

Guard troops attracted by \$15K re-up bonus

story and photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

Christmas came early this month for some Army National Guard Soldiers and potential recruits when Guard officials announced significant increases in cash signing bonuses and other Guard benefits Dec. 16.

Highlights of the new benefits include:

- A \$7,500 lump sum bonus for Soldiers reenlisting or extending for three years
- A \$15,000 lump sum bonus for Soldiers reenlisting or extending for six years
- \$18,000 of Student Loan Repayment Program benefits for Soldiers reenlisting or extending for six years
- A \$10,000 bonus for new recruits with no prior military service

The changes, which also include expanded health, dental and educational benefits, have brought the Guard's bonuses and benefits to their highest levels ever, said Sgt. Maj. Bob Graham, a theater retention sergeant major with the National Guard Bureau who is serving at the National Guard and Reserve retention office at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait.

"Without a doubt, this has done more for recruiting and retention in one week than I've seen in the past ten years in the National Guard," said Graham, who has worked in recruiting and retention for 13 years.

Before the changes were announced, about 15 to 20 Kuwait-based National Guard Soldiers per month were reenlist-

ing or extending their service contracts. That number is now expected to double, said Sgt. 1st Class Richard Garmong, a senior recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer also with the Arifjan retention office. Garmong added that he was scheduled to reenlist or extend at least 15 Soldiers on Dec. 24 alone.

The new benefits, which took effect Dec. 14 and are not military occupational specialty related, have sent National Guard retention NCOs scrambling to get the word out, Garmong said. To do their part, he and Graham are sending out e-mail notifications to qualified Soldiers and will be conducting a series of town hall meetings throughout the Central Command theater in the coming weeks.

The benefit increases apply only to Soldiers enlisting for service with Military Table of Organization and Equipment units and come as the Guard fell about 1,000 Soldiers short of its recruiting goals in November and missed its target by 30 percent in October, according to Dec. 16 article in USA today.

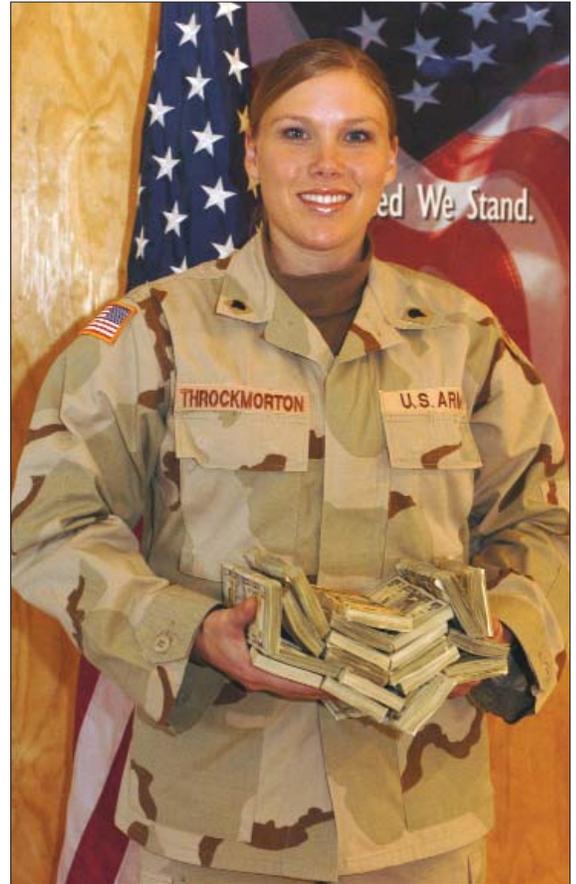
For more information, guidelines and restrictions contact the Guard retention office closest to you.

Kuwait: DSN 318-430-7193, Cell 965-937-7659 or 965-986-9802

Logistics Support Area Anaconda, Iraq: DSN 318-829-1128
DNVT 318-529-8252

Forward Operating Base Caldwell, Iraq: DSNVT 302-646-1043

Afghanistan: DSN 318-231-4353 or 318-231-2234



Spc. Rebekah Throckmorton poses with \$15,000 Dec. 23 after she earned a bonus of the same amount by extending her contract with the National Guard for six years. Throckmorton has been in the Guard for nine years and is currently serving at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait, with the 230th Area Support Group from Dyersburg, Tenn.



photo by Spc. Curt Cashour

Members of Battery E, of the Kansas National Guard's 161st Field Artillery's 1st Battalion's target acquisition battery fire M-249 Squad Automatic Weapons Dec. 19 at Udairi Range, Kuwait. Based in Larned, Kan., the unit is scheduled to deploy sometime in the next few weeks to Iraq, where they will identify potential targets by tracking incoming mortar and rocket attacks, said Battery Commander Capt. Ralph Heady.

Traffic safety: lessons learned from the fatal accident Dec. 19

- If a breakdown happens, every effort should be made to move off of high speed highways and to a location where there is enough space to either repair the vehicle or wait for a recovery team.
- Personnel should not exit or stand on the driver's side of the vehicle. All vehicle occupants should either exit through the passenger side of the vehicle or stay in the vehicle. After exiting the vehicle move far off the road way or to the other side of the guardrail if possible.
- Every effort should be made to have a means of communication between each vehicle in a convoy and a means to contact higher headquarters for assistance.
- American Soldiers should not be used to direct traffic on Kuwaiti roadways.