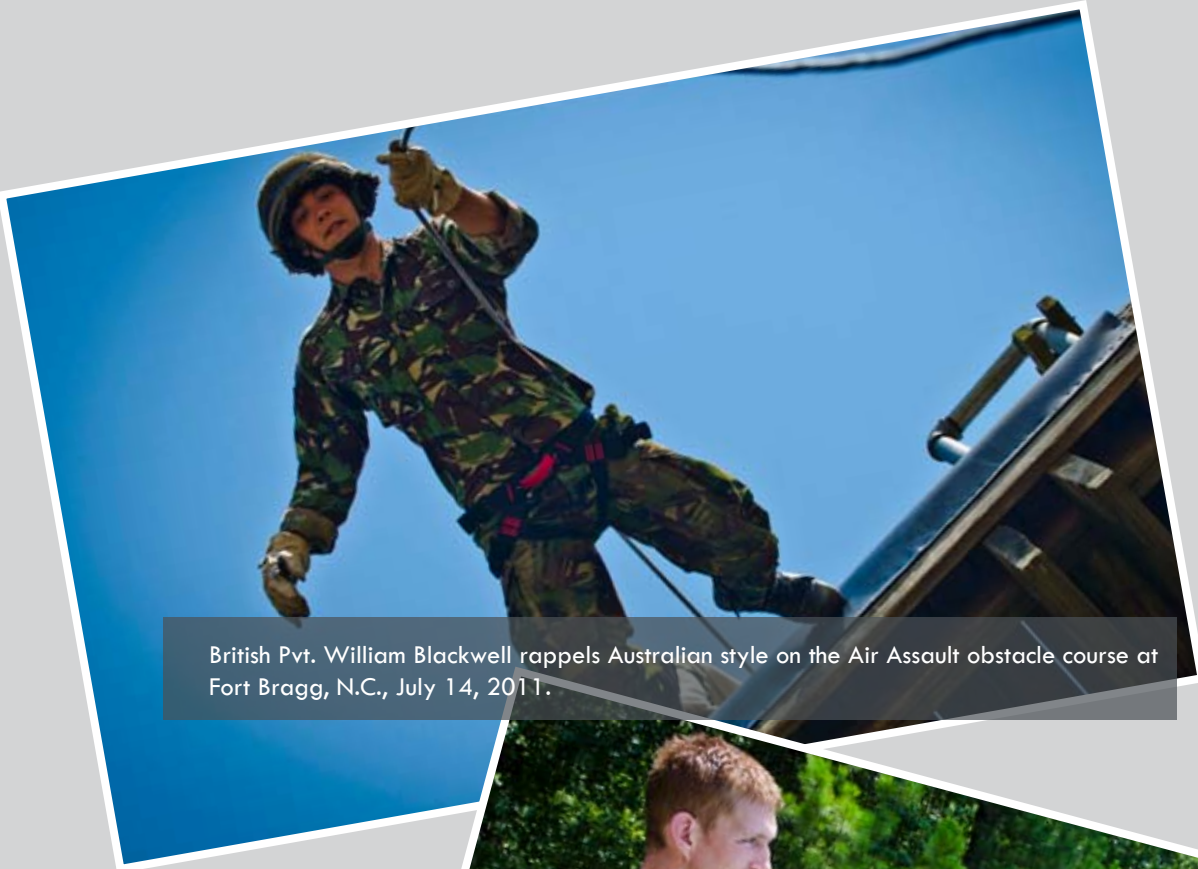
This training is an outgrowth from the two units' involvement in Operation Air Drop Warrior, in which USACAPOC(A) traditionally sends 150 paratroopers selected from subordinate units nationwide to the U.K. each year to train together before going to France for the Normandy commemorations.

For the past three years the 4th Para has organized training in the United Kingdom prior to conducting joint operations in France.

This year, USACAPOC(A) was able to return the favor by hosting the 4th Para here in order to prepare them for their next mission - a difficult deployment to Helmand province.

The group used Fort Bragg's ample resources to conduct airborne operations and really put their skills to the test with a series of events at the

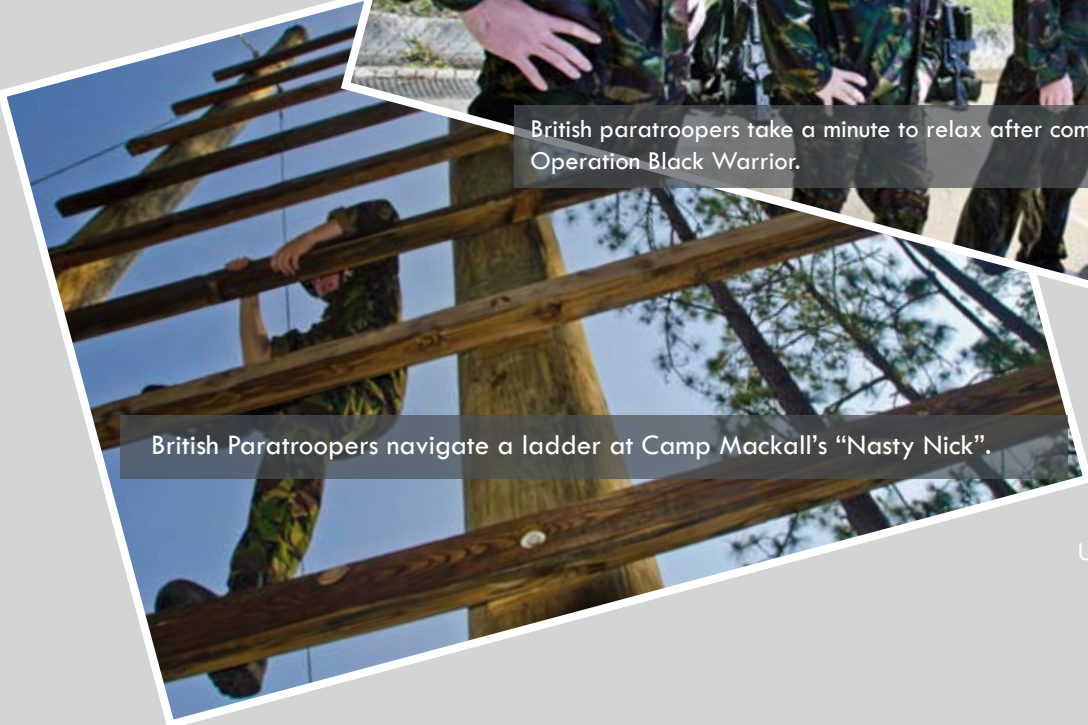
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British Pvt. William Blackwell rappels Australian style on the Air Assault obstacle course at Fort Bragg, N.C., July 14, 2011.



British paratroopers take a minute to relax after completing pool training during Operation Black Warrior.

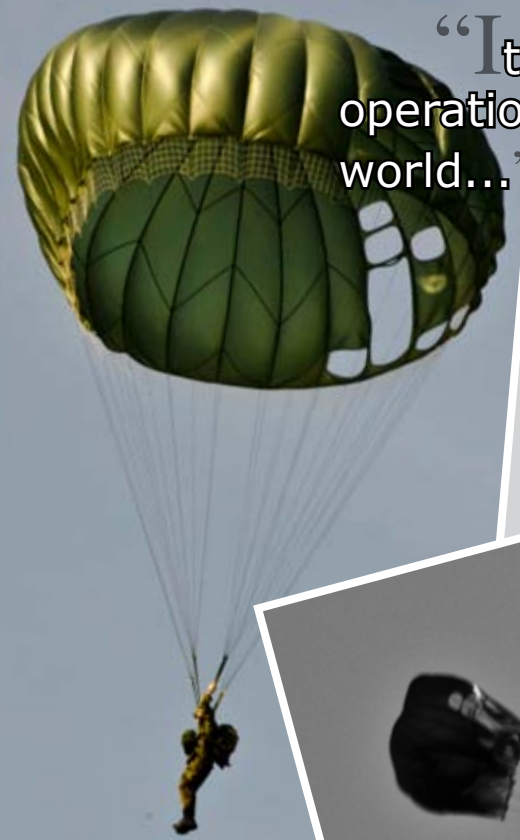


British Paratroopers navigate a ladder at Camp Mackall's "Nasty Nick".

U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres

“It’s crucial because we have joint operations going on throughout the world...”

—Pvt. William Blackwell
4th Battalion Parachute Regiment



A British paratrooper prepare for impact after jumping from a UH-60 Black Hawk during Operation Black Warrior.



A paratrooper exits a UH-60 Black Hawk during Operation Black Warrior.



A paratrooper with USACAPOC(A) unhooks himself from his parachute after completing a jump during Operation Black Warrior.

U.S. Army photos by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres



British Colour Sgt. Christopher Wright (Far Right) gets ready to jump onto St. Mere Eglise drop zone from a UH-60 Black Hawk.
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres

range on weapon systems, multiple trips to the urban training ranges, and a stroll through the Special Forces obstacle course, “Nasty Nick”, and the Air Assault course.

Though this was no ordinary training, Sgt. 1st Class Sean Bowers, USACAPOC(A) HHC operations sergeant, was modest in his role.

“I’ve been doing this for ten years, as the operations NCO, and it’s a piece of cake,” Bowers said. “I put together training that I would want to do because I knew that I wouldn’t want provide them with training they wouldn’t want to do.”

Training logistics aside, Bowers felt the joint operations away from the battlefield helped foster relationships.

“The camaraderie is the biggest thing we get to take away from this,”

Bowers continued. “They are not different than us. The only thing, is that they have that dialect, it’s hard to understand them half the time, especially when you’re talking on the phone with them,” Bowers joked.

Finn agreed that the training was only half the story.

“I think the most valuable thing is the training and just getting to see how the Americans work, getting to see how our coalition forces work together and getting to play with them effectively, is tremendous because the only time we get to see the Americans is when invariably, we’re fighting alongside them.”

The importance of joint training was echoed by Finn’s troops.

“It’s crucial because we have joint operations going on throughout

the world, it helps us adapt with how different teams work and continue it overseas, especially in Afghanistan,” said Pvt. William Blackwell of the 4th Para.

“It’s been fantastic, the facilities are absolutely incredible, we couldn’t ask for anything better,” said Blackwell.

Even though the training was only halfway done, the British Soldiers were incredibly happy with everything they’d gone through so far.

“It’s just been absolutely fantastic, and I know my guys are absolutely loving it,” said Finn.

Find more pictures at
<http://bit.ly/gnVM11>

Strong Bonds: Minnesota

A review by
Staff Sgt. Felix R. Fimbres and
Sgt. Jessica L. Fimbres

F: So what was your favorite part?
J: Date night without kids
F: No fair, you can't pick what I was going to pick
J: Too bad, what else did you like?
F: You know, I know it's a boring predictable answer, but I actually really enjoyed listening and learning from the speakers, Chaplains Cruys and Farmer, and Mrs. Farmer, did a great job of keeping my interest
J: Yeah, I agree, I liked how they added personal stories to the points they were trying to get across, because it's really easy to stand-up there and say 'communicate with their spouse' 'actively listen to your spouse' when in reality there are so many things going on in life that it makes communicating with your spouse difficult sometimes, so it was nice hearing how they dealt with it; hearing Chaplain Cruys say that it took him years to figure out to stop buying his wife only purple clothes.
F: Well, you know those Minnesota Fans... speaking of Minnesota, I know it's not a glamorous destination like Miami or New York, or LA, but I felt that not only was Minneapolis surprisingly filled with new things to do, but also that I don't think the location was what mattered most, being able to spend time with you, made it a great place.
J: Awww. I agree. You really can't beat the opportunity that's given to you, you get paid to spend time with your spouse, you get great accommodations, great food, free time away from the stresses of home, I think more people should take advantage of it.
F: Agreed, it really is a great program and it's a shame that so few people are taking advantage of it.

"And away from the kids," added Sabina. "And being able to remind yourselves why you got married in the first place," said Sabina.

While the mornings are filled with classes, it's far from your typical Army training. It allows couples to use techniques learned to talk with and explore each other.

"And being able to remind yourselves why you got married in the first place."

—Sabina Quantrell
Military spouse

To facilitate a date night, training is finished early in the afternoon so couples can plan, get ready for, and enjoy a quiet evening together.

"It was sold to me as a vacation," said Farmer who self-admittedly wanted nothing to do with the training when he first heard about it, before becoming a chaplain. "I had a great time when I was there because my friends were there."

"I also had a great time because all of a sudden things just started to make sense. This person that I loved and cared for, I finally figured out, 'Oh that's why she does this,' and 'That's why she does that.' All of a sudden, it opened up a whole new world for me," added Farmer.

Farmer's wife, Jana, was also present as an instructor to give the other side of the marriage story and training.

"I think a lot of the spouses appreciate having someone to represent them, to represent their side of what a deployment and Army life means to them," said Jana, who also at first was unsure about the training.

"I grew up as a pastor's daughter spending a lot of time learning about what a marriage should look like, and I really felt that perhaps it was a little elementary for where I was in life," remarked Jana, "but I was

surprised at some of the really basic things that we take for granted, like communicating with each other, that we were doing, but not doing them as well as we could."

Farmer also pointed out that enhancing the strength of couples is just one of the benefits of the Strong Bonds program.

Strong Bonds also invites single Soldiers and Families to attend one of the workshops being held throughout the year, across the country, using either the website, or by calling Farmer directly.

"I am the number one access point for our command, I know about all the events for the country and if I don't know, I will find out very quickly and get back to you," said Farmer.

Farmer also feels that the Strong Bonds program is a great tool for not just single Soldiers, couples and Families, but entire commands as well.

"We deploy up to six times as much as everyone else, and we need to have a more robust support system than anyone else," Farmer emphasized.

"Strong bonds is a great vehicle because I can give a commander something that gives him or her the ability to mobilize their troops, Families, everyone, to one place and the commander gets to say thank you for the job done by their Soldiers and Families, and he/she gets to ask what the problems are and how to fix them, directly from the source."

For the full story and photos, visit
<http://bit.ly/omgADT>
For more information on Strong Bonds, visit www.strongbonds.org or e-mail Chaplain Farmer at robert.m.farmer@cie.army.mil



Master Sgt. Edward Quantrell and his wife Sabina share a laugh during a Strong Bonds couples retreat in Minneapolis, Minn., July 30, 2011.
U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres

Forging bonds one couple at a time

Story by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres
USACAPOC(A) PAO Staff

MINNEAPOLIS -- Most battle assemblies take Army Reserve Soldiers away from their loved ones, however, this weekend was different.

Citizen Soldiers had an opportunity to reconnect with their spouses during a Strong Bonds event hosted by the 88th Regional Support Command in Minneapolis, Minn.

An all-expenses-paid trip sounds more like a prize than an actual Army function, but with funding directly through Congress, the Army and U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) is able to provide its married Soldiers a great opportunity to reinforce family ties and help ensure they are ready for any situation, together.

"This is a great event that is available to all our CAPOC Soldiers," said Lt. Col. Francis Klotz, of the 354th Civil Affairs Brigade out of Riverdale Md. "Sadly we don't have enough of the married Soldiers taking advantage of this. This a great weekend the Army

is paying for, you get drill points out of it, it's out there for you, do it."

Unfortunately, only six percent of CAPOC's 12,000 Soldiers are taking advantage of this opportunity, something command chaplains would like to change.

"Right now if we got 90 more Soldiers to sign up for these events that would be huge," said Capt. Robert Farmer, one of CAPOCs chaplains.

Attendance is certainly a sore

"This a great weekend the Army is paying for, you get drill points out of it, it's out there for you, do it."

—Lt. Col. Francis Klotz
354th CACOM

spot in the program, which has a very successful return rate, but not so great an adoption rate.

"Of the six-percent who come to these events half are Soldiers who have been here before," said Farmer, the Strong Bonds coordinator for USACAPOC. Farmer feels that the number of Soldiers who come back is a testament to the skills they learned.

Strong Bonds started at the University of Chicago 37 years ago in

an effort to standardize counseling, and the program is constantly evolving.

"We've integrated a number of other programs as well. They are all based on a scientific approach, but go at it in several different ways, so you're not getting the same program every time you come to an event," said Farmer.

Master Sgt. Edward Quantrell, from USACAPOC (A) Headquarters

and Headquarters Company at Fort Bragg, N.C., and his wife Sabina, were one of those couples attending Strong Bonds for the first time.

"I think this will absolutely help on my next deployment, understanding expectations and the speaker-listener skills will be very helpful," said Quantrell. "I think we get caught in a rut, the same day-to-day business at home, this gives us an opportunity to be back by ourselves."



(From left) Father, Maj. Gen. (ret) Herbert F. Ryan and sons, Lt. Col. Stephen J. Ryan and Maj. David H. Ryan, read programs during the Brooklyn Memorial Day Parade. U.S. Army photo by Capt. Saskia Ball

Civil Affairs Soldier and family march in Brooklyn Memorial Day Parade

Story by Capt. Saskia Ball
USACAPOC(A) Deputy PAO

BROOKLYN, N.Y. – “There is a saying that you are never a hero in your own hometown but that is certainly not true today,” said Lt. Col. Stephen J. Ryan, assistant operations officer for the 353rd Civil Affairs Command at Fort Wadsworth in Staten Island, N.Y., which is a subordinate unit of the United States Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) headquartered at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Lt. Col. Stephen J. Ryan, his brothers, Maj. David H. Ryan and Maj. Andrew F. Ryan, and their father, Maj. Gen. (ret) Herbert F. Ryan were honored to be given the privilege of being Deputy Grand Marshalls of the

Jones Park]; I was a lifeguard at Fort Hamilton, not far away. We’re just thrilled and honored,” said Stephen.

“Sadly my brother, Andrew, couldn’t be with us today he’s with the State Department in Moldova,” said

“When I retired they gave it back to me, for \$2.12 more a month.”

— Maj. Gen. (ret) Herbert F. Ryan

144th Brooklyn Memorial Day Parade in Brooklyn, N.Y., May 30, 2011.

“This is where I grew up. I was a Boy Scout here, played little league, right in this park [John Paul

David.

Andrew is also in the Army Reserve and a Foreign Service Officer for the State Department.

Along with sharing a family



U.S. Army photo by Capt. Saskia Ball

tradition of serving in the military, David and Andrew are also in the same unit, the 395th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in New Haven, Conn., and were also deployed to Iraq together in 2004-2005.

“We were not in the same unit at the time but we were on the

with Thomas Ryan, my great-great-grandfather, served in the 69th New York, the Irish Brigade. Then my great-great grandfather was a Lieutenant in the Spanish-American War, serving in the 1st Massachusetts Volunteers. My grandfather served in both the First and Second World

commission when he was a staff sergeant.

“I joined when I was 16, had 1 month time on my 17th birthday when I joined the Marine Corps Reserve. When I commissioned, some AG [Adjutant General’s] type finally said ‘Hey, that was an illegal enlistment’, so

“I’m the fifth generation in the Army. I’m serving in the same unit my father served in.”

— Lt. Col. Stephen J. Ryan

same base. That made my mom feel a little bit better that the two of us were together at the same time,” said David.

Serving in the same unit is not a rarity in the Ryan Family. In fact, Stephen is serving in the same unit that his father, Herbert, served in.

“I’m the fifth generation in the Army. I’m serving in the same unit my father served in. It started

War with the fighting 69th. My father served with the 24th Division in Korea, 19th Infantry Regiment. It’s in the blood, it’s a family business,” said Stephen.

The patriarch of the family ensured another tradition was followed; enlisting before commissioning.

Herbert received his direct

they knocked off 19 months. But when I retired, they gave it back to me, for \$2.12 more a month,” said Herbert, adding that he made his sons do the same: enlist first, then commission.

All of the Ryan brothers have been in the Army for more than 20 years, “I joined a year or so after Stephen did. Actually, Andrew the middle brother, joined three months after I did,” said David, who has 21 years of service.

On Memorial Day, the Ryan Family reflected on the reason they were being honored by the city of Brooklyn, “Memorial day is really about remembering the fallen. Sadly, we get it too confused with Veterans Day; the two holidays sort of get blurred. It [Memorial Day] in this country is just the kick-off of summer and often gets forgotten, it’s why these events are important, to remind ourselves of the ultimate sacrifice paid by others,” said David

It’s possible that the sixth generation of the Ryan Family military tradition lies with Andrew’s one year old son.



A young boy marches with the New York Police Department during the 144th Brooklyn Memorial Day Parade.

U.S. Army photo by Capt. Saskia Ball

“Biggest Little City in the World”

Soldiers place their bets, come out on top

Story by Sgt. 1st Class

Andy Yoshimura

USACAPOC(A) PAO Staff

RENO, Nev. -- Known for luxury casinos and recreational activities, Reno brings millions of people hoping to hit the jackpot and the nearby slopes at world-class ski resorts.

With high-altitude surroundings mixed with rugged mountain features the “Biggest Little City in the World” also provides the best opportunity to train Army Reserve Soldiers in the 304th Tactical Psychological Operations Company (TPC) from Sacramento, Calif. in high desert heat they can’t get at their home station.

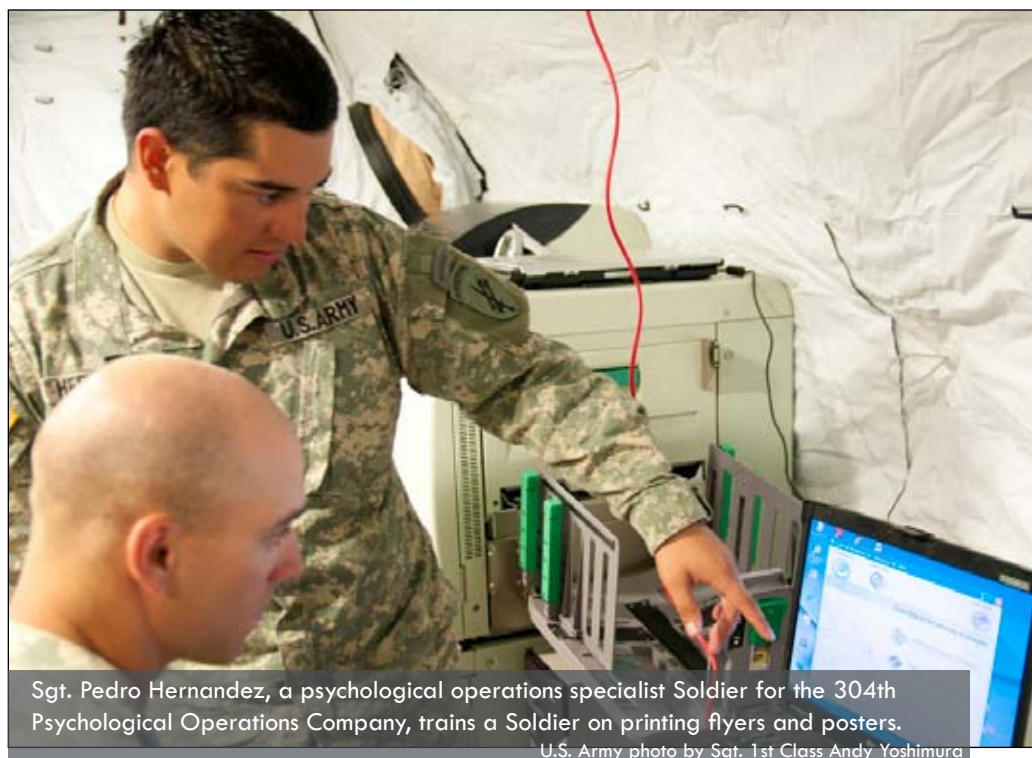
During training, the unit experienced elevation changes that ranged from extremely low to extremely high, giving these Soldiers an opportunity to prepare for upcoming deployments to Afghanistan where the terrain is not dissimilar to that surrounding Reno.

The 304th spent their two-week annual training emphasizing basic Soldier skills and providing tactical PSYOP training with a Production Dissemination Detachment.

Sgt. 1st Class John Barneson, First Sergeant for the 304th TPC said that training on perishable skills is key before they are gone or lost.

“It requires that we integrate the tactical with the technical,” said Barneson.

The role of the 304th is to disseminate information to citizens of a host nation through face-to-face meetings, flyers, posters and in some



Sgt. Pedro Hernandez, a psychological operations specialist Soldier for the 304th Psychological Operations Company, trains a Soldier on printing flyers and posters.

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andy Yoshimura

cases using radio and television to reach the people. They do this with the help of their PDD which has the capability to publish flyers and posters at a high-rate of speed. The finished product is then given to the tactical PSYOP team for distribution to villages and small towns.

With an abundance of new Soldiers who haven’t deployed overseas, the 304th an opportunity to train them in thin air climate comparable to that of Afghanistan for two weeks.

The leadership of the 304th was impressed with how well their inexperienced Soldiers grasped the training.

“They are proving themselves to be extremely useful and have picked up on a lot of tasks,” said Sgt. 1st Class Ian Williamson, training noncommissioned officer for the

304th. “I believe when we go down range, we are not going to have any issues.”

Barneson believes in the acronym PACE when it comes to being a Soldier. PACE stands for: Primary, Alternate, Contingency, Emergency. It is a four-step process that can keep a Soldier from failing a mission. Barneson believes if the primary way doesn’t succeed then use an alternate route. If the alternate way doesn’t work then have a contingency plan to overcome it. If all else fails, the emergency process should fix the problem.

“There is no point at which we achieve perfection. We work towards that,” explains Barneson, “Even if we were to momentarily be able to achieve it, we must keep working to sustain it, it’s an ongoing effort.”

The history of the 304th

stems back to the 4th Psychological Operations Company in Vietnam based out of Okinawa and has since supported every U.S. conflict leading up to, and including the war on terrorism in Afghanistan, a country whose elevation poses a unique challenge which many units can’t efficiently train for.

As one of the units that has access to high-elevation training sites nearby, this gave the 304th an opportunity to feel the lack of oxygen in the thin air by training in the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

“This area is, environmentally, almost identical to the lower elevations in Afghanistan,” said Williamson.

The Stead Training Base and the area surrounding Reno ranges from an elevation of 4,000 feet to as much as 7,000 feet in some areas. Soldiers set up antennae re-transmission sites located on the summit of these hills to connect Psyop teams with radio communication at a long distance.

In January of 2012, the 304th plans to train in even higher elevations at the Bridgeport Marine Corps Mountain Warfare Training Center. Elevations there are comparable to the 10,000+ feet that they might face in future deployments to Afghanistan.

“If they know their equipment works at high altitudes, then they can train their bodies to work with it as well,” said Wiliamson.

For more photos,
visit
<http://on.fb.me/odTuUh>



Spc. Edward Hernandez of the 304th Psychological Operations Company, hoists one of two towers at a re-transmission site on top of a hilltop here in the Reno, Nev., area.

U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andy Yoshimura

The last PSYOP Group change of command



Story by Staff Sgt. Felix Fimbres
USACAPOC(A) PAO Staff

MOFFETT FIELD, Calif. -- In front of Zeppelin hangers from a bygone era, Col. Wayne Tasler said goodbye to the 7th Psychological Operations Group, which he has commanded for the past two and a half years June 25.

"This will be the last time a PSYOP Group will change command," Tasler said in front of a few hundred PSYOP Soldiers assembled before him.

"We will have to change our name but not what we do; and what we do is provide a unique ability to persuade, change and influence foreign target audiences through non-lethal methods, which is critical to the success of our nation's wars," said Tasler.

The name change has been a hot-button issue in the PSYOP

community and the grumblings have been heard up and down the chain of command.

"A similar name will be determined, one that we will be proud of and that will carry on our legacy," Tasler assured his Soldiers during his farewell speech at the change of command.

While the 7th POG's name may still remain in question, its new commander is on the ground ready to lead. "I accepted my commission

because I wanted to lead," said Lt. Col. Miguel Castellanos, 7th POG's new commander.

If you're a 7th POG Soldier, the name should be familiar, as he served the last few years as the group's Deputy Commander.

"I am honored that Maj. Gen. Blackledge has given me this opportunity," Castellanos said during his speech. "To the Soldiers of 7th POG, you have my commitment, I will give you my best; this is my only

"A similar name will be determined, one that we will be proud of and that will carry on our legacy."

— Col. Wayne Tasler
Outgoing Commander, 7th POG

option."

The group's already high operational tempo has not gone unnoticed, especially by the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne) Commanding General, David N. Blackledge.

"I talk about our high OPTEMPO to other general officers and they always ask how the command has been able to maintain that. I attribute it directly to the quality and dedication of our Soldiers. Unlike many Soldiers in the Army who deploy and wonder what they did to affect the war, our CAPOC Soldiers can see the results they've influenced," said Blackledge at the ceremony.

The command's Soldiers were also praised by both in-coming and out-going commanders who noted the exceptional quality of Soldiers within the command.

"The quality of the Soldiers is phenomenal, what makes it difficult is the OPTEMPO," said Castellanos. "An OPTEMPO that is one of the highest in the Army, and that only stands to accelerate over the next few years.

"I look to pick up our operational tempo a notch more,



there is still much work to be done," continued Castellanos. "Dwindling resources, both in manpower and money, will continue to challenge everything we do. We'll need to find ways to work more efficiently and implement processes to increase our capacity. There are no other choices," said Castellanos, who will be facing tough command decisions until the end of his tenure.

However, for Tasler and

Castellanos, command is not just about hard choices and responsibility, it's also a gift and an achievement.

"Command is the highlight of any officer's career; I'm going to miss it a lot," said Tasler. "But at the same time, with the experiences I've gained in the last two and half years, I hope to be able to take that to the Special Operations Command, and hopefully fix some of the issues facing the Reserve Component and the Military Information Support Operations Community."

"Taking command, if you're an officer, that's what you're supposed to strive for, you take those jobs that are going to lead you to the positions where you command. For me taking command is what it's all about," said Castellanos.



For the full story and additional photos, visit
<http://bit.ly/pWXSnd>

Saying good-bye is never easy

402nd commander moves to new assignment at War College

Story by Capt. Dave Chace
USCAPOC(A) PAO Staff

FORT BUCHANAN, Puerto Rico - In 2009, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Jurasek reported to Fort Buchanan, Puerto Rico, with one supply sergeant and a mission to man and train a civil affairs battalion from, basically, scratch.

This Army Reserve unit, the 402nd Civil Affairs Battalion, had furled its colors in Tonawanda, N.Y., in order to relocate to Puerto Rico, and all but one of its Soldiers opted to forego the commute to the Caribbean and find new assignments closer to home.

After three years of hard work, a very different 402nd stood at attention as now Col. Jurasek handed command of the unit to Lt. Col. Edward McFadden in a ceremony June 4 on Fort Buchanan.

Now manned by more than 150 Army Reserve Soldiers, the 402nd has been hailed as one of the strongest battalions in the U.S. Army Civil Affairs & Psychological Operations Command (Airborne).

McFadden, a civil affairs officer who recently returned from



Brig. Gen. Mark Hendrix hands the 402nd Civil Affairs Battalion colors to incoming commander, Lt. Col. Edward Buchannon, symbolizing the assumption of command.
U.S. Army photo by Capt. Dave Chace

McFadden said. “The deployments will not stop, but I know this unit is ready to meet the challenges, and will step up to the plate.”

Jurasek thanked the senior Army leaders at Fort Buchanan for their support and assistance in

affairs personnel on past deployments and were interested in the mission of working with civilian populations and civil authorities in areas of U.S. military operations.

The 402nd quickly added and trained personnel in preparation for its 2010 deployment to Africa. In fact, the unit was ready to deploy far in advance of all established timelines, said Brig. Gen. Mark Hendrix, commander of the 402nd’s higher headquarters, the 350th Civil Affairs Command in Pensacola, Fla.

“Of all the ways you can measure [Jurasek’s] success here, the most meaningful one to me is the number of Soldiers in this battalion who aren’t in this formation today, because they’re down-range accomplishing their mission,” Hendrix said during the ceremony.

Approximately 50 members of the battalion were available to attend the day’s change of command ceremony; almost 100 more are serving on year-long deployments to northeast Africa.

Jurasek was one of them, until he returned home a couple months early in order to hand the battalion’s colors to McFadden and move onto his next assignment at the U.S. Army War College.

“The Soldiers here are the best,” Jurasek said. “It’s been an honor and a privilege to be a soldier here, much less a commander.”

“They’re like my second family,” he said. “We started from scratch and now we’re one of the best battalions in USCAPOC(A).”

The unit’s relocation to Puerto Rico added several unique characteristics to the Army Reserve’s civil affairs community.

“Culturally, these Soldiers are very close. Puerto Rican Soldiers mingle a lot easier than others, especially in Africa, where they’re very Family-oriented,” Jurasek said. “They fit in well with local populations, and that’s a tremendous strength that you just don’t find in the States.”

Many Soldiers’ high level of education contributed to the unit’s morale and success, he said.

“I have a professor, I have several doctors and lawyers,” he said. “They are very mature Soldiers, that’s the thing that stands out.”

The majority of the U.S. Army’s civil affairs force comes from the U.S. Army Reserve, where Soldiers can use the skills and experience from their civilian careers

that enhance military operations when called to service.

Military ceremonies, like changes of command, are opportunities for units to pause and recommit themselves to the profession of arms, Hendrix said.

“Command at any level is truly the best job in the Army, because it puts you in the best position to do two very important things: take care of Soldiers, and make the Army better,” Hendrix said. “The Army and the nation hold commanders accountable for accomplishing the mission, keeping the institution sound and caring for our Soldiers and Families.”

McFadden brings a record of superior accomplishment and demonstrated willingness to take on the tough jobs, Hendrix said, citing his combat arms background as an Infantry officer and solid grounding at the tactical level.

“His career reflects not just genuine expertise, but dedication, a strong work ethic and total integrity,” Hendrix said.

“But there’s one more qualification that might be his most valuable of all,” he said. “Long before he was Lt. Col. McFadden, he was Sgt. McFadden. What better way to know how to lead and care for Soldiers than to have been one?”

“In every way, he has earned the privilege of commanding this unit,” he said.

Note: USCAPOC(A) would like to thank Capt. Dave Chace for his hard work while with the Public Affairs Office for the past five years. He will be missed within the organization, but his selection as a Mobile Public Affairs Detachment commander is well deserved.



Brig. Gen. Mark Hendrix attaches a ribbon to the guidon for B-Co., 402nd Civil Affairs Battalion.
U.S. Army photo by Capt. Dave Chace

“We started from scratch and now we’re one of the best battalions in USCAPOC(A).”

—Col. Jeffrey Jurasek
Outgoing commander, 402nd CAB

a deployment to Iraq, said he was honored to join a battalion with a unique history and superb reputation.

“I’ve heard nothing but great things about what the 402nd is doing, both here and down-range in Africa,”

establishing the 402nd during the unit’s first few months in Puerto Rico.

In that time, word spread quickly around Army Reserve units in Puerto Rico that a civil affairs unit had moved to town; many of these Soldiers already served with civil

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