

# The First Friday Briefing

Serving the National Guard and State Defense Force of Georgia

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July 2008

## Joint effort takes CST to Florida



Photo by Spc. Amanda Kenny

Soldiers in the 4th Civil Support Team with help from the Tennessee Air National Guard's 164th Air Wing, out of Memphis, Tenn., load vehicles onto a C-5 Galaxy for the trip to Key West, Fla., June 17, 2008. The 4th CST will join Florida's 44th CST and Alabama's 46th CST to conduct the full scale exercise with Army North called "Relief in Place", said Maj. Darren Smith, commander 4th CST. Working jointly with other states is part of the National Guard Bureau's requirements for the CSTs, especially with out of state missions, said Smith. The CST will also take part in an exercise in the Virgin Islands.

## Ga Soldier saves two from drowning

By Sgt. 1st Class Roy Henry  
Public Affairs Office

GALVESTON, Texas – Fire and rescue officials credited a Kennesaw-based Georgia Army Guardsman with saving the lives of two young boys caught in a dangerous rip tide and being swept out into Galveston Bay July 8, 2008.



Private 1st Class  
Stephen Mercado

The youths, both pre-teens, were body surfing in the shallow portion of the popular beach area when the heavy riptides caught them.

Private 1st Class Stephen Mercado, assigned to Kennesaw's 277th Maintenance Company, Georgia Army National Guard, who was vacationing in the Gulf area, was praised by Jeff Smith, assistant fire chief for the City of Galveston, for his quick thinking and courage.

"If it hadn't been for him the youths might have drowned and we'd be doing body recovery," said Smith.

Instead, both boys were treated by emergency medical technicians and released at the scene, the chief added.

Mercado, 27, an automated logistics specialist with the 277th, is a full-time student at Kennesaw State University majoring in mathematical education, and a member of the school's ROTC program.

See **SOLDIER**, page 11

# 165th Airlift Wing announces division changes

The 165th Airlift Wing recently announced several changes in its command structure. New commanders were announced at the Wing's logistics, Civil engineering and Mission Support Group.

Lieutenant Col. D Lawrence Eaddy was selected to serve as the new Commander of the 165th Logistics Readiness Squadron, an element of the 165th Airlift Wing

Eaddy began his military career when he graduated from the Reserve Officers Training Corps in 1985. After seven years of service in the United States Air Force as a Civil Engineer he joined the Georgia Air National Guard and the 165th Airlift Wing. He has served in ever increasing positions of service including serving as a Biomedical Sciences Officer and Environmental Manager.

At the 165th Civil Engineering Squadron, Lt. Col. Salvador Sanchez-Troche is the new commander.

A native of Humacao and Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, Sanchez-Troche's military career began in 1985 when he joined the Texas Air National Guard. Later that same year he was commissioned as an officer in the 149th Civil Engineering Squadron. Since a transfer in 1988, Sanchez-Troche has served in the 165th Airlift Wing in a number of supervisory roles within the Civil Engineering Squadron.

And, at the Wing's Mission Support Group Lt. Col. Todd Freeseemann has been promoted to the command rank of Colonel and will assume command of the 165th Mission Support Group, an element of the 165th Airlift Wing, Georgia Air National Guard.

Freeseemann assumes command following the retirement of Col. Charles McMillan.

Freeseemann previously served as the Director of Support. His new command includes direct supervision of Civil Engineering, Logistics Readiness, Mission Support, Communications, Services, Contracting, Medical and Aerial Port.

A graduate of West Point, Freeseemann began his military service as an Engineering Officer. After nine years of service in the Army, he joined the Georgia Air National Guard and the 165th Airlift Wing serving in the Civil Engineering Squadron.



**Lt. Col. Todd Freeseemann**



**Lt. Col. Salvador Sanchez-Troche**



**Lt. Col. D. Lawrence Eaddy**

## 'Team Georgia' helps in tornado clean up

**Fort Riley, Kan.** -- Nine members of "Team Georgia," a group of Ga. Guardsmen training to go to Afghanistan, were part of the clean up efforts when a tornado ripped through the Fort Riley area June 11.

The Georgians were on a four-day pass for the Army's Birthday when the storm hit the and volunteered to help local residents near the post in northeast Kansas. The Guardsmen are training for their mission as embedded trainers in Afghanistan.

Major Michael Curry, Maj. Israel Ham, Cpt. Shane Strickland, 1st Lt. Mason Sawyer, Master Sgt. Martin "Buck" Barrett, Sgt. 1st Class Alvin Davis, Sgt. William Irwin, Sgt. Billy Massingale, and Cpl. Christopher Kinsey helped with the clean-up in a local neighborhood, helping move the residents' personal belongings to storage.



**Corporal Christopher Kinsey (Left) and Sgt Billy Massingale (Right) help move resident's personal belongings to storage.**



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# Georgia Association celebrates 60 years

**Jekyll Island, Ga.** – Georgia’s National Guard Association of Georgia (NGAGA) convened at Jekyll Island June 5-8 for its 60th annual conference to discuss business and review the year’s achievements. Many influential speakers were present to address the collection of Guardsmen.

Saturday June 7, in his first convention as The Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. William T. Nesbitt spoke about the benefits of moving the joint headquarters to Naval Air Station Atlanta (NAS), the remarkable success of the past year’s recruiting, expanding the HERO Bill, and other programs in which NGAGA is involved.

Jack Kingston, U.S. Representative from Georgia’s 1st District hit on a wide variety of topics, ranging from the war in Iraq, to Congressional spending. He emphasized the importance of the military’s efforts in Iraq saying, “We’ve just had the third straight week of the lowest level of security issues in Iraq (since the beginning of the war in 2003). Iraq’s electricity access is at an all-time high (in the Nation’s history). There are 12 million people with cell phone access and over 260 thousand people with net access, up from 5,000 previously.”

The proceedings of the annual conference kicked off Thursday, June 5, with a joint commander’s conference. Friday morning started with a literal bang via the shotgun start of the 21st Annual Ronnie Griffin Memorial Golf Tournament held at Jekyll Island’s newest and longest course, Pine Lakes. The team of John Smiley, James Dennis, Marvin Thomas, and Kelly Spivey took home the tournament trophy with a score of 56.

The rest of the day was filled with other recreational ac-



*Photo by Seth Stuck*  
**Maj. Gen. Nesbitt (right), Georgia’s Adjutant General, greets convention goers during formal banquet.**

tivities and fun events for the whole family, including a NA-SCAR display and antique car show, a silent auction, and children’s programs.

Prince Pele’ and the Polynesian Review offered the early evening amusement with music, dancing, singing and a Samoan sword fire dancer. The Grapevine continued the nighttime festivities with musical delights in the Pit Stop Hospitality Room.

After the business meeting on Saturday, the attendees gathered at a formal banquet, which featured a USO-style show by The Island Players, and the hand off of the NGAGA presidency to Lt. Col. Murray Hansen from Col. Stephen Joyce, and the presentation of several other awards and recognitions. The many events of this conference all aimed at one purpose, best encapsulated by the event’s theme: “Embracing the Past – Racing to the Future!”

## 170th Military Police Battalion changes command

**By Seth Stuck**  
**Georgia Department of Defense**  
**Public Affairs Office**

Decatur - Georgia Army National Guard Lt. Col. Lutalo Olutosin has taken the reigns of command from Lt. Col. Joseph P. Hoffman as the commander of the 170th Military Police Battalion. The change of command ceremony took place at the 170th headquarters in Decatur on Saturday, June 14.

Hoffman will move on to serve as the Deputy Commander for the 78th Troop Command.

Olutosin is moving up from his position as Hoffman’s XO.

Brigadier Gen. Maria L. Britt, Com-

manding General Georgia Army National Guard, praised both Hoffman and Olutosin. “You (the 170th) have had good leadership under Lt. Col. Hoffman, and you’ll continue to get good leadership from Lt. Col. Olutosin.”

Olutosin expressed his excitement about leading the 170th. “This is a special battalion because we aren’t just Guardsmen, we are also MPs. I’m proud to be a part of such an outstanding unit.”

The new commander also vowed to help the citizen soldiers and their families. “I pledge to support the programs that support your families.”

See MP, page 5



**Lieutenant Col. Joe Hoffman (left) turns command of the 170th MP Battalion to Lt. Col. Lutalo Olutosin.**

# More than 200 cadets graduate from YCA in Macon

**Macon** - Two hundred and nine cadets from the Fort Stewart-based Youth Challenge Academy took a giant step toward future achievement as they graduated from YCA Class 2008-02 during graduation ceremonies on Saturday, June 21 at the Macon City Auditorium.

Families and friends crowded the auditorium to witness cadets from more than 35 Georgia counties individually accept their GEDs. Eight graduating cadets were among the top ten percent in the nation to score over 3000 on the GED tests administered nationally.

Brigadier Gen. Larry Dudney, Commander, 78th Troop Command, was the commencement speaker and applauded the graduates on their decisions to move forward, often after difficult beginnings and to stick with the challenges and opportunities that the YCA program offered them. Dudney also welcomed a dozen YCA graduates who have decided to join the military.

More than 7,700 cadets have graduated from Georgia's YCA since the program began in 1993. Today two YCA campuses operate in Georgia, the original campus at Fort Stewart and the second campus at Fort Gordon near Augusta.



*Photo by Lt. Col. Ken Baldowski*

**Eight graduating cadets from Bryan County gathered together moments before the YCA graduation on Saturday in Macon. More than 200 cadets received their GEDs before more hundreds of proud parents and friends.**

## Ga CSMs graduate from SMA Academy



**Seven of Georgia's Senior noncommissioned officers graduated from the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy in Fort Bliss, Texas, June 20, 2008. The Soldiers took two years of correspondence courses followed by a two-week residence phase. From left to right, Command Sgt. Majors Charles Christenbury, 348th Battlefield Surveillance Battalion, Calvin Wilcox, 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry, Barry Smallwood, 148th BSB, Joe Shubert, 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team rear detachment, Michael Hurndon, 48th IBCT, Timothy Jones, 214th Field Artillery, Melvin Dover, 118th Field Artillery, and Allen Jackson, 201st Regional Support Group.**

## AFA award: Corbett earns honor

**Robins Air Force Base, Ga.** --Staff Sgt. Richard Corbett, 330th Combat Training Squadron, 116th Air Control Wing won the Air Force Sergeants Association's Division 4, First Term Airman of the Year Award for 2008.

Corbett is an instructor airborne operations technician on the Joint STARS aircraft and also works as the commander's enlisted executive.

The award recognizes and honors young airmen, and it also encourages them to continue with their desire to be exceptional representatives of the Air Force and their country.

The AFSA Division 4 represents the chapters in Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama.

Corbett has been nominated to compete against winners from the other 15 divisions around the Air Force this August.



## MP's new commander

MP, from page 3

Regarding his own promotion, Hoffman said, "I am not here solely because of my own actions. From the TAG down, all the soldiers that have worked with me, who I have worked for, and who have assisted me with making this promotion and becoming the Command's Deputy Commander have helped me."

Before exiting as the 170th Commander, Hoffman received the Army's Meritorious Service Medal for his time as the battalion's commander.

He also received a Spartan war helmet in honor of the battalion's nickname (Spartans). His wife, Mandy Hoffman, also received the Georgia Meritorious Service Medal for her many years of support as a military spouse.

Hoffman concluded, "I want to wish Lt. Col. Olutosin the best, and I know he will continue to lead this storied Spartan Battalion into the future. Lou was my XO during Desert Storm and I know the soldiers are getting a very capable, qualified officer."

## This Month in History

**July 1963** – Air Guardsmen of the 116<sup>th</sup> Air Transport Wing headquarters, the 116th Air Transportation Group and subordinate squadrons held their first summer training period under their new commander, Brig. Gen. Ralph G. Kuhn. Training took place at Dobbins AFB, Marietta. Among the skills that airmen honed were aeromedical practices, communications, flight simulator and administrative procedures. Two flights to Europe and one to Puerto Rico were made during the two week period, hauling cargo for the armed forces overseas.

**July 1964** – The Saint Simons Island based 224<sup>th</sup> Radio Relay Squadron, Georgia Air National Guard, proved it could that it could establish and maintain a wide ranging radio network during annual training. Operating from seven remote mountain-top relay stations and four base terminals, the unit established a 247-mile communications net from Indiantown Gap, Pa., north to Griffis AFB, NY and south to Olmstead, AFB, Pa., tying in with other Air Force and ANG units during annual training. To establish the network the unit convoyed its equipment more than 800 miles from Saint Simons to the various mountain top locations.

**July 1966** – The Georgia Military Instituted commissioned 43 second lieutenants during a ceremony in Macon. The group was sworn in by Brig. Gen. Charlie F. Camp, Assistant Adjutant General of Georgia for Army.

**July 1967** – the 48th Armored Division amassed a record 68 superior and 27 Excellent rating by regular Army and reserve component evaluators during its summer training. The 1967 maneuvers were expected to be the final massed training as a division. Highlighting the first week's activities was a two-day visit of the State's new commander-in-chief, Gov. Lester G. Maddox. In an address to the division, Maddox said: You can be confident that every effort is being made ... to obtain the force structure in Georgia that will provide our State with the most efficient and powerful forces that we can maintain in support of our Nation's military plans."

## Guardisman, World War II vet John W. Meeler dies

The Georgia National Guard lost another of its World War II veterans with the death on Memorial Day of John W. (Bill) Meeler, Sr. 89, lately of Cedartown, Ga. Joining the Guard in 1936, he was called to active duty in 1940 with his unit, the 179th Field Artillery Battalion. Just prior to the "call up," Bill married his wife of 68 years, Marjorie Elizabeth Plaster.

During the coming five years he rose to the rank of First Sergeant, as the 179th trained at Camp Blanding, FL, Camp Shelby, MS, Fort Sill, OK, and Camp Gruber, OK. He landed on Normandy's Utah Beach in the



*John W. Meeler inspects some records of his beloved 179th Field Artillery Battalion during an appearance at a 2003 Historical Society of the Georgia National Guard conference.*

summer of 1944, and his battalion became part of General George S. Patton's Third Army, fighting its way across France, in a matter of weeks. Meeler earned the Bronze Star for his meritorious actions at the Delme Ridge, as Patton's Army took control of the Lorraine region.

During the Battle of the Bulge, Meeler's 179th was instrumental in relieving the besieged 101st Airborne at Bastogne, Belgium. He ended his active service at the war's end in 1945, as the Third Army crossed into Czechoslovakia. Following the war, Mr. Meeler worked for and retired from Bell Telephone in Atlanta.

He was a frequent contributor and member of the Historical Society of the Georgia National Guard and a featured speaker at several of that organization's conferences.

He is survived by William Meeler is survived by his wife, Marjorie Elizabeth Plaster, lately of Cedartown, Ga., his daughter, Penelope Meeler Gaither and her husband Thomas A. Gaither of Cedartown, Ga.; his son, Dr. Joseph Lee Meeler and his wife Janet Cox Meeler of Smyrna, Ga.; and his youngest son, John William Meeler, Jr. and his wife Carol Portwood Meeler of Marietta, Ga., as well as four grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

# AFOUA Presented to 224th during Award ceremony

Georgia's 224th Joint Communications Support was presented its fifth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award on Saturday, June 21st at award ceremonies held at the Brunswick-based unit.

The award, presented by Col. John B. Morrison Jr., Commander of the Joint Communications Support Element, MacDill Air Force Base, Fla., was made before unit members, families and friends of the unit.

The Air Force Outstanding Unit Award is awarded by the Secretary of the Air Force to numbered units which have distinguished themselves by exceptionally meritorious service or outstanding achievement above and apart from similar units.

The 224th was recognized for its exceptionally meritorious service in the accomplishment of a significant mission against an armed enemy involving conflict with or exposure to hostile actions by an opposing foreign force.

The citation recognized the 224th Joint Communications Support Squadron, Joint Communications Support Element, United States Joint Forces Command which distinguished itself by exceptionally meritorious service from January 2006 to December 2007. It was during this period that the 224th JCSS successfully deployed thirty-four percent of its Citizen-Airmen to Iraq and Afghanistan in support of joint special operations forces in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom.

While deployed, the squadron is credited with the delivery of a full spectrum of communication services, often



**Colonel John B. Morrison, Jr (right, in red beret) presents 224th commander, Lt. Col. John Austin (left saluting) with the unit's fifth Air Force Outstanding Unit Award.**

under fire, at areas like Camp Al-Saliyah, Qatar, Balad Air Base, Camp Habbaniya and Camp Taji, Iraq and Forward Operating Base Solerno, Afghanistan. The citation further acknowledged the 224th's technical expertise as the Department of Defense's 'cutting edge leader' in the deployment of the latest tactical communications technology.

The fifth AFOUA adds to the squadron's recent award of the Joint Meritorious Unit Award presented twice in the past five years for its exceptional service in the Global War on Terrorism.

## 48th BSTB Warrior Transformation Recognized during Change of Command

**Spc. Tracy J. Smith**  
48th IBCT, PAO

**STATESBORO, Ga.** - The change of command ceremony for 48th Brigade Special Troops Battalion found relinquishing commander, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond D. Bossert, conflicted with emotions; pride and obvious sadness as he recalled where these Soldiers, his Soldiers, had been and where they had arrived as part of the Warrior's transformative experience.

Bossert spoke of change, under the standard of the former 648th Engineer Battalion, recognizing the symbolism in acquiring a new battle standard under Lt. Colonel Thomas J. Bright, the new commander for the Statesboro, Ga. based Warriors.

"We have built a solid foundation," Bossert told the assemblage of troops and special guests. "You didn't sweat the small stuff, or the big stuff. As your



*Photo by Spc. Tracy Smith*  
**Leutenant Col. Thomas Bright accepts colors from Col. Durham, 48th IBCT Commander.**

commander I was privileged to resource you, train with you and sync you; giving you what you need to be the tip of the spear as you continue to prepare for your next mission in Afghanistan."

Traditionally departures are met with a presentation of gifts to the outgoing commander, but Bossert, who will be moving forward in his career supporting the mission of our total force as

an Operations Officer and training the Pakistani Army, presented a symbolic gift to the battalion.

The framed, papyrus rendering of Egyptian King Ramses, artistically analogized the three phases of the Warrior, depicting training/preparation, conflict engagement and success as the Warrior returns from battle. It was a complete depiction of the combat veterans as adaptive Warriors.

Bright, a 25 year Army careerist accepted the gift on behalf of his Soldiers and spoke directly to them of his intent to carry the 48th BSTB Warriors to the next phase of transformation, transition and success.

"You have placed your trust and confidence in me to continue to the support you have received," Bright said. "I am humbled by the potential that stands before me today."

# News from the 48th IBCT

## Hurndon: 'Support will be an action verb'

Spc. Tracy J. Smith  
48th IBCT, PAO

**DOBBINS AIR RESERVE BASE, Marietta, Ga.** - Senior NCOs will be able to teach junior NCOs how to deal with problems while deployed thanks to empowerment and support skills learned during a first-of-its-kind 48th IBCT (L) Volunteer Brigade Senior Sergeants Conference June 27-28.

The invitation only event for 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Sergeants Major, 1st Sergeants and enlisted key leaders will enable them to educate the Corporals, Sergeants and Staff Sergeants who, once in Afghanistan, will be direct representatives of the brigade with the local population.

"Our Soldiers deserve the best leadership we can provide," roared 48th IBCT (L) Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Hurndon. "We are putting four big rocks in their ruck with the largest being an unwavering support of the Global War on Terror. We, collectively, are the example and need to train with tenacity, vigor and as if your life depends on it. Our Soldier's life does!"

"This is a decentralized fight," Tom Wilborn, guest speaker, retired 1st Sergeant and U. S. Army Infantry Hall of Famer, reminded the group. Wilborn now actively influences the fight as an advisor with the Asymmetric Warfare Group based in Washington, DC. He offered a mission brief and sound advice to the senior staff NCO saying, "Everything we do is to progress the Soldier in the field and we need to give these young NCOs what is necessary to be successful."

As Iraqi Freedom combat veterans junior NCOs, have combat experience, but this time their role will be as diplomatic leaders and will involve more face versus trigger-time with the Afghani locals. They will have to make quick decisions as they alongside tribal elders conduct shuras (council meetings). Their tasks are also to motivate, encourage and advise as trainer/mentors to their Afghan National Security Force partners.

Trust, however, is not a trait predominate within the culture of the Pashtu people, who live by an unspoken Code of Honor that has dictates their way of life. This Pashtunwali code of ethics is driven by nang (honor) and tor (shame) and the insurgency, said Wilborn, has learned to strong-arm the kindness of the people by using this code to their advan-



*Photo by Spc. Tracy Smith*  
**A living Civil War re-enactor demonstrates the proper firing procedure, circa 1864, to senior NCOs of 118th Field Artillery at Kennesaw National Battlefield. The Soldiers, completing a 6-mile trek of the mountain park, quizzed their fellow Order of St. Barbara artillerymen (patron saint of heavy gunners) on proper firing procedures and the weapon itself.**

tage.

The code mandates a Muslim must give shelter and protection to another Muslim and by claiming Pashtunwali. According to Wilborn, this forcible refuge abuses the spiritual intent of the culture and way of life.

Georgia State Command Sergeant Major Neil Russell took advantage of the gathering of the single largest body of enlisted leadership to remind leaders to stay attuned to Soldier's issues as the brigade prepares to take on a very different

battle rhythm.

"Listen to the Soldier, tell them the truth, and talk to them often," Russell encouraged. "Do everything you can to educate your Soldiers, not just during the train-up, but during the deployment by instilling trust and confidence that you will do what is required to make them successful; that you have their best interest at heart."

Day two's mid-morning finale brought the conferees to the site of a historic battle. At the base of Kennesaw Mountain Battlefield they listened as Andrew Cole, a Civil War historian and re-enactor explained that the weekend was a commemoration of 144 years since the deadliest day of fighting for the two-week Atlanta campaign in 1864.

"We don't re-enact the fighting, we believe it dishonors what they fought for," Cole, a history teacher with the Cobb County school system explained.

"We just want to show how they managed to live day-to-day." With a brisk run up the 650 feet of the initial trail the teams donned 35 pound-plus rucks and hiked 4.5 miles of the historic mountain battlefield returning to the base of the Georgia Confederate Soldiers Memorial for final reflection.

With heads bowed it hit home the connection the 48th volunteer Soldier shared with their Citizen-Soldier counterparts of 1864.

The National Guard, the Citizen-Soldier, is not just a reserve component homeland force in readiness, but an integral operational force in the global war on terror.

# KEEPING IT REAL:

## 148th prepares for OEF with live scenarios

Spc. Tracy J. Smith  
48th IBCT, PAO

The young man in the *keffiyah* or *shemagh*, a traditional head-dress of Middle Eastern origin, cautiously moved through the sea of uniforms. He was looking for someone whom he could easily target.

His eyes immediately trained on Company A, 148th BSB, Staff Sgt. Melvina Barnes.

“*Ish la aklabah (I am Your Friend)*,” Spc. Benjamin Browning, a COMSEC radio operator said in Pashtu, the language of the indigenous Afghanis, while waving his hands frantically.

Browning is a valued member of the Immediate Search Squad, ISS, Desert Hedgehogs training team.

A college history major, he is a natural in the role of a local Afghani attempting to pass through a hasty check point. His role today is to disrupt the training environment and finds his target, Barnes, a 48th IBCT Iraq veteran,

non-plus.

Respectfully showing the back of her hand Barnes motions, her fingers pointed downward, and, instructs him in a language he would understand, to “Go away.”

“*Em-shee*,” Barnes says firmly, a slight scowl on her face. The hardened platoon sergeant has five new Soldiers and wants to ensure they realize that “this is real. If he wants to play I’ll play too. I am bringing all my Soldiers home.”

Barnes and the Soldiers of 148th Brigade Support Battalion are in an intense two day training scenario to not only prepare for the Infantry brigade’s pending Afghanistan mission but to also ensure Warrior Training tasks are covered prior to the 2009 troop assemblage for Operation Phoenix.

148th BSB Command Sergeant Ma-

yor Barry Smallwood cited the initiative of the Soldiers to prove they are ready for deployment as the springboard for the elaborate training.

“As we continue to meet the (brigade) commander’s intent, which is to show our Soldiers are trained and

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**“You have to remember the more you practice, the better you get at it. Its like driving home.”**

**Sergeant April N. Brock  
Supply technician  
148th Brigade Support Battalion**

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ready at any given time, we look at any opportunity to capitalize on resources available to us,” Smallwood said marveling at the success of the training. “We married-up with our aviation partners and training assets at Fort Stewart and were able to go above and beyond what was expected.”

Expectations were initially to break out the trauma moulage kit, give some chaos based scenarios and pop off the simulated-frags to wake everyone up. Pepper it with land navigation using the new hand-held Precision Lightweight GPS Receiver (PLGR pronounced Plugger), and show them some dummy IEDs for familiarization and you have a recipe for a typical training weekend.

Then battalion training command upped the ante and brought in the purveyor of chaos Sergeant Michael ‘Madman’ Madsen. All Hades broke loose as an open field adjacent to the armory became a all things one would anticipate in a war zone.

“I practice chaos,” Madsen, a training NCO for HHC, 148th BSB said. He also has experience as a tactical interrogator.

Continued on next page



Photo by Spc. Tracy Smith

**Demonstrating check-point procedures, Spc. Jeff Shull ‘frisks’ an Afghani National played by Spc. Ben Browning as Spc. Rob Powell maintains a watchful eye at a hasty check-point. As trainers assigned to the 48th BSB Mobile ISS team the Soldiers ensure their peers are prepared for the 48th IBCT’s 2009 OEF mission travelling to each battalion for extended mobilization training opportunities. “I am responsible for my fellow Soldiers,” Shull said. “(Our team) learns and pass that knowledge forward so each Soldier is ready for what the mission calls for.**

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“My job is to make sure they have all the tools and solid training they can handle then I go into overload mode.”

Madsen also brings another unique trait to the training table; as Citizen-Soldiers do.

A former active duty Warrant Officer pilot he has strong aviation ties and with the help of his ‘friends’ was able to bring in big blades to add to the ambience.

As the medical choppers are directed to a field expedient landing zone, a big boom erupts from a tree line. Soldiers acting as potential casualties literally flip in the air and wait for their peers to render aid.

One trainer is simply waiting for a reaction.

“This is what they call a directional blast,” Sergeant Michael A. Quinones states. Quinones is an Improvised Explosive Device Detect Level 1 training NCO from Rochester, NY. He now calls Georgia home and the Guard his

‘familia.’

“We want to reiterate situational awareness. You don’t want them to get tunnel vision focusing on one thing. You’ve got to take your visual scan and if it’s suspicious react appropriately. Watch this....”

Training his sights on three Soldiers who are taking baby steps in order not to be surprised, his lips curl in anticipation of their reaction.

Leading the three is Sergeant April N. Brock. She tells the young PFCs of her ‘squad’ to keep close along a narrow path. The scenario is to take care of a Soldier who has lost her left arm and leg. When the next blast erupts Brock, who was four months out from becoming a new mom, is surpris-

ingly calm and focused. Uttering an expletive she deftly places the soldier over her shoulders and tells the squad to “Follow me!”

Fireman-carrying the ‘injured’ soldier more than 300 yards to a field hospital tent, the supply technician realizes what she has just accomplished and reflects on her OIF combat experience.

“You have to remember the more you practice, the better you get at it. Its like driving home,” Brock muses. “You don’t remember the name of the streets or how you got there sometimes, it just becomes a part of you.”

Smallwood wants this to be more than an



*Photo by Spc. Tracy Smith*  
**Private Yeshua G. Tillis, a combat medic with Company C, 148th BSB renders aid to Spc. Adam Livingston, a Newnan, Ga. electrician and mechanic for 148th BSB, Company B under the watchful eye of her medical section Sergeant.**



*Photo by Spc. Tracy Smith*  
**Sergeant April Brock, a supply technician for 48th IBCT, HHC, 148th BSB fireman carries a fellow Soldier who ‘lost’ her left extremities in a simulated IED blast during the battalion’s live familiarization training. Spc. Katherine R. Bartlett, a battalion administrative technician follows close behind to manage the ‘casualties’ bleeding.**

opportunity to check off seven additional Warrior Tasks. He wants them to embrace the training standards.

Adjusting to circumstance is important and those experienced Junior Non-Commissioned Officers are who will lead the training and the very different battlefield fight in Afghanistan.

“You cannot hold a soldier to your standard, you hold them to the standards set by the Army” Smallwood punctuates. “That’s how you gain respect and their attention.”

Barnes sides with her Soldiers. She is satisfied with the stress and realism reflected in their faces and that they have gotten a taste of the trainings intent.

“It’s not about a sign-in roster, it’s taking your training seriously and applying it. Knowing what to do when it is time to do it. This is for real!”

(NOTE: As a full immersion training mission, trainers/Soldiers spoke certain phrases in Arabic. For this article the phrases are presented in basic phonetic-aural translation in italicized font.)

# New leader to take National Guard unit into Afghanistan

By Melissa Weinman  
Gainesville Times

**FLOWERY BRANCH, Ga.** - A local National Guard battalion performed a time-honored tradition with a change of command ceremony Sunday at the Falcons complex in Flowery Branch.

The 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment ushered in Maj. Matt Smith, who will replace Lt. Col. Andy Hall as the new commander of the battalion, headquartered in Winder.

"It brings changes in focus and leadership style," Smith said. "(Hall) is handing off a great unit at the top of its game. The trick is to keep it going."

Hall, the outgoing commander, was selected for officer training at the War College in Pennsylvania. "I'm sad," he said. "I want to be here, but I'll take that honor."

Hall said being a commander was the "best job in the Army" and hopes to have the opportunity to do it again.

The unit of about 900, which went to Iraq in 2006, is set to be deployed to Afghanistan in 2009.

"There's some degree of apprehension, some degree of excitement, even some dread," Smith said about the mobilization.

Smith said having the ceremony on Father's Day was "even more hum-

bling. Most of these guys are probably fathers. It's a big responsibility. There's a family behind all these soldiers," he said.

Capt. Jeffrey Moran, who was chosen to be the commander of Charlie Company in Gainesville, said he was glad to have his father and son in the audience for what he called the "highlight of my career."

"It's a huge honor and responsibility," he said. "I am entrusted with (soldiers') lives and safety."

Col. Lee Durham said the unit's mission in Afghanistan will be training the Afghan National Army and National Police.

"Their mission is vitally important to get the U.S. (troops) out," Durham said.

Moran said the people of Hall County have been very supportive of the National Guard.

"Everywhere you go, you can sense they support you. Everyone wants to help," he said.

Hall said a good way

for people interested in helping the families of soldiers overseas is to go to patriotscall.com

The Web site was designed to connect people who are willing to provide services with the families of deployed soldiers.

"It's a good way for people to serve," he said. "It gives them a way to support our families."



Photo by Spc. Tracy Smith  
**Major Matthew Smith address the Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment (1st Foot) and the guests in attendance at the Atlanta Falcon's Training Camp in Flowery Branch, Ga near the Gainesville Armory. Smith, formerly 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team's Administrative Operations officer, takes command of the 900+ Soldiers from Lt. Colonel Andy Hall, who relinquishes command after his acceptance to the Army War College.**

# 116th Medical Group Scores 'Excellent' in recent Inspection

The Robins-based 116th Medical Group (MDG) recently scored an overall "excellent" on the Air Force Health Service Inspection.

Conducted once every five years, the Air Force Health Service Inspection found that the sixty-eight members of the Medical Group consistently perform at a level above many Air Force medical units while maintaining an extremely high operational tempo.

Three programs of the 116th MDG were specifically acknowledged by evaluators as among the best they had inspected. Inspectors noted that the Force Health /Flight Medicine program for the Wing managed by Staff Sgt. Kristin Gault and Staff Sgt. Brandi Hill-Trahan, went "above and beyond in caring for Airmen".

The Homeland Defense Equipment Readiness program managed by Staff Sgt. Michelle Sheppard was called the 'best program ever seen.'

See 116TH, page 13



**A 116th Medical team administers first aid to a severely wounded soldier during the recent Vigilant Guard exercise. The Robins-based medical group recently completed an Air Force Health Services Inspection scoring an overall excellent.**

# Kennesaw Soldier saves drowning Teens

**SOLDIER**, from front page

“From what we gathered no one else who saw what was happening did anything,” Smith said in a telephone interview about the July 8 incident. “The bay had been extremely rough and the riptides bad...we’ve had the red flags flying all day.

“I know two young men and some parents who are really grateful today for the quick thinking and selfless act of this Soldier,” he added.

Mercado, modest about his actions, said he didn’t see himself as a hero, saying instead that he only followed his values and considered it his duty as a Soldier to take the risk.

“It made me feel pretty bad when I found out no one on the beach even attempted to help or go find a lifeguard,” he said in a late-night telephone interview. “I see it as my job to help, where and whenever I can. Otherwise, the values they teach us as Soldiers mean nothing.”

Mercado, who returned home to Athens the evening of the incident, said it was about mid-afternoon, the last day of a long visit with a cousin in Hous-

ton when he and Dean Digamon found themselves helping the two youngsters –ages 10 and 11– fight for their lives.

He, Digamon, and a friend had gone to the beach for one last day of surfing. It was only his third time on a board, Mercado said. They had been out in the water since 11 a.m. and the water, as Smith stated, had been rough the entire time.

The trio wasn’t far from a local pier when Mercado said he lost sight of the friend. He paddled back out and found the man and his surfboard being pushed toward the pier’s pylons by the tide.

“Seconds after I’d made sure this guy was okay and moving away from the pier, I heard voices behind me calling for help,” he recalled. “When I turned to see who it was, I saw two boys who’d been body surfing most of the day struggling to stay afloat and moving ever closer to the pylons.”

Mercado said he paddled to the boys as quickly as possible, the tide working against him. When he reached the pair, he found them weak and barely able to move. They had been out quite a way from the beach, and had been fighting

the tide so hard and for so long, that they’d no longer had the strength to keep the tide from rushing them headlong into the pier and certain danger.

Grabbing the closest boy, Mercado said he told them they’d be okay, and that he’d get them back to shore. After having them latch onto to his board, he turned around and headed away from the pylons and in the direction of the beach. The only problem, he said, was that the tide was determined to drive them back.

“Riptides kept pushing us toward the underside of the pier,” Mercado said. In the back of my mind, I was real concerned about whether we’d make it to shore before getting slammed into the pier.”

Reflecting on the ordeal, Mercado said his Army training took over and then, after a moment added, with a laugh, “the whole time I was hoping I didn’t miss my flight cause I’m going to Annual Training at Fort McCoy Wisconsin.”

Undoubtedly there are several Texas boys who today are thankful for that Soldier training.

## Georgia Soldier only second to earn top ranger honors

Georgia National Guard  
Public Affairs Office

**FORT BENNING, COLUMBUS, Ga.** – One didn’t have to stand close to see the humble, but proud smile on the face of Georgia Army National Guard Sgt. Iaian Duncan recently as he accepted his diploma for graduating Army Ranger School. He’s now attending airborne training here.

And the smile wasn’t just because he graduated, which, for some, would be reason enough. Duncan, a member of Company H, Georgia’s long range surveillance company is only the second Georgia Army Guardsman to be selected the school’s Distinguished Honor Graduate. The first achieve honor grad status was Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Hurndon, now the senior noncommissioned officer for Macon’s 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, back in 1995 while serving with the LRS.

“There’s no greater feeling than this for me,” Duncan said.



**Sergeant Iaian Duncan (center) poses for photos after graduating Army Ranger School with Command Sgt. Maj. Lance Rygmyr (left), command sergeant major for Augusta’s 560th Battlefield Surveillance Battalion, and Command Sgt. Maj. Neal Russell, state command sergeant major for Georgia. Like all students who attend ranger training, Duncan isn’t wearing his rank.**

See **RANGER**, page 13

# Georgia Army National Guard earns first place In Army National Guard Communities of Excellence program

WASHINGTON D.C. - The Georgia Army National Guard has been named the first place award recipient in the Gold Division of the 2008 Army Communities of Excellence program.

Lieutenant General Clyde Vaughn, the National Guard Bureau's director of the Army National Guard, announced the award following an intense assessment based on the prestigious Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria. It is the Army National Guard's highest recognition for organizational performance excellence.

"The Georgia Army National Guard is a top notch role model for the military and other industries in our country," said Gen. Vaughn. "I applaud them for implementing continuous strategic and tactical improvement into their operations and setting the standard for all other state National Guard organizations to achieve."

The Georgia Army National Guard received the award during the Army Communities of Excellence Conference and Awards Banquet held at the Army National Guard Readiness Center in Alexandria, Va.

"This is a tremendous accomplishment for our organization and is further validation of our members' hard work and dedication to continuous improvement and exceeding customer expectations," said Brig. Gen. Maria Britt, commander of the Georgia Army National Guard. "Our Guard members recognize that success depends on innovation in everything we do and the relentless pursuit of excellence."

The Army Communities of Excellence process contributes significantly to Army operations and has improved the quality of life for soldiers, Army civilians, and their families within the state of Georgia.

"The Army Communities of Excellence recognition is an earned award," said Maj. Larry Deaton, Georgia Army National Guard's director of Strategic Management. "Applying for the award requires a rigorous self- and third-party assessment of your business against the Baldrige Business



*Lieutenant Gen. Clyde Vaughn, the National Guard Bureau's director of the Army National Guard, attaches a flag streamer awarding the Georgia Army National Guard first place in the Gold Division of the Army Communities of Excellence program. Representing Georgia are Maj. Larry Deaton, Georgia Army National Guard's director of Strategic Management (center); Brig. Gen. Maria Britt, commander of the Georgia Army National Guard; and Maj. Gen. Terry Nesbitt, Georgia's Adjutant General (far right).*

Management Criteria."

Using the Baldrige model serves as a base for improvement in the areas of customer service and satisfaction. All applicants receive a written feedback report detailing their respective strengths and improvement opportunities.

The program emphasizes a comprehensive and integrated change management framework, allowing an organization to assess its approach, organization, and the results of its efforts to improve our services to meet and exceed the requirements of our customers, the citizen of Georgia. All applicants receive a written feedback report detailing their respective strengths and improvement opportunities.

## Soldiers receive training from famed martial arts instructor

ATLANTA – Soldiers of Georgia's Counterdrug Task Force, Macon's 48th Infantry Brigade Combat Team and Marietta's 78th Aviation Troop Command participated recently in four days of extensive and intensive training with world renowned Israeli martial arts instructor and Black Belt Magazine Hall of Fame member Mike Lee Kanarek.

Participants were challenged with a rigorous training regimen that involved Haganah Combatives, combat fitness,

ground survival and Israeli tactical knife fighting techniques.

The group also received instruction in empty hand defenses against firearms and knives, as well as Stick Attacks and Defenses. As taught by Kanarek, a Haganah chief instructor and former Israeli special forces veteran, the training is designed for the combat soldier to learn better deal with armed and unarmed attackers.

Participants received certification as

Military Instructor Associates (MIA) in the International Haganah Federation. This certification authorizes them to teach Haganah Military Combatives and techniques to other military and law enforcement personnel.

"This was one of the most intense and focused training periods these Soldiers have experienced," said Lt. Col. Brock Gaston, coordinator for the drug task force.

See **COMBATIVES**, page 13

## Combatives

COMBATIVES, from page 12

He and Sgt. 1st Class Roger Green with Decatur's 78th Troop Command, are the two senior military instructors certified by Kanarek in the first military certification of this kind back in 2004. Since then, Gaston has received recognition as the 2005 and 2007 Haganah Military Instructor of the Year.

His greatest reward as an instructor, he said, is knowing that the soldiers he trains can go outside the wire, confident in their ability to dominate and "stop an attacker in his tracks."

"Most of the Soldiers who took this training, including this recent group, have lived through combat and heard shots fired in anger against them," Gaston went on. "They could not, however, quite compare this training to anything they have ever experienced in their military careers.

It is truly one of the most physically and mentally demanding training challenges I have endured in 26 years of military service, he added.

First Lt. Shilo Crane, who commands Company B 1/121 Infantry in Covington, participated in this recent training session with Kanarek and is one of those combat veterans Gaston talked about. Having served two tours in Iraq, Crane said, the effectiveness of Haganah Combatives is obvious to anyone who takes the training.

"The techniques are geared toward the Soldier fighting on the battlefield wearing body, helmet and boots," he explained. "There are no fancy kicks or moves, just violent and compact motions designed to incapacitate an assailant in the shortest amount of time possible."

## Ga Soldier earns Ranger Honor

RANGER, from page 11

"I can't begin to explain how proud and honored I am for having achieved this; especially in light of the fact that I follow in the footsteps of one of the greatest Soldiers I know."

After receiving a certificate of achievement and a plaque-mounted Fairbairn-Sykes dagger, Duncan was honored with a brick at the Ranger Wall of Fame for being selected the distinguished honor grad. He also received challenge coins from Command Sgt. Maj. Lance Rygmyr, command sergeant major for Augusta's 560th Battlefield Surveillance Battalion and Command Sgt. Maj. Neil Russell, state command sergeant major for Georgia.

Duncan, who lives in Douglasville and works as a service technician for Casteel Heating and Cooling, isn't the only one who's pleased with his achievement.

Captain William Parker, Company H commander, said the sergeant made it known for quite a while that he wanted Ranger School, and that he was determined to make it the best experience he's ever had.

"I am especially proud to see him receive his Ranger Tab," Parker said. "This has been a goal of his for some time, and for him to be first in his class, well it's nothing short of outstanding."

From the time he began Ranger School in March, Duncan knew that reaching graduation, by no means, would be an easy thing. Training during all three phases – conducted at Benning, Dahlonge and in Florida – is extremely intense, and some of the best the Army offers, he continued.

Students are under constant physical and mental stress, carrying 65 to 95 pounds of combat equipment, moving by foot nearly 200-plus miles, getting no more than four hours of sleep – sometimes none – doing patrols and honing combat skills, and all the time being evaluated on your combat and leadership skills, Duncan explained. And then there is reconnaissance, mountain and airborne training.

"The toughness and intensity of it all, in the end, instills a confidence and pride in yourself that those who've never experienced the school may never know."

It's certainly evident in Sgt. Iaian Duncan, the Georgia Army Guard's latest recipient of the coveted Ranger Tab.

*Editor's Note: Captain William Parker, Company H commander, contributed this story.*

## 116th earns Excellent in inspection

116TH, from page 10

Additionally, the Group's credentials program managed by Maj. Patricia Curtis also set the example from which "other units could learn from," according to inspectors.

"The men and women of the MDG continue to amaze me with all that they can do," said Lt. Col. Alan Peaslee, 116th MDG commander. "During the last 12 months we have completed a Wing Unit Compliance Inspection (UCI), CERF External Evaluation (EX-EVAL) and Certification, participated in a National Disaster exercise and then received an excellent on their toughest inspection, the Health Services Inspec-

tion (HSI); all this while also deploying more 116th Airmen to fight the GWOT then during any previous 12 month period. Truly they are amazing airmen!"

The responsibilities of the 116th Medical Group extend beyond just caring for the more than 1,500 Air National Guard members at Robins AFB and three other units. It is also charged with supporting Air Expeditionary Force Medical deployments. The unit prepares an average of forty-four members from the 116th to deploy in support of Global War on Terror around the world. The 116th Medical Group is an integral part of the Homeland Defense tasking as the lead Medical unit for Georgia.