



CAPITAL GUARDIAN



Published in the interest of the men and women of the District of Columbia National Guard - Spring 2003

The D.C. National Guard *defending America at home and abroad*



Mosul



Baghdad





Commander's Column

As I write these words, President George W. Bush is preparing to declare victory in Operation

Iraqi Freedom. We hope this is the last major campaign in the war on terrorism. But, with that being said, we must be ever mindful that this President is determined to eliminate threats to our nation from weapons of mass destruction, and those nations that harbor terrorist groups. As our units return from the Gulf and we look for a return to normalcy, we must remember our pledge to "support and defend." We must also continue to focus on readiness and training – to be prepared if called upon again.

Since January 1, I have been Acting Commanding General of the DC National Guard. As such, I've had the opportunity to visit most of our mobilized Army National Guard brethren performing mission for our country. Currently, members of the 276th Military Police Company are supporting the Air Force security mission at Bolling AFB – a mission that permitted 113th Wing Security Forces personnel to return to Andrews and to be demobilized. The 273rd MP Company is helping to secure the

Pentagon. The 121st Criminal Investigation Detachment is assigned to the Army Protective Services at Fort Belvoir where they claim the Secretary of Defense as one of their clients. Detachment 1 of the 148th Medical Company (Air Ambulance) has deployed six UH-1 helicopters to Fort Bliss, Texas where they are providing medivac support to Army units in field training exercises. The 104th Maintenance Company is serving at Fort Dix, N.J., preparing equipment for deployment to Southwest Asia. They are working side-by-side with a unit from New York City — the 237th Maintenance Company of the 301st Area Support Group, US Army Reserve. To see our "Capital Guardian" patch next to their Statue of Liberty patch in a shop repairing small arms for units deploying to Iraqi Freedom was a moving experience for me.

Last year, members of the 274th MP Company served at Fort Detrick, Md., and the 275th at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Other members of the 260th MP Command were called upon as part of Task Force Capital Guardian. In 2001, more than 100 guardsmen were deputized by the District of Columbia to work side-by-side with US Capitol Police officers under Title 32.

Let us think our work in Southwest Asia is over, the 547th (Light/Medium) Transportation Company just arrived in theater to participate in the critical logistical mission taking place in Iraq during the second phase of Iraqi Freedom. The 274th MP Company is preparing for their critical mission that may include Enemy Prisoner of War management. There are ongoing discussions with NGB for other units and individual deployments as well. The DC Army National Guard has the 3rd highest percentage of troop strength mobilized since the beginning of the war on terrorism.

As if that wasn't enough, DC Army National Guard members responded to the snowstorm in February supporting the DC Emergency Management Agency and the Metropolitan Police Department. We also provided light-all equipment to the MPD for the standoff downtown where a farmer tied up the city for three days with his tractor in the lake at Constitution Gardens.

On the Air Guard side, the 121st Fighter Squadron has supported the air defense of the Capital since 9-11. There has been an incredible effort at Andrews Air Force Base to build the facilities and communications equipment for this critical mission. The 121st also deployed with other elements of the Wing to Southwest Asia in support of Iraqi

Freedom. The 121st is the only direct combat unit in the DC National Guard and they participated in operations in Western Iraq. They successfully accomplished their mission to deny the enemy opportunities to launch tactical ballistic missiles at coalition forces or into neighboring countries.

By far, the unit with the longest involuntary call-up of the most personnel has been the 113th Security Forces Squadron. Until April 15th when the majority of the unit demobilized, the SF Squadron was fully engaged in security missions at home and abroad. They defended our flight line, Andrews AFB and Bolling AFB. The unit also sent teams to several locations in Southwest Asia where members continue to serve.

The 231st Combat Communications Squadron supported secure data and voice requirements for the US Army Air Defense mission downtown. The Weather Flight continues to deploy individuals around the country. Countless individuals from all units and the staff are serving here in the US and overseas.

In reviewing this awesome list of service, I am proud of each and every Capital Guardian. I thank you and your families for your service and sacrifices. I am humbled to have the opportunity to serve with you and I look forward to greater accomplishments.

This leads to my main point. Over the past three months, I have had the opportunity to participate in departure ceremonies over 700 Capital Guardians mobilized for this war. I shook hands with each individual, thanking them for their service and assuring them that they would represent us well. The eye contact I made with each person gave me an insight into our unique heritage. It was as if these dedicated Americans were communicating to me the reasons for which they serve. From this experience, I have written what I believe is our mission statement as understood by our patriotic members. "We are Capital Guardians – dedicated Americans, supporting and defending the nation and our capital when directed to do so by the President of the United States, in order to assure the survival and success of liberty."

"No group or nation should mistake America's intentions:

We will not rest until terrorist groups of global reach have been found, have been stopped, and have been defeated."

**PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH
NOVEMBER 6, 2001**

Capital Guardian Staff

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Capital Guardians in NJ get Guard, Reserve equipment ready for war



Photo by Capt. Sheldon Smith

Two soldiers from Washington D.C. and New York stand side by side maintaining their weapons.

*by Capt. Sheldon Smith
DCNG Public Affairs Officer*

More than 130 members of the 104th Maintenance Company are on active duty and providing a vital service at Fort Dix, N.J.

The unit's mission is to provide direct maintenance support for units deploying for Operations Enduring Freedom and Noble Eagle.

"In the ground maintenance area, we bring to mission capability such equipment as 5-ton tractors, 2.5-ton trucks, trailers, and radio systems," said Capt. Tunstall Wilson, commander. "We've been averaging about 200 to 250 work orders per week."

Personnel from the unit are also getting hands-on experience in the electronics shop, and are providing general maintenance and supply support.

"A lot of my work has been outside my MOS," said Spec. Maurice Brown, quartermaster equipment repairer. "I've gained a lot of respect for what other

people do."

Since arriving at Fort Dix, the 104th has remained in high gear but the soldiers don't seem to mind. "It's hard work and long hours, but we're getting a lot of good experience," said Spec. Johnathan Jones, another repairman of quartermaster equipment.

"We can't complain," he said.

The 104th is not the only maintenance unit deployed to Fort Dix from a city that was affected by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. The 237th Maintenance Company from Brooklyn, N.Y., has personnel working side-by-side with the Capital Guardians.

Like the DC National Guard, 237th's higher headquarters assisted civil authorities in the aftermath of Sept. 11. Units from the 301st Area Support Group provided support to civil authorities as

Manhattan dealt with the shock of what is likely to be the worst terrorist event in U.S. history.

This is the first mobilization for the 104th since returning from the World War II in 1946. However, members of the unit have participated in a number of training exercises and peacetime operations in recent years to prepare for the possibility of once again being activated for war.

The history of the 104th dates back to April 1, 1939, when it was originally organized in the District of Columbia as the 104th Ordinance Company, 29th Division.

On February 3, 1941 the unit was called into Federal service at Washington, DC. During the following year, the unit was reassigned to the 29th Division, which is well known for its service in Europe during W.W.II.

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547th soldiers prepare for battle at Ft. Eustis

By Capt. Sheldon Smith
DC National Guard Public Information Office

More than 150 members of the 547th Transportation Company will soon be ready to join coalition forces in the Persian Gulf.

Brigadier General David F. Wherley, acting commanding general of the DC National Guard, flew to Ft. Eustis, Va., on March 18 to visit members of the 547th Transportation Company as it prepared for possible deployment to the Middle East.

Upon arrival to the base, Wherley and other members of his staff were escorted to administrative and training areas related to the mobilization.

The first stop of the base tour was the Mobilizing Units In-processing Center. There, the 2174th General Support Unit coordinates the mobilization of reservists sent to Ft. Eustis for processing, training and validation.

"I'm here to make sure we're doing all that we can to take care of these soldiers," Wherley said shortly after arrival as Col. Debra Templeton, commander for mobilization at the MUIC, greeted him.

Templeton briefed the group on the mobilization operation and the progress of the 547th. "The 547th came here with a lot of the SRP process completed. Most of the units come here with a lot



Photo by Staff Sgt. Sophia Piellusch

A soldier from the 547th Transportation Company occupies a security position along the unit's perimeter at Ft. Eustis.

of work that still needs to be done," Templeton said.

Nevertheless, much work was still required in other areas before the end state of validation could be achieved.

After visiting the different staff sections of the MUIC, Wherley and his staff continued on to the training areas where the unit was preparing for a field training exercise scheduled for the following week.

Maj. Anthony Jackson of the 260th Regional Training Institute arrived at Ft. Eustis earlier that week to assist with additional training still required by the unit. "The team from DC has been a tremendous help," Templeton said.

First Lt. Malek Freeman who is commander of the 547th briefed a group of 30 augmentees a day earlier said the unit undergoing vigorous training to insure

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547th Deploys to Gulf after emotional farewell

By Capt. Sheldon Smith
DC National Guard Public Information Office

The 547th Transportation Company is once again in the Persian Gulf after a tear-filled April 9 sendoff at Ft. Eustis, Va.

The Capital Guardians were joined by nearly 50 soldiers from two other deploying transportation units in a ceremony in their honor that was held in a post gymnasium. Along with members of the 958th Transportation Corps Detachment, an Army Reserve unit from Belleville, Ill, and the 679th Transportation Corps Detachment, a National Guard unit from Allentown Pa., 547th soldiers got in those last hugs, kisses and farewells with their families, friends and colleagues before an early morning departure.

Maj. Gen. Robert T. Dail, commander of the US Army Transportation Command, addressed the group of more than 200 soldiers and dozens of well wishers explaining the need for transportation assets in the Iraqi theater of operations. "They are short on transportation today and can't wait until you get there," he said.

Dail also expressed to the group his confidence in their training and their ability to perform in a combat situation. "You will be fighting for each other; for the men and women to your left and right flanks; for the people you meet over there. You will be

victorious as a team," he said.

Not wanting to miss an opportunity to talk about the contributions of the families and communities from which these guardsmen and reservist have come, Dial praised the soldiers' roots. "Nations are not just measured by the men and women that go off to serve them, but by the communities and homes that produce this kind of people," he said.

The strain placed on Guard families when one parent is called up can often be difficult to bear, but the mobilization of both parents can prompt major changes in the lives of their children.

Spec. Sylvia Day knows the impact of those changes all too well. "My mother who is a nurse retired so she could take care of the kids during the deployment," she said. "She'll go back into nursing when the mission is over."

Married to Spec. Albert Day of the 547th, Sylvia Day was mobilized at about the same time as her husband. "We were leaving for [pre-mobilization] training at Fort A.P. Hill on the same day the 547th departed for Fort Eustis. It hurt a lot not being at the mobilization ceremony like other military wives," she said.

However, after being married for only three months, Sylvia and Albert Day are fortunate in that they have support systems in place that alleviate some of the strain caused by their dual

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121st Weather Flight Member Activated Again

By Senior Master Sgt. Lynne Morrison
121st Weather Flight NCOIC Training

Like other members of the 113Wg, SrA Thomas Richards of the 121st Weather Flight was activated under the PRC Feb 03 in Support of Operation Noble Eagle. What was notable though was the swiftness of the call-up and his readiness to answer the call. He was notified on Thu Feb 27 03 and was shipped out on Saturday Feb. 29.

His reaction after receiving such short notice "I'm ready to serve." He literally was "ready" having completed most of his ancillary/medical requirements prior to the notification; he needed only to complete a mask fit and M16 training.

Even more unusual is that Senior Airman Richards also has a brother in the 113th Wing who is serving as well. As with all Guardsmen, leaving for active duty has a price. In Thomas' case he was taking a full load of classes on an awarded scholarship at Montgomery Community College. Because of his activation, he was forced to relinquish this scholarship money.

This is not the first time Richards has answered the call for duty. Since joining the 121 Weather Flight in Dec 2000, and shortly after completing a yearlong course in forecaster training, he volunteered for duty in Bosnia-Herzegovina in support of Operation Joint Forge.

"The unit asked for 7 skill level weather specialist. I was so confident in his abilities as newly upgraded 5 level that I knew he would be up for the challenge. He met the challenge and exceeded it through his professionalism and dedication not only in his AFSC but in other areas.", said Senior Master Sgt. Lynne Morrison, 121st Weather Flight Training NCOIC.

Richards completed all of his certification at both Eagle Base and Camp Comanche in just two training shifts, He maintained 100% accuracy rate on products-exceeding his active duty counterparts, assisted Army motor pool mechanics to repair HMMWV fleet, and repaired disabled Tactical Wind Recorder equipment. For his efforts during this deployment, he received an Air Force Commendation Medal.

"He performs his duty in an positive manner with no complaints. He truly exemplifies the Air Force Core Values," said Morrison.



USAF File Photo

ABOVE: Richards takes a reading from a laser range-finder-a system that uses a reflectance of a laser beam to determine visibility for a personnel and aircraft. BELOW: Richards works with satellite weather images in preparation for a weather brief for aircraft personnel.



USAF File Photo

Capital Guardians enhance medivac training

By Spc. Andrew Thompson

In an open field here March 10, basic combat trainees from C Battery, 1st Battalion, 19th Field Artillery, teamed with the Army National Guard's 148th Medical Detachment in a medical evacuation exercise.

The detachment, out of Washington, D.C., was activated and is serving at Fort Sill - but the trainees didn't know that.

The 175 1st-19th FA trainees were directed by their leaders to respond to and treat trainees with simulated injuries.

The trainees thought the radio calls they made for helicopter evacuation of the "injured" were simulated, too, said drill sergeants.

Not so.

The trainees had "no clue that a real helicopter was going to be used for the exercise," said drill sergeant Staff Sgt. W.J. Lohr. "The information that was put out to the trainees was that they were going to receive a patrolling class, and when the patrol had reached the field, we would 'open fire' on them inflicting simulated casualties and (would simulate calling) in the MEDEVAC for further assistance."

Preparing for the exercise, which also filled a training requirement for the 148th Medical Detachment, started when 1st-19th FA leadership requested MEDEVAC Flight Operations support.

When the pilots received the request, they exercised their response and air-evacuation mission by planning the flight and medical evacuation out of the training scenario, said flight medic Sgt. T.J. Galat.

"The pilots' portion is a rapid and intense session. They evaluate the weather conditions, threat levels, proposed routes of flight, and plan for overall mission success and safety," said Galat.

UPPER LEFT: Soldiers and trainees of C Battery, 1st-19th FA remain low as the medical evacuation team lands. LOWER LEFT: With drill sergeant Staff Sgt. W.J. Lohr leading the group, trainees practice evacuating a helicopter during MEDEVAC training. UPPER RIGHT: Purple smoke is popped near C Battery, 1st-19th FA to ensure the medic team has a safe landing spot and is aware of the exact location of the troops. CENTER RIGHT: After the medical evacuation team lands, flight medic Sgt. Tom Galat gathers the trainees from C Battery, 1st-19th FA in a big circle to teach a brief class. LOWER RIGHT: During the MEDEVAC training exercise, Pvt. Ryan Core pretends to be injured. Core and other simulated casualties were loaded aboard the helicopter and transported as though they were being transported to a medical facility.

Galat said the trainees radioed a 9-line (medical evacuation report) request.

Once the drill sergeants knew the pilots and crew were in the air, the sergeants "popped smoke" to identify the scenario location, said Galat.

Until they heard the helicopter's rotorwash, the trainees thought the MEDEVAC response was simulated, too, said Lohr. "The realism of this training really sticks with them and served as a motivator," Lohr said.

The trainees provided simulated suppressive fire while the UH1-V "Huey" landed.

"Once on the ground, the flight medic expeditiously evaluates the soldiers to determine the extent of each of the wounds, and prioritize their care and loading order onto the aircraft. This phase of the operation is very critical and ensures that the soldiers receive the finest care available," said Galat.

The trainees practiced first aid before the flight medics arrived, received a class from the guardsmen and followed the medic's and crew's directions about loading casualties into the helicopter.

The "casualties" and some of the trainees were flown in the helicopter for a short while - a rare thrill in a trainees' eighth week of basic training.

The trainees finished the day familiar with calling for air evacuation support, rendering first aid and knowing what to expect and how to assist when a MEDEVAC crew lands.

"(This) gives the privates a chance to see one of the many important jobs in the Army. With war in Iraq happening now, MEDEVAC training is extremely important," said Lohr.



Training at Ft. Sill



Photos courtesy of Ft. Sill, Ok., Public Affairs

201st Airlift Squadron claims new title

By 1st Lt. Daniel Olson
201st Airlift Squadron

Special awards and distinctions are a common occurrence for the 201st Airlift Squadron. Each generation of men and women who pass through the squadron's hanger doors leave a treasure of titles and honors to challenge the next generation of flyers and maintainers.

But the most recent title earned by the squadron is credited to every generation over the past 50 years. After consultation with historians from The National Guard Bureau as well as the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base, the 201st Airlift Squadron claims the title as the operational flying squadron with the most aircraft conversions in the history of the Air Force.

From 1951 until today the squadron has operated 22

different aircraft, including helicopters, fighter jets, converted bombers, business jets, and military transports. The upcoming arrival of the new C-40s will bring that total to 23 conversions over a 51 year period.

History of Unit Assigned Aircraft "H" Flight, Det. 1, HQ DCANG 201st Airlift Squadron

C-47	1946-1967	C-54	1965-1967
B-26	1946-1972	C-121	1969-1972
C-53	1946-1958	U-3A	1969-1972
P-51	1954	O-2B	1974
P-33	1954-1987	C-131	1975-1978
C-45	1954-1960	T-43A	1978-1985
F-86	1954-1957	T-39	1981-1987
L-23	1955-1962	C-22B	1986-Present
LC-126	1955-1956	C-21A	1987-1998
L-20	1957	C-38A	1998-Present
L-29	1958-1975	C-40	2002-Present
H-23	1960-1963		
U-8	1963		



The DC Air National Guard recently added the C-40 to its fleet of executive transport aircraft. Seen to the left in the photo above, the C-40 can fly military personnel and government officials coast to coast or across the Atlantic non stop. The 201st Airlift squadron is also the only Air Force unit in the US that flies the C-38 (upper right).

Senior Airman Robert Bandy selected Air Reserve component transportation Airman of the year

By Master Sgt. Sean Brennan
Public Affairs Office

“Not in my 28 years of military service have I met a more motivated, knowledgeable, and dependable airman,” said Master Sgt. Pete Smith, the NCOIC of TMO and Senior Airman Robert Bandy’s supervisor.

Airman Bandy was recently selected as the Air Reserve Component Transportation Airman of the Year. He also received the 2002 District of Columbia Tuskegee Airman Award for academic and technical excellence based upon his superior achievement at technical school.

Bandy’s nomination letter reads like the performance one expects from a Chief Master Sgt. “Overcame scheduling and prioritization roadblocks...prepared training materials and conducted classes. Worked overtime and on weekends to manually input data... voluntarily inventoried and corrected all Traffic Management Personnel Readiness folders... teaches safety awareness and self-defense to youth in Landover, MD.”

Smith said, “Airman Bandy is good, he’s just good. I can see him becoming the commander of this unit down the road. He is person of integrity definitely deserving of this award.”



Photo by Master Sgt. Sean Brennan

Master Sgt. Pete Scott, NCOIC Traffic Management Office, (left) reviews paperwork with Senior Airman Robert K. Bandy prior to shipment

Wing selects Lt. Col. Armstrong Inspector General

Lt. Col. Beverly L. Armstrong with over 19 years of military service recently took over the office of the 113th Wing, DCANG Inspector General.

Armstrong said that it is the right of every airman to present complaints, grievances, or requests for assistance from the Inspector General.

Issues of fraud, waste, and abuse also fall into the types of complaints that airman are encouraged to present to the IG. It is critical that problems are reported as soon as they are identified, said Armstrong.

Before contacting the IG she suggested a few steps airman take. First, evaluate your problem carefully and separate out peeves (personal irritants) from genuine systemic problems.

Secondly, give your chain of command an opportunity to solve the problem, since many problems must be presented to them anyway for resolution. Finally, be sure to contact the Wing IG before

proceeding to IG’s at higher commands. Higher command IG’s will simply refer you back to the Wing. Armstrong is available during drill weekends from 0730-1600 in room 209 of the Wing Building and during the week from 0730-1630.

Armstrong comes to the IG position after nine years of active duty service in the Army, and 10 years in the DC Air Guard. Prior to becoming the IG, she served as Assistant Chief of Maintenance for the 201st Airlift Squadron.

As a civilian, she is also a First Officer with American Connection with over 2400 hours of flight time. Her ratings include Airline Transport Pilot, Boeing 737, Airplane Multi-engine Land, Commercial Privileges, Airplane Single Engine Land, Rotorcraft-Helicopter, and Instrument-Helicopter.

Armstrong is available during drill weekends from 0730-1600 in room 209 of the Wing Building and during the week from 0730-1600.



547th soldiers prepare

(Continued from p.4)

they are ready for war. "Our goal is to make sure each of you is ready for the fight," he said.

Among the training 547th truckers are receiving are nuclear biological and chemical training, driver and movement training, and other tasks necessary for soldiers to be able to operate and survive in a combat environment.

Col. Leon Bowlin, deputy chief of staff for operations, Chaplain (Col.) Robert Chance, state chaplain; State Command Sgt. Maj. Arthur Williamson, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Queen of the 74th Troop Command, Sgt. Maj. Patricia Williamson of personnel, and Staff. Sgt. Sophia Piellusch of public affairs accompanied the acting commanding general.

This is the first mobilization for the 547th since returning from the Gulf War in 1991. However, members of the unit have participated in a number of training exercises and peacetime operations since that time.

The 547th was activated in support of Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm on Sept. 19, 1990, and deactivated on May 3, 1991.

The company logged more than 750,000 miles and had the highest equipment-standard rating in the 553rd Combat Support Battalion, its higher headquarters during the Persian Gulf War.

547th deploys to Gulf

(Continued from p.4)

and women that go off to serve them, but by the communities and homes that produce this kind of people," he said.

The strain placed on Guard families when one parent is called up can often be difficult to bear, but the mobilization of both parents can prompt major changes in the lives of their children.

Spec. Sylvia Day knows the impact of those changes all too well. "My mother who is a nurse retired so she could take care of the kids during the deployment," she said. "She'll go back into nursing when the mission is over."

Capital Guardians at Ft. Dix

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On August 6 of that year, the unit was re-designated as the 104th Ordinance Medium Maintenance Company. As such, it participated in several WWII campaigns.

On April 12, 1946, the 104th returned home from the war and was deactivated at Camp Kilmer, N.J., and returned to the – District.

Between 1946 and 1972 the unit went through a number of reorganizations and re-designations. It eventually evolved into what we know today as the 104th Maintenance Company.

LTG Blum Confirmed as 25th Chief of NGB



By Master Sgt. Bob Haskell

The Army National Guard two-star general who helped form the United States Northern Command, the new military organization responsible for homeland security, has become the 25th chief of the National Guard Bureau.

H Steven Blum will be promoted to lieutenant general and pinned with his third star as chief of the 466,000 members of the Army and Air

National Guard now that the U.S. Senate has confirmed his Jan. 6 nomination by President George Bush. The Senate confirmed the four-year appointment on April 11.

Blum, 56, succeeds Lt. Gen. Russell Davis who retired as the Guard Bureau's chief last August. Major General Raymond Rees has been acting chief since then.

Nearly 160,000 members of the Army and Air Guard, almost 35 percent of the total force, are on active duty or belong to units that have been identified for mobilization for the war against terrorism as Blum becomes the Guard Bureau's chief. Guard forces are involved in the largest mobilization of reserve component troops since World War II.

The chief is the senior uniformed National Guard officer responsible for formulating, developing and coordinating all policies, programs and plans affecting Army and Air National Guard personnel. The general serves as the principal adviser to the secretary and chief of staff of the Army and the secretary and chief of staff of the Air Force on all National Guard issues. As NGB chief, he serves as the Army's and Air Force's official channel of communication with the governors and adjutants general.

Blum has been chief of staff for the commander of the Northern Command and the North American Aerospace Command at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado since last August.

The Maryland Army Guard general coordinated the activities of all members of the five uniformed services, including the reserve components, assigned to the Northern Command that was activated in Colorado Springs last Oct.

That is the first single military command that has been formed to defend the continental United States since the Continental Army, commanded by General George Washington, was organized in 1775.

"There is no more important mission than the defense of this nation and the homeland," said Blum during an interview last September. "We cannot fail the American people. They have high expectations of us. We are defending our families, our friends, our way of life."

Now he will oversee the National Guard's overall commitment to that cause as well as to the war on terrorism overseas, including the war with Iraq. He will also be concerned with how well the Guard performs its traditional jobs of training for war and supporting civil authorities during natural disasters, such as floods and wildfires, and civil disturbances.

He has already paid his dues on the foreign front as commanding general of the Multinational Division North in Bosnia Herzegovina from September 2001 to April 2002. He commanded troops from other countries, including Russia and Turkey, during that time.

Blum assumed command in August 1999 of the Virginia Army Guard's 29th Infantry Division that provided the command and control element for that peacekeeping rotation in Bosnia. He commanded the 29th until last August when he was assigned to the Northern Command in Colorado.

The late historian Stephen Ambrose, who died in October 2002, gave Blum high marks as a soldier and as a commander in his final book, "To America."

"At fifty-five, he has had made 1,500 air drops. He has had open-heart surgery. He talks so well and thinks so swiftly and knows so much that he reminds me of Eisenhower in 1945, when Ike was fifty-five years old," wrote Ambrose after meeting Blum while visiting Bosnia with a group of World War II veterans during Thanksgiving 2001.

"We flew in helicopters together, we attended ceremonies, briefings, meals with the troops," Ambrose continued. "[Blum] was always fully concentrated."

"He is outstanding in his job as military commander and diplomat, as good as Ike was in Germany after World War II, although on a much smaller scale," said Ambrose.

“Gift of groceries” on the hot list to help military families

By Bonnie Powell

FORT LEE, Va. – One of the best gifts you can give a U.S. service member deployed overseas might be peace of mind. The Department of Defense is discouraging the general public from sending unsolicited mail, care packages or donations to forward-deployed service members. Take care of the families back home instead with the “Gift of groceries” - commissary gift certificates.

The gift certificate program allows anyone to purchase and donate commissary gift certificates at <http://www.commissaries.com> or by calling a toll free number (1-877-770-4438).

The certificates can be given directly to military friends and family, donated to an installation chaplain’s fund or family support activity at a local military installation, or donated to military families through the Air Force Aid Society, the USO or Fisher House Foundation. Only authorized shoppers can spend the certificates at any of the nearly 280 commissaries serving the U.S. armed services worldwide.

“Commissaries save shoppers an average of 30 percent or more, and that’s a valuable benefit for members of our armed forces, their families and retirees,” said Defense Commissary Agency director, Air Force Maj. Gen. Michael P. Wiedemer. “The gift certificate program started out as a customer service, but it seems to have evolved into much more.”

“Our priority is to get these gift certificates to the families of service members wounded in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom,” said Jim Weiskopf of Fisher House Foundation. Families staying in Fisher Houses at Walter Reed (Washington, D.C.) and Bethesda (Md.) military hospitals are already benefiting from the program.” Fisher House Founda-

tion is best known for building family comfort homes near military medical centers.

The program began in the fall of 2002 as a way for family and friends to buy gift certificates for loved ones in the military, but chaplains’ funds and other military installation charities started using it as a convenient way to help local military families during the holidays.

Now, civilian organizations are jumping on board as well. Mission Valley Christian Fellowship near San Diego recently donated \$25,000 in certificates through Operation Homefront, a regional effort to support military families. Just a week later, Mission Valley Christian Fellowship donated an additional \$25,000.

The gift certificate program has also resulted in significant increases in traffic at the commissary Web site, reflecting the tremendous interest from the general public in donating gift certificates to military families. Average daily visits increased by more than 20 percent at the end of March, according to DeCA Web master Corintha Russell. “In fact, March 28 was the most visited day ever at the Web site,” she said. The gift certificates page has vaulted from No. 36 in visits to become the top-ranked specialty page.

The gift certificate program is made possible through a business agreement with CertifiChecks Inc. at no cost to DeCA or the federal government. A standard charge of \$4.95 covers the costs of handling, printing and mailing of gift certificates. Additional charges may apply for bulk orders or special delivery. When a purchaser selects to donate through the Air Force Aid Society, Fisher House Foundation or the USO, CertifiChecks forwards the donated certificates to the designated charity.

Returning home

They left their friends, family and country to fight a war thousands of miles away from their homes, but now these Airmen are finally...

By Master Sgt. Sean M. Brennan
113th Public Affairs

Andrews’ flightline was the scene of a homecoming April 28 as friends, family and coworkers welcomed 13 members of the District of Columbia’s Air National Guard 113th Wing back from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

For one of the guardsmen, it was somewhat more than a homecoming. At 30,000 feet and five hours into a combat sortie over the skies of western Iraq, Lt. Col. J.C. Witham, an F-16 Fighter pilot with the 113 ANG, called in his list of expended ordnance.

This routine procedure, which allows ground troops to prepare for reloading and quickly return the aircraft to the sky, turned out to be anything but routine.

Lt. Col. Phil Thompson, mission director, responded from ground control, “Roger that, be advised Michael, Alpha, Romeo, Yankee has expended one ordnance, and it’s a Bravo, Oscar, Yankee.” Immediately, shouts of joy reverberated through Witham’s plane. The cryptic message had

just informed Colonel Witham that his wife Mary had delivered a baby boy.

Only an hour and a half earlier, Mary Russell-Witham, Colonel Witham was notified that his wife of 19 years, had given birth to the couple’s second son, three weeks early.

Colonel Witham was part of a team of nearly 300 members of the 113th Wing that participated in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The group consisted of 28 pilots from the 121st Fighter Squadron, over 180 logistics personnel, five operations members and approximately 20 Airmen from services.

Together with other Guard units, they helped form the 410th Air Expeditionary Wing.

Their mission was to seek out and destroy enemy ballistic missiles.

Flying over 1,300 combat sorties, logging in excess of 800 combat flying hours, this deployment represented the largest combat mission since the Vietnam Conflict. More importantly, the unit sustained no casualties.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Dennis Young.
LTC. J. C. Witham and wife Mary Russell Witham, hold newborn son, Ryan James Witham.

Lt. Col. Marc Sasseville, Deputy Commander of 121st Fighter Squadron and one of the deployed pilots, said, “We flew day and night and took fire from anti-aircraft and surface-to-air missiles. But, we had trained hard, the choreography was right, and it paid off.”

On May 1, 175 more guardsmen returned. The rest of the 113th’s deployed Airmen are scheduled to return home as their duty is concluded in Southwest Asia.

Argentinean Cadets tour District of Columbia Air Guard facility

by Master Sgt. Sean Brennan

Bienvenidos! Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, 22 November 2002, one hundred and thirty-eight Argentinean Air Force Cadets visited with the members of the 113th Wing, District of Columbia Air National Guard, during their second leg of a three-city excursion that has taken them from Utah, to Washington D.C., to Florida. During these stops, the cadets were introduced to an array of Active Duty and Guard Member personnel that make our Air Force the finest in the world.

Our relationship with the Argentinean Air Force is not a new one. During the dates of 16-29 April 2001, the Wing deployed to Villa Reynolds Air Base, Villa Mercedes, Argentina, to participate in Operation Southern Falcon 2001. During this deployment, our primary goal was to utilize the tactical training maneuvers between the Argentinean A-4AR, Mirage 3&5, and DCANG F-16 aircraft in a safe and professional manner. Just as important, we also wanted to nurture and further the camaraderie that exists between the two forces. It was against this background that Colonel Michel D. Redman, Vice Commander, 113th Wing, welcomed the group to Andrews.

During the visit to the 113th Wing, the cadets were able to see our F-16 fighters, visit the 201st Airlift Squadron, home of the, C-22 (Boeing 737) and the C-38 (AstraJet) aircraft, and visit the 231st Combat Communication Squadron. During each stop, the strength of our diversity was showcased, as each organization was able to effectively communicate with our visitors by making our bilingual members assessable to the group.

There cadets were accompanied by Brigadier (Brigadier General) Heriberto Rozzi, Military Aviation School Director, Cordoba, Argentina, and Brigadier Mayor (Major General) Roberto Ernesto Janett, Argentine Air Attache', Washington D.C. Both were extremely impressed with the hospitality and professionalism displayed throughout the Wing. "We have visited various installations, and by far, your hospitality, professionalism, and military bearing exceeds that of what we have seen. We look forward to collaborating with the 113th Wing during the future operation Southern Falcon exercises."

The visit came to a conclusion with an exchange of gifts between Brigadier Rozzi and Colonel Redman. It is evident, that the camaraderie established in 2001 was further enhanced by this visit.



Photos by Staff Sgt. Sophia Piellusch

1st PHOTO: Argentinean Cadet seated in a F-16 training model while touring the 113th District of Columbia Air National Guard facility on Andrews Air Force Base, MD. 2nd PHOTO: Argentinean cadets attending a briefing in the 113th Wing auditorium