

53rd Troop Scoop



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Summer 2012



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About the 53rd Troop Scoop

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Submissions

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(FRONT/ BACK COVER) STEWART AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, NEWBURGH NY -- More than 450 New York Army National Guard Soldiers of the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion- based in Yonkers, Orangeburg and Peekskill-- say goodbye to their families and depart for post-mobilization training at Fort Bliss, Texas at Stewart Air National Guard Base here on Sunday, August 19. The Soldiers are schedule to deploy to Afghanistan.



COMMAND CORNER



Brig. Gen. Mike Swezey

53rd Troop Command
"For The Soldier"

I had the pleasure of spending part of my September drill with the 369th Special Troops Battalion during their MUTA-8 at Ft Indiantown Gap in Pennsylvania. Indiantown Gap has some great weapons ranges and I would encourage all units to look at it as a training location other than Ft Drum or Ft Dix. I believe that Soldiers like change and variety in their training and Indiantown Gap fits the

bill.

Change and variety. There was another item with this weekend that was different and that was the schedule ... a MUTA-8. I know that many units within the Troop Command drilled the first weekend after Labor Day in September ... many utilizing MUTA-8's and MUTA-6's. There are definite training advantages to using an extended drill weekend. A lot can be accomplished on a well planned weekend with three to four training days. It is an activity that I am sure we will see more and more units embrace as we move forward. I encourage it, as long as our Soldiers have been given plenty of notice that it is coming so that civilian work and family obligations can be rearranged.

As many of you know, we have a new Director of the Army National Guard - LTG William E. Ingram. General Ingram has just published a document outlining his "Strategic Imperatives" for the future.

He wants a force that continues to

mirror the structure of the active duty. He wants to maintain readiness through the use of predictable, rotational deployments for operational needs, as well as constructive combat training center tours. He wants us to recommit to the basics of personnel readiness through focusing on improvement of USR metrics and Unit Manning Roster management. We are our Nation's homeland security force prepared to rapidly respond to the need of our Governor and citizens. Lastly, General Ingram looks to maintain the trust of our Soldiers, Families, Employers and Communities by living and emulating the Army Values.

I ask all of you to be safe. I also ask you to follow the credo of "ACE" when it comes to helping your fellow Soldier. "Ask, Care and Escort". "Ask" your buddy if they need help. "Care" for that buddy and "Escort" them to get help. Best of luck to the 101 Signal Battalion as they begin their deployment to Afghanistan.

What are the basics of discipline? Is it leading from the front? Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) operate in an environment where the sparks fly. Of all the grades of the NCO, the Sergeant has the greatest impact on the lower ranking Soldiers.

I would like to see more NCO's lead from the front, set and enforce the standard, not to pick and choose. I think we need to get back to some of the basics. We have been an Army at war for over ten years. We have gone from the things I had to do when I initially came in.

Strength and leadership have never been more important in the Army than today. As we continue to move forward, the Army National Guard is expected to perform a large, more dedicated mission for the defense of our Nation and State. Our units need to be full strength, well trained, and prepared for mobilization in a time of war or national disaster. NCO's are crucial to Soldiers' perceptions of service, and therefore must take an active role in personnel management.

• Ensure new Soldiers are oriented to the unit

through sponsorship. The first drill is important because first impressions are lasting impressions.

- Provide for continued growth of all Soldiers through career development, counseling, and productive training programs.
- Respond to potential loss situations such as excessive absences, pay, supply, training, employment conflicts, family pressure, and educational demands.
- Take a positive rather than a negative approach to the term "counseling." The term counseling should be used to "listen to, coach, and develop Soldiers at all levels."

The NCO corps must help maintain a proper balance between the needs of the organization (mission, Soldier, and equipment), Family, work, and leisure. NCO's must keep a sense of how their Soldiers feel toward the unit's demands, advise commanders on these feelings, and maintain a strong readiness posture.

As NCO's, no one is more professional than I. I am a NCO, a leader of Soldiers. As an

NCO, I realize that I am a member of a time honored Corps, which is known as the "The Backbone of the Army."



Command Sgt. Maj. Louis Wilson

53rd Troop Command
"For The Soldier"



Mother/Daughter team deploying to Afghanistan

Story and photo by Capt. Alvin Phillips, 138th PAD

CAMP SMITH, New York -- "Like father, like son" is the more popular expression used in the English language, but "like mother, like daughter" is the phrase Soldiers in the New York Army National Guard's 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion will use this August.

For Spc. Alexandra Lippi, and her mother Sgt. Maj. Gina Lippi, service in the National Guard is a family thing. The two will deploy to Afghanistan this year with the Yonkers-based 101st Signal.

"I don't know exactly what 'it' is, but 'it' is in my blood," said Spc. Lippi, a newly trained signal Soldier in Alpha Company, 101st ESB when asked why she decided to enlist in the New York National Guard like her mother did over 30 years ago.

Spc. Lippi, who was previously assigned to the New York Army National Guard's 466th Area Medical Company, said her mom inspired her to join the National Guard. Now she is looking forward to working with satellite communications equipment in the same unit as her mother.

She's looking forward to the challenges of her new job, Lippi said, and she's also looking forward to facing them with her mother around.

It's good to know that somebody who knows her well will be deployed with her, Spc. Lippi said.

For Sgt. Major Gina Lippi, there is no greater way to serve than to know she inspired her daughter to serve too.

The two Lippi's resemble each other and possess the same mannerisms, same hair, same laugh and will both be on their first deployment.

Sgt. Maj. Lippi joined the mili-



CAMP SMITH, New York-- Specialist Alexandra Lippi, left, and her mother Sgt. Major Gina Lippi will deploy to Afghanistan later this year with the New York Army National Guard's 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion.

tary over 32 years ago. A lot of things have changed since then and definitely for the better, she said.

As the Operations Sergeant Major, Sgt. Maj. Lippi is the overall non-commissioned officer in charge of Tactical Operations Center.

She is responsible for accountability and maintenance of the command post, and supervises pre-combat checks and pre-combat inspections. Additionally, she monitors and records messages and operational overlays, and assists the Battle Captain in all his duties.

"The circumstances of 9/11 led to a more versatile force and Soldiers are more experienced than ever before at understanding the changes of the world," Sgt. Maj. Lippi said.

"I respect her and this organization so much and do not want it to appear that just because my mother is a Sergeant Major I should receive special exceptions or take short cuts," she added.

[Sgt. Maj. Lippi] is stern, to the point, but always respectful and courteous. Her style and approach

when dealing with Soldiers in the S3 team is productive and enlightening, never divisive," said Capt. Frank Quintano, the 101st's operations officer.

She would never show favoritism to any Soldier, daughter or not, he added.

"My primary focus is and has always been to take care of Soldiers, it's something that I have been doing for three decades and the best way to take care of Soldiers is to uphold standards and those standards apply to all wearing the uniform, especially my daughter," Sgt. Maj. Lippi said.

However, those standards shouldn't be a problem at all when referring or discussing the younger Lippi.

"Spc. Lippi absolutely exemplifies what it takes to be a Soldier deploying to Afghanistan with this unit," said Company A, 101 ESB Plans and Operations NCO, Sgt. 1st Class Tracy Ann Stewart.

She reflects great ambition, military bearing and respect for others, all great traits and potential for

being a leader, plus she wants to prove herself she added.

Sgt. Maj. Lippi's son and Spc. Lippi's brother George also is in the New York National Guard. He serves in the 442 Military Police Company.

The 101st Signal Battalion was where she began her National Guard career, and it may be the unit she would like to retire from, Sgt.

138th Public Affairs Det. is Guantanamo Bay bound

Story and pictures by Sgt. Jonathan Monfletto, 138th PAD

FORT BLISS, Texas – Eight soldiers from the 138th Public Affairs Detachment of the New York Army National Guard are here preparing for their deployment to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, by covering other units training for their own missions.

The Soldiers are currently stationed at Fort Bliss awaiting the start of their nine-month tour of duty at Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, and in the meantime are conducting public affairs missions while other units conduct missions to prepare them for deployments to Afghanistan.

Seven members of the 138th spent Thursday morning and afternoon at Camp McGregor, N.M., interviewing, photographing and video-graphing the 488th Military Police Company of the Maine National Guard and the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, also of the New York National Guard.

Both units are training at Camp McGregor before they ship out to Afghanistan. The 488th performed

Maj. Lippi said.

"Definitely there is something special when you return to a unit that you joined with and now deploy with at the end of your career, Sgt. Maj. Lippi said.

"My daughter is an incredible Soldier and I have had a phenomenal career, what more could I ask for," she said.

"I am deploying with the finest

detainee operations exercises on Thursday and will head to Parwan Detention Facility, while the 101st practiced counter-improvised explosive device movements and will head to Kandahar.

During those training exercises,



First Lt. Jon Santana, Alpha Company commander for the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion, answers questions from Sgt. Trisha Pinczes, public affairs specialist with the 138th Public Affairs Detachment, during a training exercise at Camp McGregor, N.M., Thursday afternoon.

the 138th underwent training of its own as Soldiers worked as media escorts, interviewed soldiers from the other units and took photographs and video footage of the exercises.

Later that day, a couple of soldiers also interviewed and photographed officials from the United

group of individuals I have served with, no exaggeration. I have had a phenomenal career, what more could I ask for," Sgt. Maj. Lippi added.

"I am so grateful I have this opportunity so early in my career and all I have to do is apply everything I have been taught and make it second nature," Spc. Lippi, said.

States Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, while another group covered a news conference and a concert given by the pop duo Karmin.

On Saturday, soldiers of the 138th continued their training with more photography, videography and interviews with soldiers of the 101st working in their tactical operations center.

The 138th received its training under the guidance of Task Force Redhawk of 5th Armored Brigade and 1st Army Division West.

The 138th will head to Guantanamo Bay in support of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, in which they will be reporting, photographing and Video-graphing for their own media, as well as facilitating media relations and escorting independent journalists.

More specifically, the 138th will help publish *The Wire*, the weekly Guantanamo Bay newspaper, while also supporting press briefings, responding to media inquiries, writing hometown news releases and releasing photos for military and civilian publications.

NYARNG Engineers working on the old Erie Canal

Story by Eric Durr

COHOES, N.Y.--A quarter mile of the 19th century Erie Canal here in this old textile city north of Albany is being turned into a town park and walking path thanks to 30 members of the New York Army National Guard's 204th Engineer Battalion.

The soldiers -- assigned to the 1156th Engineer Company from Kingston, N.Y., and the 152nd Engineer Company from Buffalo -- are spending half of their two week annual training cutting down trees, trimming weeds, and leveling the ground between locks number 14 and 15 of the 19th century canal bed.

They're staying at a local Hilton Hotel (instead of tents at Fort Drum), working from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., using chain saws, skid steer loaders, an armored "back hoe on steroids" called a High Mobility Engineer Excavator (HMEE), and having a great time, said Staff Sgt. Howard Weed, the project Non-commissioned officer in charge.

"I point them in



COHOES, N.Y. - Soldiers from New York Army National Guard's 1156th Engineer Battalion and 152nd Engineer Company leveled trees and removed tons of underbrush in the ruins of the Erie Canal located in the center of the City of Cohoes on June 11 as part of a trail-clearing process. The Soldiers were conducting innovative readiness training as part of their Annual Training (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Steven Petibone, New York Army National Guard).

the direction of the work and they go right at it," said Weed, a 28-year military veteran from Gardner, N.Y.

"It's great training and we are helping out the City of Cohoes," said Spec. Charles Adams from Fishkill, NY,

saw. "It is all about giving back to the community and at the same time having a little fun," he added.

"We like it because, not only is it a helping to advance the city's agenda, it is a sound opportunity for our troops to have good training," said Cohoes Mayor John McDonald.

The Cohoes project is one of four innovative readiness training opportunities the 204th Engineers are taking advantage of during their 2012 Annual Training period, said Lt. Col. Jim Freehart, the battalion commander.

One team is working on ranges at the New York National Guard's Camp Smith Training Site in the Hudson Valley, a second team is upgrading drainage at Niagara County's Bond Lake Park on the other side of the state, while still another training mission is taking place in a quarry where the unit is running rock crushing equipment.

Army National Guard and Army



who was operating a chain

Reserve units can conduct community projects when the work involves the unit's combat tasks and the job is not something the municipal workforce or a private company would ordinarily be able to do.

At another quarry near Niagara Falls the National Guard engineers are also getting a chance to train on heavy rollers, big scrapers and graders and other road building equipment. "What we have out there is a big sandbox and we have been invited to bring all our toys into it," Freehart said.

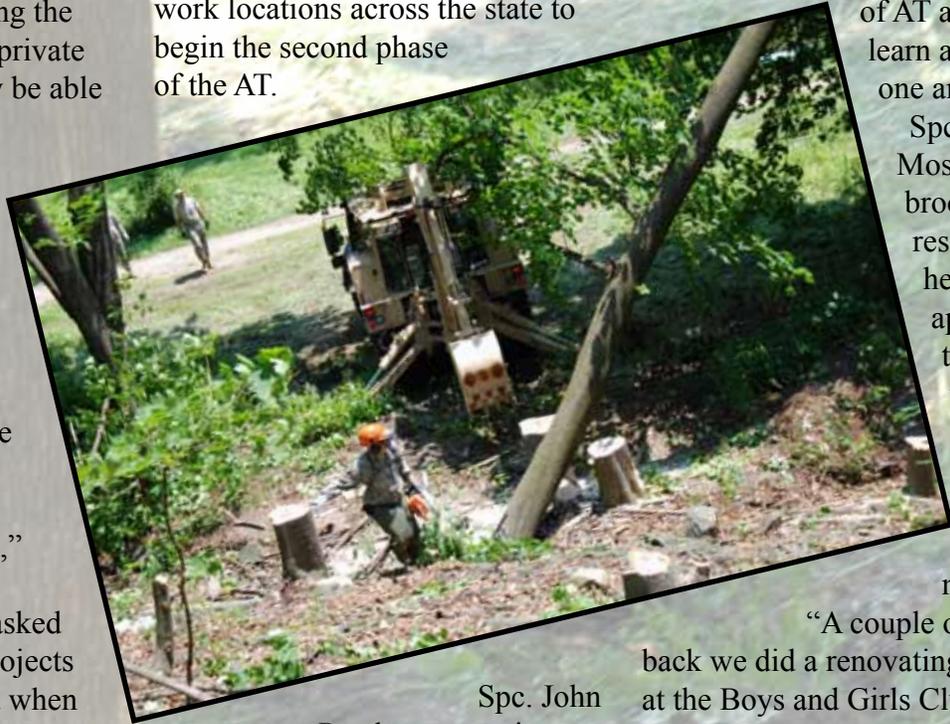
Because engineers are tasked to work on a number of projects at once, both overseas and when responding to emergencies in New York, this kind of dispersed training is realistic and builds leadership skills at the company level, Freehart said.

The battalion spent its first

training skills like righting a rolled armored vehicle. Then, the battalion's elements convoyed to their work locations across the state to begin the second phase of the AT.

"This builds a lot of teamwork," Pember added. "We are together every day on these two weeks of AT and we learn a lot about one another."

Spc. Radoslaw Mosiej, a Ryebrook, N.Y., resident, said he always appreciates the chance to put his engineer skills to work in the community.



Spc. John Pember, an engineer from Brunswick, N.Y., said he appreciated the opportunity to work in the community.

"It is a ton of real life experience," said Pember, a home-builder and contractor in civilian life. "A lot of us have some type of construc-

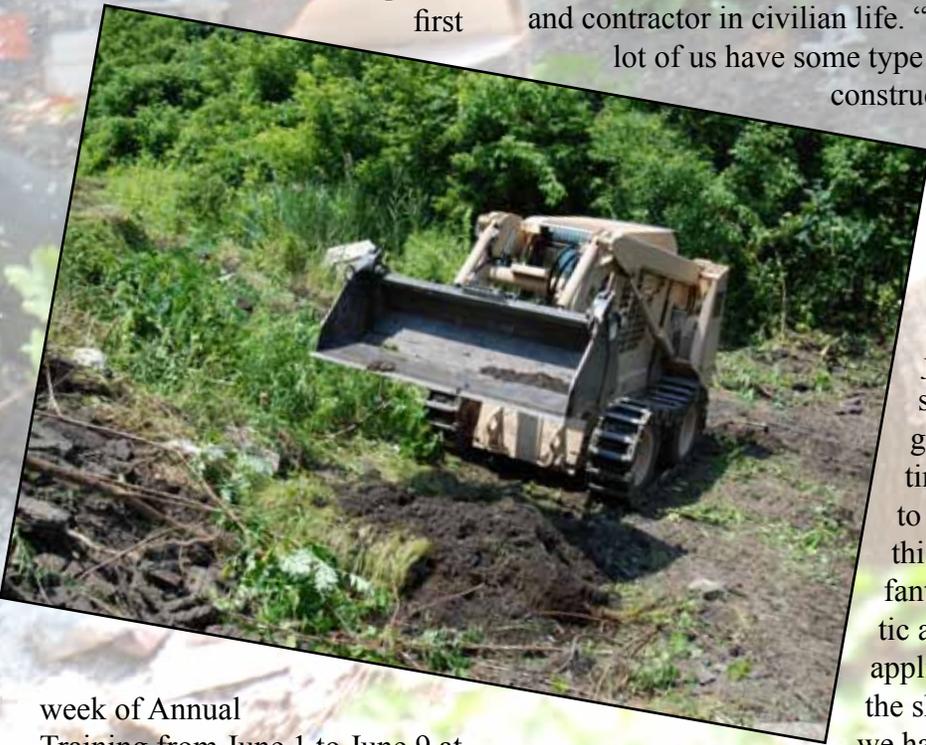
"A couple of years back we did a renovating project at the Boys and Girls Club (in Binghamton, N.Y.) which was very rewarding," he said. "I went home with my chest puffed out," the Polish immigrant said.

The 204th began working on the Cohoes project during the battalion's 2011 Annual Training. The battalion spent a week doing the initial clearing on the old canal bed-- unused since 1911-- that runs above the Mohawk River.

This year the team will continue clearing out the brush and additional work in 2013 should complete the project, Freehart said.

For Adams the combination of military skills training at Fort Drum, and working in the community is the best possible way to spend Annual Training.

"It's the best of both worlds," he said. "We are not just sitting at a post and doing the same things over and over. We are using our skills."



week of Annual Training from June 1 to June 9 at Fort Drum firing on the rain, going through drivers training, and prac-

in everyday life training we have in the military."

NYARNG Medics on the Job in Hohenfels, Germany

Story and photo by: Spc. Rachel Sanzo - 42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

HOHENFELS, GERMANY-- Seven New York Army National Guard medics traveled 4,000 miles for to help care for patients at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) here.

The Soldiers with the 466th Area Support Medical Company (ASMC) from Queensbury, NY, located at the edge of the Adirondack Mountains, arrived August 13 to provide medical support for Soldiers deploying to Kosovo. They will be on the job until Sept. 3.

The New York Guard Soldiers are filling in for Reservists from the 4203rd United States Army Hospital Unit from Nashville, T.N. Those medics will deploy to Kosovo with the 218th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, South Carolina National Guard in September. The deploying medics are currently receiving additional medical training in other areas of Germany.

When the Reserve medics identified their need for help, the 466th ASMC was happy to provide their assistance.

"We're really excited to be helping out here in Germany," said Sgt. 1st Class William C. Vincent, a Queensbury resident and a medic with the 466th ASMC. "I'm glad that our unit was the one they called, and that they trusted us enough to take over for them."

The temporary medical clinic staff is composed of three physician assistants and four medics, and contains enough troop medical clinic sets to treat between 500 to 700 patients, depending on the amount of treatment they require.

"Our clinic is what we call a level

one clinic, meaning that we can perform minor surgical operations," said Maj. Peter N. Fish, a Staten Island resident and the officer in charge of the 466th ASMC team. "Most of our patients will probably be treated for respiratory infections, orthopedic issues, and minor fractures. If they require any treatment beyond that, we will refer them and provide transportation to a local civilian hospital."

Fortunately for the 466th ASMC, their medics and physician assistants have only had to treat a handful of Soldiers for minimal injuries and ailments since they arrived in Hohenfels.

"The less action that happens in our medical clinic, the better," Fish said. "As long as we're bored, it means that our Soldiers are healthy and well cared for. We will train and learn how to treat Soldiers the best we can in our down time."

When it comes time for the Sol-



HOHENFELS, GERMANY -- New York Army National Guard Sgt. 1st Class William C. Vincent and Sgt. Michael P. Boulerville, medics with the 466th Area Support Medical Company from Queensbury, administer an IV to a patient at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center medical clinic here, August 22, 2012.

diers of the JMRC medical clinic to depart Hohenfels and head back home, the 4203rd Tennessee Reserve Soldiers will be heading to Kosovo for the start of their deployment.

"We're glad we've had the opportunity to help out these Soldiers," said Maj. Warren Sheprow, a physician assistant who lives in Queensbury. "We're happy to have met them and sincerely hope they return home safely."

NYARNG Soldiers lay foundations in Germany

Story and photo by: Spec Rachel Sanzo - 42nd Infantry Division Public Affairs

HOHENFELS, GERMANY--- The crunch of ten-ton vehicles on gravel and the din of voices over radio calls can be heard as New York Army National Guard Soldiers carry out their annual training at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) here.

Seventy-eight Soldiers with the 827th and 152nd Engineer Companies from New York's 204th Engineer Battalion from Walten, traveled to Hohenfels to assist and chip away at troop construction projects (TCPs) August 4 to 25, 2012.

"Our mission here in Hohenfels is to aid in TCPs in order to improve the realism of training areas for Soldiers participating in overseas deployment training," said Capt. Chad Clark, the commander of the 827th from Chester, N.Y.

At the JMRC in Hohenfels, units conduct pre-deployment training in authentic environments that mirror the setting and culture of Soldiers' deployment destinations. Features of the Center include a helicopter landing zone to transport Soldiers to and from training areas within Hohenfels, realistic villages occupied by experienced actors imitating citizens, and various other logistical facilities.

One of the goals of the two engineer companies throughout the duration of their training involves building upon the site's preexisting helicopter landing zone (HLZ). The Soldiers will work to raise the elevation of the HLZ two and a half meters, in accordance with training needs.

Additionally, the 827th and 152nd will work to lay foundations

for logistical facilities that future units deployed to Hohenfels will build upon and integrate into upcoming training missions.

"All of our projects are supporting units who will deploy," Clark said. "We're creating buildings for them to utilize, and improving the landing pad that they will utilize during their pre-mobilization training."

Although the members of the 204th Engineer Battalion will only remain in Hohenfels for a couple of weeks, the projects they are undertaking are ongoing and will involve many more hours of manpower before they are completed. Additional units will be sent to Hohenfels for up to two years before the HLZ and buildings are finished.

"The work we're doing here is laying the footprint so future units that come in will have a good idea of the work that we've done, and the work that still needs to be done," said Lt. John Scott, the officer in charge of construction with the 827th from Albany.

According to Scott, the progress on the landing zone and logistical facilities should be 33 percent complete by the time the engineer companies depart Hohenfels, thanks to the work of the current engineers on site and those who came before them.

"Our sponsors and advisors have been ecstatic with the work we've done," said Clark. "They say that we've really embraced the concept of this pad. And as for our guys,



HOHENFELS, GERMANY-- Lt. Col. James Freehart, the commander of the 204th Engineer Battalion from Binghamton, N.Y. is briefed by Lt. John Scott, the officer in charge of construction with the 827 Engineer Company from Chester, N.Y. at the JMRC here August 15, 2012. 78 New York Army National Guard Soldiers with the 827th and 152nd Engineer Companies from the 204th Engineer Battalion traveled to Hohenfels as part of their annual training August 4-25 to aid in troop construction projects on the base's pre-deployment training area.

they've jumped right in and have made great strides in getting it to where we want it to be."

When it comes time for the engineer Soldiers to depart Hohenfels and head back home, their time spent overseas will definitely be a time to remember.

"It's definitely been a plus to be doing our annual training away from the drill shed floor at home," said Pvt. Jean Thompson, an equipment specialist with the 827th from Almond, N.Y. "But we, like many other units that will come in after us, are just here to chip in a little bit until the project is done."

NY MP unit heads home from Guantanamo Bay

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Kryn Westhoven, JTF-GTMO PAO

GUANTANAMO BAY, Cuba — As the troopers of the 107th Military Police Company concluded their Joint Task Force Guantanamo mission, these New York Army National Guard members took with them pride in a job well done. The citizen soldiers completed a one-year deployment as the external security force.

The historic importance of being at Guantanamo during the tenth anniversary of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001 will always be a large feature of their deployment. Also, having the start of the military commission for the five alleged co-conspirators brought a sense of closure to some of the New Yorkers.

“Closing that circle in the whole process,” said 1st Sgt. Fabio Cardenas, who wears a New York State Police uniform when he is not the unit’s senior non-commissioned officer.

The attacks on 9/11 have kept this unit busy for the past decade. The 107th MPs, headquartered in Utica, N.Y., were one of the first Empire State Guard units to be in New York City at Ground Zero. The following year began the first of two mobilizations to Fort Drum, NY, then a pair of Iraq deployments before arriving at JTF Guantanamo.

That tempo for the unit post-9/11 has led to a change in the age of the group, averaging 22 years old. This is the generation that watched the World Trade Center crumble on TV in elementary or high school, like Cpl. Edward Nepton. He remembers watching the events unfold in his typing class and not having it affect him until got home

to find his mother crying.

Nepton, with several of his friends, are in the group of young service members that raised their right hand because of the events on 9/11.

“Most coming out of school wanted to go to Iraq or Afghanistan,” noted Cardenas, who had to explain that they were on the frontlines for the country. “You are dealing with the enemy every day on another level.”

Cardenas lead a core of senior enlisted who have served on prior deployments and several worked in law enforcement in civilian life.



Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Ruffin (left) lead the team of New York Army National Guard soldiers, including Spc. Gregg Gerber, who designed and built a replica of the World Trade Center towers on a five sided base to represent the Pentagon in honor of all the 107th Military Police Company members past and present who served in the unit since Sept. 11, 2001. The New York citizen-soldiers completed a nearly one-year deployment to Joint Task Force-Guantanamo this month.

This brought experience vital to train the younger soldiers to excel in the mission’s responsibilities.

The hard work and long hours did not go unnoticed as Lt. Col. Christopher Wynder, commander of the 525th Military Police Battalion, called them “superb performers.” The 107th served under the 525th MP Bn.’s umbrella of military police companies and “in order to capitalize on their unmatched work ethic” the unit was given increased responsibilities, according to Wynder.

“They realized the importance of what they do being from New York,” said 1st Lt. Andrew Miller, 107th MP commander, talking about the unit’s sense of pride in the mission. Miller, a New Hartford, N.Y. police officer encouraged his soldiers to continually improve the operating procedures.

“We significantly raised the bar for other companies to follow,” noted Miller.

Before the soldiers faced the challenges of sometimes repetitive and mundane work on long shifts, the unit needed to come together as a team. This was a difficult task to accomplish in the preceding year, as the citizen soldiers lived in 35 different New York counties, spending drill weekend at four armories located in upstate New York down to Fort Hamilton in New York City.

“They were phenomenal, absolutely phenomenal. I couldn’t ask for a better group of soldiers to work with,” said Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Mower.

One young trooper said to Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Ruffin that “never in a million years” he would have thought that during the trial of

the 9-11 co-conspirators he would be handling security outside the courtroom.

For Ruffin it was a “surreal moment” to be at Guantanamo Bay for the tenth anniversary of 9/11. “It has a lot of meaning to me,” added Ruffin, who led the team to design and build a lasting monument to their unit’s deployment.

The idea for the monument

started as soon as 107th got on the island. The replica of the World Trade Center towers is set into a five-sided base, which represents the Pentagon. The towers are 9 feet tall, and 1x1 foot in diameter. The north tower’s antenna is represented with a piece of metal rebar.

With material donations from Guantanamo Bay Naval Station contractors and help from the Navy

Seabee construction team, the monument towers over the other tributes to units who have completed a Joint Task Force Guantanamo tour of duty.

A plaque dedicates the memorial to all who perished in the 9/11 attacks: a fitting honor of all the 107th MP Company members, past and present, who served from Ground Zero to Guantanamo Bay.

NYANRG Engineers Restore Historic Fire Tower

Story and Photos by Sgt. 1st Class Thomas Wheeler, 138th PAD

BEACON, NY-- Trekking up the 1600 feet of rugged, unforgiving terrain of Mount Beacon, “citizen Soldiers” of the New York Army National Guard’s 1156th Engineer Company spent two weeks sharpening their skills, as well as learning new ones refurbishing the fire observation tower located at its summit.

“The project request started out as a complete overhaul for the tower to include painting, adjusting handrail heights, adding fencing, and rebuilding the cabin atop the tower,” said Cpt. Daniel L. Colomb, commander of the 1156th Engineer Company.

“We are basically trying to make it safer,” said Spc. Osse Jean-Pierre, a carpenter assigned to the 1156th who also performs part-time general maintenance in his civilian job. “We replaced some rails, changed all the top panels, and painted it so it won’t rust.”

Built in 1931 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2005, the Mount Beacon Fire Observation Tower requires serious repairs and updates to modern building codes before it can be approved public use by state engineers.

“It’s all about preserving a his-



BEACON, NY -- Soldiers assigned to the 1156th Engineer Company, New York Army National Guard, refurbish the historic Mount Beacon fire observation tower, September 7, 2012.

toric site that showcases the beauty and heritage of the Mid-Hudson Valley,” said Colomb. “Thousands of people walk the trails around Mount Beacon each year. Some use the trails for exercise and some simply enjoy a nice hike or picnic with family and friends.”

Mount Beacon, located near the City of Beacon, is the highest point in the Hudson Highlands chain of hills. The Mount Beacon fire tower, used until 1975 for fire watching duties, commands a 75-mile view of the Hudson Valley and Connecticut.

History aside, this project has gotten the community involved and excited about this project.

“I’ve heard stories from hikers and local residents that describe their excitement in getting to finally go to the top and visit the tower after all these years,” Colomb said. “One gentleman even told me how excited he was to take his father up the mountain to see the tower that he hasn’t seen since he was his son’s age.”

“We have a retired Sgt. 1st Class that comes up here every day,” said 1st Sgt. Gregory Sinclair. “He is

very excited about getting up there just for the view.”

Colomb also added that the community at large is happy to see progress come from the many donations made to the historical society and specifically the Beacon Fire Observation Tower restoration project.

Community support notwithstanding, projects like these benefit the Soldiers, both personally and professionally.

“These community based projects are priceless training opportunities for my Soldiers,” said Colomb.

“Not only are they able to train and exercise their MOS (Military Occupational Specialties) skills, but they are also able to do it in a ‘real life’ environment.”

“I get a feeling of accomplishment and feel good because

we are doing something good for the community,” said Jean-Pierre. “Personally I love doing things to help other people, especially something I can use at my civilian job.”

“The biggest thing about this project is that it’s something different,” Sinclair said. “It’s nice for these guys and for the unit to do something for someone other than

the military.

“When we do something at Camp Smith (New York’s state training facility) who sees it? Not many, but when we do something like this thousands of people will be able to use it and enjoy it,” added Sinclair.

The project helped the engineer Soldiers learn to adapt, which helps prepare them to respond to state emergencies or challenges on active duty, Colomb said.

“Training piece aside the biggest thing these projects provide my Soldiers is critical thinking and problem solving skills,” said

“We’ve done quite a few projects this year,” said Sinclair. “Throw in our response to Tropical Storm Irene and Lee in Greene and Schoharie counties (in August and September, 2011) , our part in the Homeland Response Force (HRF) and CERFP (CBRNE Enhanced Response Force Packages), and it’s been a busy year.”

Sinclair also added that in the past year the 1156th has completed Phase II of the Cohoes, NY, Erie Canal cleanup and Restoration Project, constructed new ranges and barracks bathrooms at Camp

Smith Training Area, Cortlandt Manor, NY, successfully completed a HRF validation exercise at the New York State Preparedness Training Center in Oriskany, NY, and assisted their Puerto Rican National Guard



BEACON, NY -- Staff Sgt. Marco Padilla and Spc Osse Jean-Pierre, Soldiers assigned to the 1156th Engineer Company, New York Army National Guard, repair and replace railings on the Mount Beacon fire observation tower, September 7, 2012.

Colomb. “There is no great way to train a Soldier to react to the many situations they may encounter in a natural disaster or war-time situation. These projects give my Soldiers that ability.”

No strangers to serving both the military and civilian communities, the Soldiers of the 1156th have had a busy year, he added.

search and extraction counterparts in a “Go” on their CERFP validation exercise.

101 Signal Battalion trains for deployed to Afghanistan

Story by Sgt. Trisha Pinczes, 138th PAD

CAMP MCGREGOR, New Mexico – With the temperature at 94 degrees, conditions reflect that of the upcoming battlefield. Soldiers endure through the dry heat to hone their skills and ensure their own success.

Soldiers with the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion (ESB) complete deployment training 28 miles into the desert at Camp McGregor in preparation for deployment.

Although the 101st ESB is a signal battalion and their mission is to supply communications to Regional Command South, the battalion is tasked to complete signal equipment training as well as what is often referred to as infantry training.

The 101st ESB is being trained by Task Force Redhawk, part of the 5th Armored Brigade, who trains units that are deploying overseas.

They ensure that no Soldier leaves home without the proper training and knowledge that is crucial to having them return safely to their family and loved ones.

“We do have Soldiers that will be going out with other units in teams of three, five, or ten going out in support of MP (military police) and infantry units,” 1st Lt. Jon Santana, Alpha Company Commander of the 101st ESB said.

Santana said he feels it is important for his Soldiers to train on basic combat skills as a signal battalion.

“Their main mission is signal communications but they have to be prepared to defend their position if need be, and so this training is critical for our Soldiers as well as



A soldier from the 101st Expeditionary Signal Battalion pulls security in a 360-degree formation with other Soldiers from the unit, after the sighting of an improvised explosive device, during a counter-IED training exercise at Camp McGregor, N.M. (Photo by Sgt. Jonathan Monfiletto, 138th PAD).

make sure all their communication gear is set for the upcoming mission.

“We made sure that all of our equipment is in working order,” Santana said. “We will later take it out to a location in the field, set it up and communicate with the equipment, tear it down and bring it back in.”

The importance of being prepared and trained on the equipment was stressed by Medrano as well.

“Having our equipment ready means we can go over there and serve everybody,” she said. “We can fix all of our mistakes here so we don’t make them when it counts.”

Individual Soldiers are learning everyone else’s job, so no matter

who is available they can always get the job done, Sgt. 1st Class Ramon Anderson, 2nd Platoon Sgt. and team supervisor, said.

“Unit cohesion and teamwork have been important so if something goes down and someone isn’t around, another Soldier can actually step up and use the equipment,” he said. “It is something they have been doing since they got out here so it has been very good and positive throughout.”

“They are used to working together as a unit, so now they are going to be trained by other people from here and learning new tricks of the trade,” Anderson Said. What they learn from here and what they are going to learn from the people in Afghanistan will give them more knowledge and they’ll be more productive as a unit. “

The training required at Camp McGregor is both Soldier training and Signal training. This gives a different perspective to something they have already been trained on in order to expound the capabilities of the 101st ESB as they serve in Kandahar, Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.



