



First in Deed

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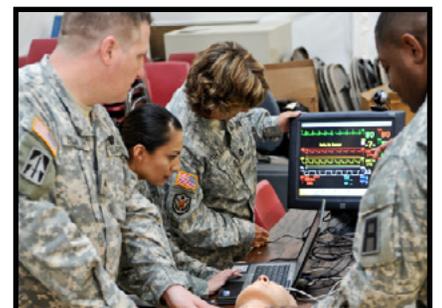
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On the cover: First Army Soldier of the Year Spc. Kevin S. Jarvis, 166th Aviation Brigade, tackles the obstacle course. (Photo by Master Sgt. Jerome Debarge, 181st Brigade Public Affairs)

Soldiers remain our top priority

As summer comes to a close, I want to thank all of our Soldiers and their Family members for their continued support. It is their continued sacrifice that makes the accomplishment of our mission possible.



Our Soldiers and civilians face a daunting task every day; training Army Reserve and National Guard units from across the nation, along with their counterparts in the Air Force, Navy, and civilian sector, for missions around the globe. As we focus on preparing them for their missions, it is also important that we take a comprehensive view of both First Army Soldiers and those that we are preparing to send and those returning from the fight.

Our Army’s leadership is currently focusing its energy and concern on the resiliency—physical and mental fitness—of Soldiers, families and civilians that serve stateside, abroad and in combat zones. It is important that we take a comprehensive view of First Army Soldiers and civilians and (RC) Soldiers that we mobilize and demobilize. The Army’s recently released “Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention Report” (story below) serves as a reminder of the obligation we have to Soldiers and their families.

We have been at war for 10 years and the report details some of the strains that have been placed on the force, including increased mental health reporting needs.

We will never shy away from unpleasant facts, but rather will attack them head-on. And indeed, the report’s release represents the next step in the process of promoting force sustainment and Soldier and civilian welfare.

I am convinced that we have excellent programs in place during the mobilization and deployment phases for our Soldiers at our Mobilization Training Centers (MTCs) and we are working hard to ensure the demobilization process is equally beneficial to those returning service members. However, we must be vigilant to identify “high risk” Soldiers and family situations and be watchful for the gaps in supervision and support that can occur when Soldiers and units are in transition, throughout our formations and RC units. It is our obligation and duty to insure that we apply the same amount of effort in preparing a servicemember to return to his or her family that we apply in preparing them for combat. They deserve nothing less and this will be an area of focus at our upcoming commander’s conference.

Finally, as our country focuses more of its attention on the fight in Afghanistan, First Army will continue to train deploying and contingency forces across a broad set of missions.

My priorities are to continue to provide the tough, realistic, mission-focused training the Reserve Component forces need for deployment while we transform and adapt to support future Army requirements.

Soldiers, Army civilians and family members can all participate in the Global Assessment Tool by visiting the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness website at: <http://www.army.mil/CSF/>.

- Lt. Gen. Thomas Miller



Leaders play key safety role

Continuous overseas operations are taking its toll on our forces. The Army Chief of Staff, Gen. George W. Casey stated that our Army is out of balance. Statistics in a number of areas are being gathered after more than eight years of overseas deployments for the Army, the National Guard and Army Reserve, many of those statistics are far above the national average.

Suicides are the number one concern in everyone’s mind these days, especially for leaders across the board. The Army is working hard to develop many programs for Soldiers, Family members, and civilians in being able to identify and assist those who need help. Learned behaviors often go unchallenged and quite often become high-risk behaviors. The Army’s Global Assessment Tool (GAT) and the learning modules in the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program are available now.

The Army continues to lose Soldiers in privately owned vehicle accidents. In Fiscal Year 2010, 62 percent of Army accidental fatalities were due to POV accidents. More than a third of the accidents happened in sedans, 24

percent on motorcycles and more than 80 Soldiers died in a POV while off-duty, many only 18 to 24 years old. More than half of those accidents involved speeding and nearly 20 percent were alcohol related. A great deal of responsibility is being asked of all our leaders to remain fully engaged with their Soldiers, in all aspects of our Soldiers’ daily lives, helping to ensure that they do the right thing while on and off-duty.

Soldiers need to know that their leaders are there for them willing to listen first then assist them with their matters or concerns. Family members and peers must remain vigilant and intervene when witnessing unnecessary and high risk behaviors.

Soldiers are our most valuable resource. Let’s take care of one another. Someday, someone will thank you for it.

Keep First Army Strong!
First Army Safe!
Hoohah!

- Sgt. Maj. Ronnie Cotton



Army releases health and suicide report

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Army News Service) - The Army has released the Health Promotion, Risk Reduction, and Suicide Prevention (HP/RR/SP) Report, the result of a focused 15-month effort to better understand the increasing rate of suicides in the force. This candid report is intended to inform and educate Army leaders on the importance of recognizing and reducing high risk behavior related to suicide and accidental death, and reducing the stigma associated with behavioral health and treatment. This report represents the next phase in the Army's ongoing campaign to promote resiliency in a force that has been at war for nearly a decade.

"The dedicated effort behind this report sends a clear message to our force that we take the resiliency of our soldiers and families very seriously," said Secretary of the Army John McHugh. "This effort is part of our culture to look closely at ourselves, and to make continuous improvements in our capability - but most importantly, to reduce the number of Soldiers we lose to suicide."

"This comprehensive review exposes gaps in how we identify, engage, and mitigate high-risk behavior among our Soldiers. After nearly a decade of war we must keep pace with the expanding needs of our strained Army, and continuously identify and address the gaps that exist in our policies, programs and services," said Chief of Staff Gen. George W. Casey Jr.

Casey told the Army's two- and three-star commanders and command sergeants major recently that "our challenge

over the next several years will be to maintain our combat edge at an appropriate tempo while reestablishing garrison systems to better care for our Soldiers and Families. The combination of Comprehensive Soldier Fitness with these health promotion efforts provides the foundation to improve the resilience of the force."

Unprecedented operational tempo has dictated that leaders remain primarily focused on preparing for their next deployment. As a result, enforcement of policies designated to ensure good order and discipline has atrophied. This, in turn, has led to an increasing population of Soldiers who display high risk behavior which erodes the health of the force.

The report grew out of a series of visits to six Army installations directed by Casey and led by Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Peter Chiarelli in Spring 2009 to look at suicide prevention efforts in the force. "What we witnessed were real indicators of stress on the force, and an increasing propensity for Soldiers to engage in high risk behavior," Chiarelli said.

"These findings demonstrate that many of our programs are unbalanced and lack integration, while reinforcing recommendations that will help us mendations that will help us improve programs and services," Chiarelli said.

"We've often said the Army is a reflection of society, but we have soldiers today who are experiencing a lifetime of stress during their first six years of service. Army leaders at all levels remain dedicated to promoting resiliency, coping skills, and help-seeking behavior across our force," Chiarelli said.

First in Deed

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The keys to safe driving

By Deborah Joyce
Fort McPherson Garrison Safety Director

Drowsiness and fatigue are dangers anytime you drive, but are especially dangerous on long trips along the expressway. Stop driving if you feel drowsy. Don't rely on stimulant drugs or caffeine. They are likely to make your driving even more hazardous. Expressway drivers are subject to "highway hypnosis," a condition of drowsiness or unawareness brought on by the monotony, the sound of the wind, the tires on the pavement, and the steady hum of the engine.

First Army
Safety

On long trips, it is a good idea to exercise your eyes to help keep you alert. Keep shifting your eyes from one area of the roadway to another and focus on various objects, both near and far, left and right. Conversation with other passengers and lively radio programs may also help you remain more alert. Of course, always pay attention to the traffic around you and potentially hazardous highway conditions.



Mental health counseling available

By John Kastenbauer
First Army deputy inspector general

We are a nation at war, and our Soldiers' mental fitness must be given the highest priority. Soldiers should be encouraged to seek mental health counseling without fear of being ostracized. We must remember that we have the responsibility to do everything possible to eliminate any stigma or adverse consequences for Soldiers who seek mental health assistance.

Commanders who have concerns that a Soldier under their command may be suffering from a legitimate mental health

First Army

IG

problem may refer the Soldier for a mental health evaluation (MHE). A recent Department of the Army Inspector General inspection found that often the commander referring the Soldier was unaware of, or misunderstood, the procedural differences between routine command MHE referrals and emergency referrals. The general information below is provided to assist commanders in complying with the procedural guidance for such referrals.

A commander who wishes to refer a Soldier for a non-emergency MHE must: 1) consult with a mental health provider (MHP) concerning the need for a MHE prior to referring the Soldier for a MHE, and 2) provide the Soldier with written notice of the MHE two working days before the MHE appointment. The notice must include:

- the date and time of the MHE;
- a brief description of the behavior that gave rise to the need for a referral;

- the name of the MHP with whom the commander consulted with prior to the referral.

- Contact information of resources that can assist the Soldier, such as an attorney, chaplain, or inspector general.

- A list of the Soldier's rights, which include:

- The right to consult with an Army attorney;
- The right to complain to the IG that the MHE was in reprisal for communication with chain of command, member of Congress or IG;

- The right to request a second MHE by another MHP;

- The right to communicate with an IG, attorney, member of Congress, or chaplain about the referral.

If a commander determines that a case constitutes an emergency (imminent danger to self or others), the priority is to protect the Soldier and others from harm. The commander should still try to contact a MHP, but if one is not available, the Soldier should be escorted to the nearest MHP for a MHE. The commander will provide, as soon as practical, the memorandum and statement of rights described above to the Soldier. If the commander was unable to consult with a MHP prior to transporting the Soldier for the MHE, the commander will promptly provide a memorandum to the MHP documenting the circumstances and observations of the Soldier that resulted in the emergency referral.

The key to the MHE referral procedure is the completion of the referral paperwork of DOD form O6490.4, enclosure 4, and timely consultation with an MHP.

Taking these steps will preclude IG complaints from Soldiers that they were improperly referred for a MHE. More importantly, it will assure Soldiers of timely, confidential mental health assistance.



Army News

Some Soldiers may be missing out on stop-loss pay

WASHINGTON, D.C. (Army News Service) - A key lawmaker behind the creation of a monthly \$500 stop-loss allowance says the Defense Department may not be doing enough to locate separated service members who are now on the brink of losing the right to apply for the money.

Sen. Frank Lautenberg, D-N.J., said only about 25,000 of the more than 145,000 eligible have applied for and received payments.

There is an Oct. 21 deadline to apply for payments, and Lautenberg expects an all-out push from the military using "every available outlet" to warn people they could be losing the money.

With payments set at \$500 a month for every month in which a person spent one day under stop-loss orders since September 2001, and with six and a half months the average time spent beyond their separation date when orders were given, more than 100,000 people would receive aver-

age payments of \$3,500 — if they can be found.

Army officials launched a campaign two weeks ago to remind eligible troops and veterans of the looming deadline, but Lautenberg said he wants the military to do more.

In a letter to Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Lautenberg says there is time to try to locate people owed money if the military and Veterans Affairs Department will work together.

"I recognize that the Department of Defense has faced many challenges in reaching the eligible population and educating them on the application process, but the Department should use every available outlet to locate these service members, veterans, and beneficiaries and inform them of their eligibility," Lautenberg said in the letter.

Among the ideas he suggested are efforts to send letters to the last known address of those who were under stop-loss orders, contacting veterans organizations for their help, and advertising in mass media.



Key lessons learned at conference

By Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Mike Thomas
First Army Chaplain's Office

First Army chaplains are ensuring that their 200-unit ministry teams are receiving theatre-specific training centric to their units. To help with this, the First Army Chaplain's Office hosted a Single Integrated Training Plan (SITP) Ministry Team Conference at Fort Gillem.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Michael Thomas, First Army deputy command chaplain, led teams in an exercise to define roles and responsibilities. Chaplain (Col.) Steve Holley, Mobilization Chaplain, provided an information packet on joint assessment and explained the importance the command has in identifying Soldiers' religious preference.

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Bob Phillips, Garrison Chaplain, provided insight to the observer controller/trainer, a role he formerly filled. He stressed the importance of chaplains being integrated with the staff. Unit ministry teams (UMTs) must understand the commander's intent and be involved in staff planning. Also, in order to provide ministry and religious support in full spectrum operations, the chaplain and chaplain assistant have to understand tactical operations, battle tracking and counterinsurgency operations.

Col. George Geczy III briefed the First Army Ministry Teams on the commanding general's training guidance and

SITP. Geczy's brief had an overview of the First Army training mission, and he explained how the SITP is improving the training process.

Chaplain (Col.) Terry Meek, First Army command chaplain and Sgt. Maj. Wilburn Penick, senior command chaplain NCO, explained how First Army command chaplain training guidance complements First Army's mission.

First Army

Chaplain

"My training vision is to provide a training environment that is full spectrum operations-driven, realistic, mission-focused, and demanding," Meek said. He added the conference will help "enable UMTs to meet command religious support requirements and Soldiers' spiritual fitness in any theater."

"The SITP Training Conference provided superb training and team collaboration," said Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Trenton Lewis, Division East chaplain. "This year's Ministry Team Training Conference set the stage to ensure UMT survivability. Our goal to provide premier training, and to place UMTs who are tremendous combat multipliers on the battlefield, will ensure the ministry of nurturing the living, caring for the wounded, and honoring the dead takes place with dignity."

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Randy Edwards, Division West chaplain, expects the lessons learned to reap benefits: "The conference laid a foundation for the division ministry teams to forge an integrated plan in order to execute premier Unit Ministry Team training at the MTCs."



Attendees at the conference, from left to right, Staff Sgt. Barry Townes, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Wilfredo Santiago, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Trenton Lewis, Sgt. 1st Class Fred Cohen, Chaplain (Col.) Terry Meek, Sgt. Maj. Wilburn Penick, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Randy Edwards, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Dan Ettner, Master Sgt. John Wright, Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Michael Thomas, and Chaplain (Col.) Jim DeCamp. (Photo by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) Bob Phillips)

Army News

New policies take aim at brain injuries

SAN ANTONIO (Army News Service) - Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr. has sent a message to commanders throughout the force to reinforce new policies designed to minimize the effects of mild traumatic brain injuries, or mTBI.

Mild traumatic brain injuries are more commonly known as concussions. Explosions on the battlefield often cause these injuries, but they also can occur through falls, sports injuries, auto accidents or any other event resulting in a blow to the head.

The policies require any Soldier who

sustains a direct blow to the head or loss of consciousness, or is within 50 meters of a blast (inside or outside), or is in a vehicle associated with a blast event, collision, or rollover, or is dismounted within 50 meters of a blast, or is in a building or vehicle damaged by a blast or accident to undergo a medical evaluation, followed by 24 hours of downtime and medical clearance before returning to duty.

Comprehensive medical evaluations are mandatory for anyone sustaining three concussions within 12 months.

Research shows that concussions

are treatable. Receiving prompt care, regardless of the severity of injury, is the key to regaining the highest functional level possible.

"I want to reinforce the need to fully implement and adhere to this mTBI management program," Casey said in the message. "We are completing our ninth year at war, and our force is stretched by the cumulative effects of the last nine years. Effectively managing our fighters is essential to our long-term success in this war. That is what this program is about."



ATRRS enrollment pays off for Soldiers

By Robert J. Redord
First Army G3 Training

Have you ever wondered how to enroll your Soldier into a coveted class that could boost your Commander's Readiness Report? If you answered yes, read on. Army Training Requirements and Resources Systems (ATRRS) is the avenue to your Soldier's successful enrollment. ATRRS is the Department of the Army's Management Information

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System for managing Soldier training. This system supports the Training Requirements Division, Department of the Army G-1 in its Army-wide mission of integrating all phases of input to training management, during peacetime and mobilization. Training NCOs and unit administrators must use the ATRRS enrollment application process for any course that your non-qualified Soldier may require.

Mobilization and training of our Reserve Component (RC) Soldiers are First Army missions. How else would you have trained and ready forces than to start one Soldier at a time? Individual readiness is ultimately the Soldiers responsibility, but the buck stops at the Training Section of every unit level organization with the capability of inputting Soldiers into ATRRS. Take some time and visit www.atrrs.army.mil/atrrscc. This site is the catalog for ATRRS courses - sort of like a buffet table of training courses. So pick up your mouse and click away. Remember to contact your training NCO or unit administrator to initiate course enrollment.

The following ATRRS operators are available to assist commanders and command sergeants major in their effort to ensure trained and ready forces enter our First Army Mobilization training centers (MTCs):

First Army G3 Training, Fort Gillem. Robert Redford 404-469-4474 robert.redford@us.army.mil; First Army West, Fort Hood, Texas: Emanuel Tucker 254-553-4723 emanuel.tuck-

Soldier help available online

By CW4 Darryl Sams
First Army G1 office

There have been issues with evaluations in AKO My Forms with checkmarks being inserted into "X" boxes. This is possibly due to the conversion from PureEdge to Lotus forms. For those who are having this problem, HRC Evaluation Systems Office has provided a short tutorial at <https://forums.bcks.army.mil/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=1126932>. This will explain how to change the checkmarks to "Xs" prior to submission of reports.

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G1

The Chief Army Reserve has advised commanders to begin using the Army Reserve PVB process to assist with shaping the force. As the CAR indicated, the PVB process affords the Army Reserve the opportunity to promote officers who demonstrate the potential to serve in positions of higher responsibility and fill current vacancies. He further indicated his intent is to have the right Soldier in the right place, at the right time.

The Army Reserve Position Vacancy Board promotion promotes officers to fill troop program units and vacancies that cannot be filled with officers already assigned to the unit, nearby unit, the individual mobilization augmentees (IMA), or the individual ready reserve (IRR).



Davenport has much to offer

By Les Harvey
First Army RIA Liaison Officer

Called "Iowa's Front Porch", because of its location along the Mississippi River, Davenport is the largest of the Quad Cities with a population of just under 100,000.

Davenport features exceptional schools, a variety of housing choices, and state of the art health care.

Education takes top billing

Whether you have children in pre-school or college, it's all about choice in Davenport. Davenport has education for pre-kindergarten through Ph.D. programs, at both private, parochial, and public schools.

St. Ambrose University and Palmer College, the birthplace of chiropractic medicine, are both in Davenport. If you're looking for community education classes, we have those, too, through the Eastern Iowa Community College District.

Davenport community schools have the resources of a large district but the small class sizes and hands-on approach of a smaller school.

In eighth grade, students adopt a five-year career track that guides them through their high school years and best pre-

pares them for post-secondary education. Students have the option to enroll in a variety of dual credit courses, earning up to two years college credit at graduation.

Our extracurricular offerings are as diverse as our community. Davenport community schools have a rich history of award winning fine arts programs as well as a strong athletic legacy.

Welcome home!

Davenport offers a variety of housing options including historic riverfront homes, chic downtown lofts, new construction in our Prairie Heights neighborhood and quiet bungalows on tree-lined boulevards. The city has a lower cost of living than the national average. In 2009, Forbes ranked Davenport as the second best metropolitan area for cost of living. CNN Money ranked Davenport as the sixteenth most affordable housing in the country.

Homeowners can take advantage of incentives to buy, build or renovate in Davenport. Residents may be eligible to receive a 50 percent Davenport NOW rebate on city property taxes for 10 years. No matter what's on your wish list for your new home, there is ample room within city limits to find a property to build the home of your dreams.

First Army
RIA LNO

Where the Mississippi celebrates

Davenport residents can take advantage of being in the heart of the action. Shopping, dining, entertainment, and recreation are a short drive from your front door.

Also downtown Davenport has experienced an expansive river renaissance.

The area boasts the River Music Experience, the Davenport Freighthouse Farmer's Market and internationally recognized Figge Art Museum that is an architectural icon along Davenport's magnificent riverfront.

The music runs deep in this part of the country with festivals and celebrations highlighting blues, jazz, reggae, classical, country, rock and roll and everything in between.

When it comes to recreation, residents can take advantage of all the area has to offer year round. In spring and summer, the city's parks are packed with parents, children, and baseball fans. The city has numerous parks that offer something for everyone, such as botanical gardens, aquatic centers, soccer, horseback riding, golf courses, bicycle paths, ice skating and tennis courts.

So come explore for yourself why the U.S. Conference of Mayors named Davenport one of the most livable small cities in America.



Family news you can use

By Larinza Stinnett
First Army Headquarters Chief of Family Programs

Families approaching a Permanent Change of Station can request a sponsor at their new duty station. Sponsors serve as your representative before you arrive, provide information and show you around upon your arrival.

For specific information on a particular installation, you should check the gaining installation's web site and the gaining unit's web site to determine if they offer online sponsorship requests. If not, you can apply for sponsorship using DA Form 5434.

Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance

FSSA is a voluntary financial benefit program for military Families intended to increase a service member's income

First Army Headquarters Family Programs

in order to remove their household from eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly the food stamp program). Active and reserve component members on active duty with multiple family members meeting the income-eligibility requirements may participate in the FSSA program. A member must be entitled to basic allowance for subsistence (BAS) or partial BAS to be considered eligible for FSSA. More information is available at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/fssa>.

Military Spouse Career Advancement Accounts Program

The MyCAA program will resume Oct. 25, but with some significant changes to the popular spouse employment program. Changes include a reduction in the amount of financial aid, a change in the population eligible to receive that aid from all military spouses to spouses of junior service members, and more robust counseling services.

Financial aid will be limited to spouses of active duty service members in pay grades E-1 to E-5, W-1 to W-2, and O-1 to O-2, as well as the spouses of activated guardsmen and reservists within those ranks. Those spouses eligible to receive aid can use the money to fund associate's degrees, licenses, and certification programs, not higher degrees.

Spouses can learn more about MyCAA by calling Military OneSource at 1-800-342-9647, or by visiting <http://www.militaryonesource.com>.

Global Assessment Tool (GAT) for Spouses

Comprehensive Soldier fitness is an Army program to assist Soldiers, Family members and civilians in developing a holistic approach to fitness. The Army has long recognized that physical fitness is necessary to survive and win on the battlefield.

A Soldier or Family member begins the fitness process by taking the global assessment Tool, found on the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness website at <http://www.army.mil/CSF>.



Changes make clearance investigations easier

By Carl Pfeifer
First Army G2 office

Clearance investigations have gone from the days of carbon paper to personal computer programs to electronic questionnaires for investigations processing (e-QIP), the new standard for submitting investigations. Here are some hints

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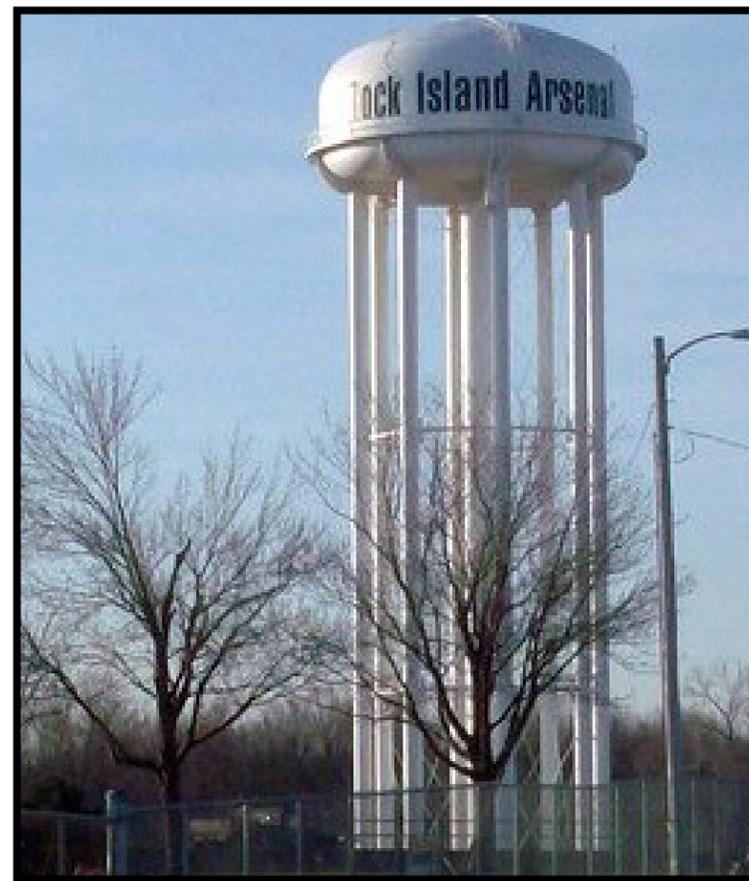
to make the process easier. First, make sure to read all directions. Addresses and contact information must be complete, especially for references. If necessary, the subject can save the work, exit e-QIP and return with the missing data.

It is equally important to make sure the information in each section agrees with the information in other sections. You cannot list a CONUS residence and then have a work address overseas. The Office of Personnel Management will ask how you commute each day.

Also, check for derogatory information. You can obtain a

free report from each major credit bureau once a year at <https://www.annualcreditreport.com/cra/index.jsp>. No matter how embarrassing, answer each question accurately and completely. Listing just the facts can paint a damning picture. The e-QIP allows the subject to provide comments and context for each piece of derogatory information.

The e-QIP has numerous advantages. It can be used on any computer with Internet access but protected by three golden questions devised by the subject. Once you complete a section, you can move from one section to another freely. Your information remains secure on an OPM server. After the first time, you simply update your file. When the security manager submits the completed packet, OPM has it instantly. The program also allows you to download a copy of your packet. If nothing else, you have a compact record of your relatives for birthdays and holiday cards. The investigations using e-QIP are highly automated. If the information is complete and accurate, Secret level investigations can be completed in as little as a month.



First Army NCOs and Soldiers of the Year compete

By 1st Lt. Jeffrey Gruidl
Division West Public Affairs Office

FORT McCOY, Wis. – With pre-dawn temperatures already near 90 degrees, four Soldiers gathered here to compete for First Army NCO and Soldier of the Year.

Sgt. 1st Class Julie Hampton, representing Division East and Spc. Kevin Jarvis, representing Division West were the winners. Runners-up were Sgt. First Class Kraig Bowen of Division West and Spc. Ashley Killian of Division East.

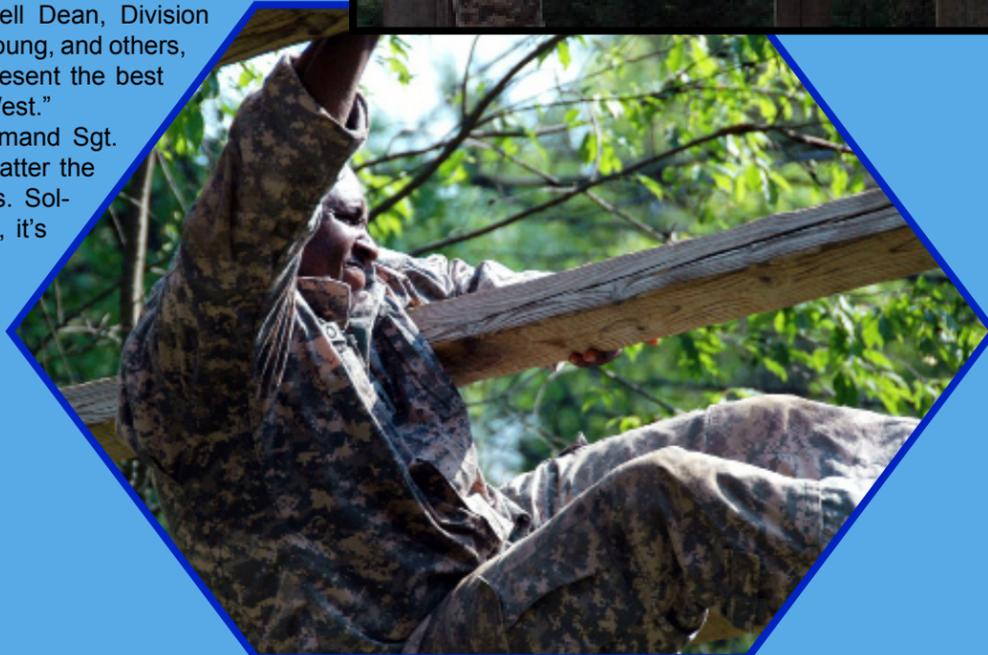
The three-day competition began with the Army physical fitness test. This was followed by the Soldiers completing the confidence and condition course, which requires the Soldiers to navigate climbing over and under walls, various rope challenges, and tests of strength and conditioning. Next for the competitors was a march in full gear to a firing range, where Soldiers were tested on their knowledge of various military weapons, tactics and M4 weapon qualification.

Following the range, Soldiers took part in both a day and night land navigation challenge. The first day of competition didn't end till 2:30 a.m. the following morning. Then came weapon cleaning, a written test, and an Army combatives test and competition.

The final day of the competition was the board. The Soldiers, dressed in their class A uniforms, were tested on uniform appearance, military knowledge, basic rifle marksmanship, troop leading procedures, first aid and U.S. history.

At a banquet honoring the competitors, attended by then-First Army Command Sgt. Maj. Ronald T. Riling, Division East Command Sgt. Maj. Marvell Dean, Division West Command Sgt. Maj. Terry Young, and others, Riling said, "These Soldiers represent the best of First Army Division East and West."

Guest speaker, retired Command Sgt. Maj. William Gainey said, "No matter the outcome, all of you, are winners. Soldiers will look to you as leaders, it's your job to lead them."



Left center, Spc. Ashley M. Killian, 188th Infantry Brigade, makes her way across the horizontal bars.

Lower left, Sgt. 1st Class Kevin J. Bowens, 120th Infantry Brigade, winds his way through the monkey bars as he tackles the obstacle course.

Right, Sgt. 1st Class Julie A. Hampton, 157th Infantry Brigade, maneuvers her way through a ground obstacle.

Below, Spc. Kevin S. Jarvis, 3-383 Training Support Battalion, 166th Aviation Brigade, ponders his next move.

(Photos by Master Sgt. Jerome Debarge, 181st Brigade Public Affairs)

S.D. Employers visit 196 MEB

By Capt. Marvin J. Baker and
Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen
Division West Public Affairs Office

FORT HOOD, Texas – Some learn by watching but others learn by doing, and that's how employers learned as they interacted with Soldiers of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, South Dakota Army National Guard.

The 24 employers started their day by boarding a KC-135 Stratotanker military aircraft on their way from Sioux Falls, S.D., to Fort Hood, Texas.

"The Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Boss Lift transports employers from their workplace to their military training sites where they observe the type and quality of training their employees receive," said Capt. Lona Christensen, ESGR executive director.

On the first day of their visit, the employers watched the personal security detachment conduct urban operations training under the watchful eyes of Soldiers from the 120th Infantry Brigade, First Army Division West.

The 120th Infantry Brigade is a training support unit that conducts post-mobilization training for Army Reserve and Army National Guard Soldiers before they deploy overseas.

The training regimen includes exercises in weapons qualifications, improvised explosive device awareness, and force protection. The training support unit uses realistic scenarios and role players to create a realistic and tough training environment.

The employers got a first-hand look at the realism of the training when many of them volunteered to stand in as Afghan citizens complete with traditional dress and head coverings.

"I have just been in awe. I can't believe civilians get to do this. It's just been amazing," said Connie Tveidt, of the South Dakota Governor's Office.

Tveidt said she couldn't wait to get home to spread the word about her trip.

"Everyone will be so envious, especially my husband," said Tveidt.

Many of the employers said getting to see and participate in the training is better than hearing about it.

"This is an opportunity for them to do something they have never done before in their whole life," said Dennis Flanery, ESGR committee volunteer.

The group also had the opportunity to participate in a marksmanship competition using the Engagement Skills Trainer 2000. The EST 2000 is a computer-simulated weapons qualification system used to prepare Soldiers before they go to the weapons range.

On the second day, the group saw some of the safety training and equipment the Army uses to protect their Soldiers including the HMMWV Egress Assistance Trainer and a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle.

The employers weren't the only ones who learned about the experiences of the National Guard Soldiers training on



Capt. Scott Mosely (center) of the 120th Infantry Brigade gives weapons training to a group of South Dakota employers at Fort Hood, Texas. (Photo by Capt. Marvin Baker, 120th Infantry Brigade, Division West Public Affairs)

North Fort Hood. The Gatesville, Texas, Chamber of Commerce also learned something about the ESGR program.

"It's a great program to let the employers actually see what the Soldiers are doing. We want to let them know that even though they're miles from home, there's a community close by that supports them," said Carla Manning, the military affairs representative of the Gatesville Chamber of Commerce.

Manning and nine other members from the Gatesville community met with the group of employers when they organized an evening social.

Susie Gunnels, executive director of the Gatesville Chamber of Commerce, said, "I would like to have a day where people in the community have the opportunity to go on base and see some of the training, dine in the facilities, and listen to what the Soldiers have to say. I don't think that people in the community realize what's there and what the Army does to support the deploying Soldiers."

The 196th MEB left for Afghanistan this summer, and members of the Chamber of Commerce and the employers say they now have a better understanding of the sacrifices of the Soldiers and are more committed to supporting them on the home front.



From Big Band to Broadband

World War II dance hall prepares units for OIF

Story and photo by
Sgt. 1st Class Gail Braymen
Division West Public Affairs

FORT HOOD, Texas – In the 1940s, when Fort Hood was just a camp and gas for Studebakers cost less than a quarter a gallon, the square-sided, high-raftered building beside Texas State Highway 36 hosted thousands of spit-shined GIs and young Texas belles swinging to big band tunes on the polished wood dance floor.

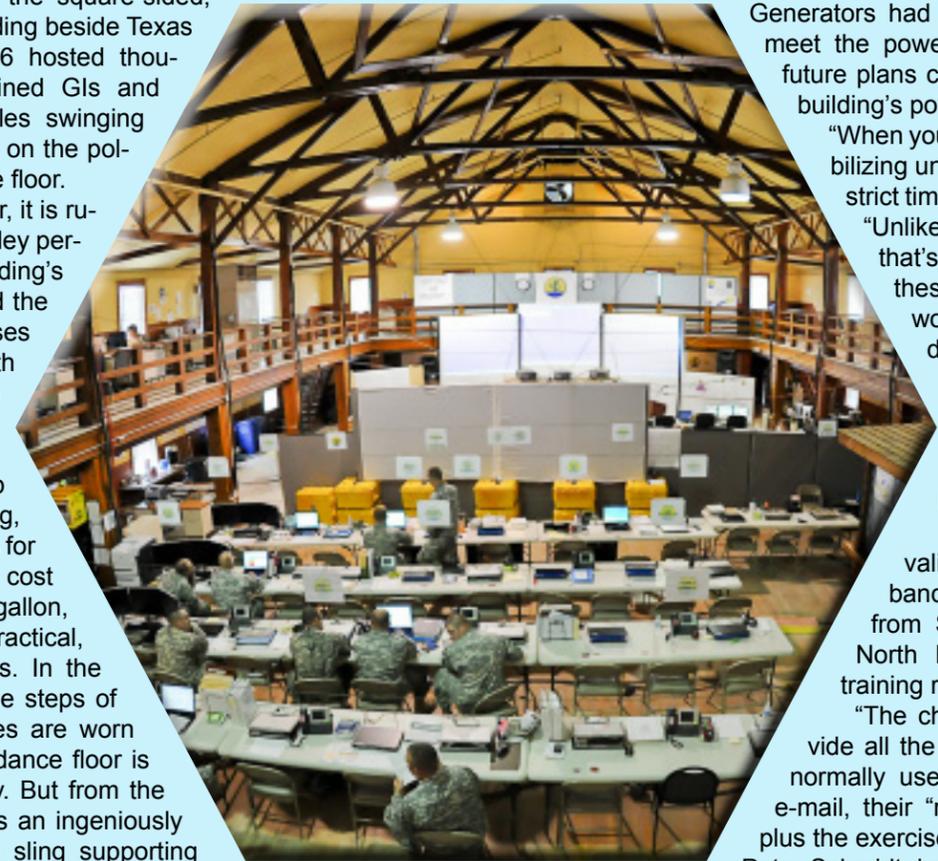
A few years later, it is rumored, Elvis Presley performed on the building's modest stage and the twin wood staircases were packed with delirious, bobby-socked fans.

Several decades later, Camp Hood is a great big, grown-up fort, gas for compact hybrids cost three dollars a gallon, and GIs have practical, unshineable boots. In the old dance hall, the steps of the twin staircases are worn and creaky. The dance floor is scuffed and dusty. But from the high rafters hangs an ingeniously engineered cable sling supporting three multimedia projectors. On the dance floor, neat lines of tables hold scores of sleek laptops. Behind the corner bar, where light once glistened from rows of bottles, rows of tiny green lights blink busily from droning stacks of computer servers.

It's broadband, not Big Band, that rocks the dance hall now. The "Boondocks" building, as it's called now, has been reborn as a 21st century, state-of-the-art virtual exercise simulation center, and its dance card is full, helping train Army National Guard and Reserve units for deployments.

Units coming through Fort Hood for post-mobilization training conducted by First Army Division West eat, sleep and train for several weeks exclusively at North Fort Hood. But when it came time for their culminating training event, they had to be transported to a battle simulation center in the main post area.

Converting the Boondocks into a battle simulation center at North Fort Hood



First Army Division West converted this World War II dance hall into a battle simulation center at Fort Hood, Texas.

saves Soldiers a 90-minute bus ride every day, said Lt. Col. John Pugliese, Division West's information office chief. Over the course of a 14-day exercise with nearly 550 people, "they save roughly 11,400 man-hours," he said.

Two units currently training for missions in Iraq contributed to the Boondocks makeover: the 103rd Expeditionary Sustainment Command, an Army

Reserve unit from Des Moines, Iowa, and the 224th Sustainment Brigade, a California Army National Guard unit headquartered in Long Beach, Calif. Computer experts from both units, along with staff from Division West headquarters and the division's 120th Infantry Brigade, spent about two weeks setting up and testing a couple hundred computers and servers, Pugliese said.

Generators had to be brought in to meet the power requirements, but future plans call for upgrading the building's power supply.

"When you're working with mobilizing units, they're on a very strict timeline," Pugliese said.

"Unlike an active-duty unit that's doing an exercise, these guys also have to worry about their Soldier readiness processing and the other tasks required for deployment. So they have a very big balancing act."

Also, technicians validated that enough bandwidth was running from South Fort Hood to North Fort Hood to meet training requirements.

"The challenge was to provide all the services the staff is normally used to getting – their e-mail, their "real" secret internet, plus the exercise network," said Maj. Peter Schmidt, information office deputy chief for the 103rd. "It wasn't just an exercise that had to succeed, it was the real-time collaboration we're doing with the unit in theater, so when we replace them in the future, we're ready to go."



Division East celebrates women's equality

By Sgt. Amburr Reese
First Army Division East Public Affairs Office

FORT MEADE, Md. – During the 1920 presidential elections more than one million American women stood in line to cast their votes for the first time in U.S. history. It was on Aug. 26, 1920 that the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was finally ratified, and permitted all American women, like men, the full rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

The nation celebrated the 90th anniversary of the 19th Amendment's passage on August 26. Women's Equality Day was proclaimed an official commemoration in honor of this event by Rep. Bella Abzug (D-NY) in 1971.

"Celebrating women's equality is important; it is important to be able to reflect on how things were," said Sgt. 1st Class Sharon Knickerbocker, senior human resources sergeant, First Army Division East. "To be able to see how women have moved forward and how drastically different women are treated is important."

Knickerbocker, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, shares in a rich tradition that started during WWI when a corps of female telephone operators was formed, called the "Hello Girls."

The Hello Girls were established in late 1917, when Gen. John J. Pershing, commander of the American First Army, now known as First Army, published an appeal for bilingual telephone-switchboard operators in U.S. newspapers.

The emergency appeal called for women who held the position of switchboard operators to be sworn into the U.S. Army Signal Corps. In the appeal, Pershing stated that women have the patience and perseverance to do long, arduous detailed work.

"Patience is something that is typically associated with women, we stick with things," said Maj. Latonya Walker, clinical operations officer also with First Army Division East.

Out of the 7,000 women who applied, only 450 were accepted. After completing their Signal Corps training at Fort Franklin, Md., presently known as Fort George G. Meade, the Hello Girls were deployed to different parts of Europe as part of the American First Army.

Upon returning from Europe and despite the fact that they wore U.S. Army uniforms, the Hello Girls were not afforded honorable discharges. They were considered military "civilians," like Department of the Army civilians today, because Army enlistment regulations specified Soldiers should be male.

The Hello Girls faced even more equality struggles off the battle field. It was not until 1978, when Congress approved veteran status and honorable discharges for the Hello Girls, following a long battle for equality.



World War I telephone operators known as the "Hello Girls" pose for a photograph in France. The women served as second lieutenants and earned \$33 per month. (Photo courtesy of Fort George G. Meade Museum)

"To come back [from Europe] and not be recognized equally must have been difficult," said Knickerbocker.

She added that it is amazing women like these who have served in the past and knew they were not seen as equal, yet still made the sacrifice for our country. Knickerbocker, who enlisted in 1991, said that since she joined the Army even she has seen changes.

"There are more opportunities available for women, like medics going out on patrol or females training to be fighter pilots," she added.

Women presently comprise more than 15 percent of the total Army.

They are allowed to serve in a variety of non-direct combat positions that total about 70 percent of all Army specialties, according to statistics provided on Army.mil.

"Women's equality is an ongoing effort," said Walker. "There are always people who say you shouldn't do this and you shouldn't do that, but once one person does it--and they do it successfully--things get easier."

The road for women's equality has been long and arduous, but female servicemembers continue traveling down it. Women have served in various capacities with the military since the Revolutionary War and their bravery and determination for women's rights does not go unnoticed.

Walker hopes that as we progress into the future, society will realize it takes a collaborative effort to obtain goals and no one will be discounted or dismissed, referring to the struggles for equality.

"A woman's work is never done."



Training machine fine-tuned

Commander's conference yields positive results

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Gail Braymen
First Army Division West Public Affairs Office

FORT HOOD, Texas – The senior leaders of First Army Division West's seven training brigades gathered at division headquarters to fine-tune the unit dubbed "Training Machine in the West" during a quarterly commander's conference.

Division commanding general, Maj. Gen. Charles Anderson, led the commanders and command sergeants major in discussions including best training practices, threat overviews in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, the Army's new holistic Soldier-care program.

"After almost nine years of war, we've upgraded our body armor a dozen times," Anderson said. "Now we need to upgrade the invisible armor of our Soldiers."

Division West trains and validates mobilized Army Reserve and Army National Guard units for deployment to combat or other contingency operations and, as directed, also trains units of the active Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and United States partner nations.

"Training troops is the most important thing we do," Anderson said.

The division's second priority at this time is the continuing transformation of the training brigades, set to be complete next year. Two of the brigades, the 120th Infantry Brigade and 166th Aviation Brigade, were joined at Fort Hood by the 479th Field Artillery Brigade, which uncased its colors at Fort Hood in July. The 402nd Field Artillery Brigade has left California to join the 5th Armored Brigade at Fort Bliss, Texas, and the 181st Infantry Brigade at Fort McCoy, Wisc., is preparing to join the 191st Infantry Brigade at Fort Lewis, Wash.

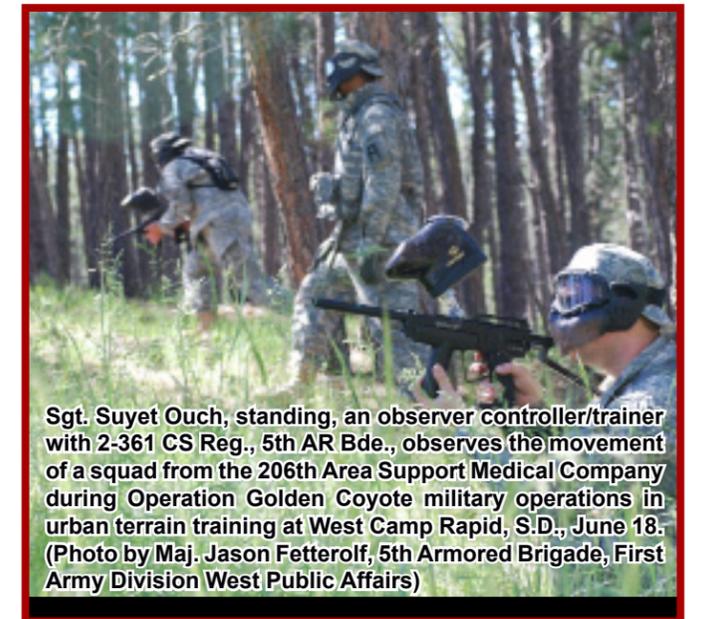
A division-level Family Readiness Group conference held in conjunction with the commanders conference emphasized communication and relationship-building, said Tammy Anderson, wife of Maj. Gen. Anderson.

The leadership of the training brigades "is a little dispersed," Mrs. Anderson said. "We are scattered; we are an anomaly. This way, we all come together. We grow from each other, we learn from each other, we share ideas, we share camaraderie, and we share friendship."

Getting together as a unit builds strength and cohesion, Mrs. Anderson said, "and that's what the Army's about."



Senior leaders of First Army Division West headquarters and its seven training brigades discuss Comprehensive Soldier Fitness, led by Chaplain (Col.) Orman Boyd during a commanders' conference at Fort Hood, Texas.



Sgt. Suyet Ouch, standing, an observer controller/trainer with 2-361 CS Reg., 5th AR Bde., observes the movement of a squad from the 206th Area Support Medical Company during Operation Golden Coyote military operations in urban terrain training at West Camp Rapid, S.D., June 18. (Photo by Maj. Jason Fetterolf, 5th Armored Brigade, First Army Division West Public Affairs)

Medics no dummies at training

Story and photos by
Sgt. 1st Class Gail Braymen
Division West Public Affairs Office

FORT HOOD, Texas – Nearly 30 First Army trainers/mentors have learned to operate and maintain programmable medical training mannequins so sophisticated that “the only thing they can’t do is get up and walk around,” said one Soldier.

First Army uses two types of computer-operated, interactive mannequins that can bleed, cry and vomit, and are as close as you can get to real life, said Sgt. 1st Class Paul Robinson, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of combat lifesaver training with First Army Division West’s 5th Armored Brigade at Fort Bliss, Texas.

First Army Division West, headquartered at Fort Hood, and Division East, headquartered at Fort Meade, Md., have a total of 16 training support brigades that train tens of thousands of Army National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers for deployments every year.

Using the lifelike training mannequins will “help the medics out so they know ... what they can possibly see in the future overseas,” Robinson said.

Medical training mannequins have come a long way since he first started working with them in the 80s, said Master Sgt. Ralph Hurley, senior clinical operations noncommissioned officer-in-charge with First Army headquarters at Fort Gillem, Ga.

“Instead of just a piece of plastic lying on a table, Soldiers will actually be able to make the mannequin an interactive part of the training,” Hurley said. “If somebody says, ‘Oh, it’s just a mannequin,’ and leans on it, these guys can actually make the mannequin scream. It turns it into as live a patient as you can have without it being a human.”

During the week of instruction, the trainers/mentors learned to program the mannequins to simulate different types of injuries.

“They will put the simulations in, so that when the medical providers come up to the mannequin, it reacts to certain things,” Hurley said. “If you have a patient that has just a head wound, you can program in only the specific things that deal with a head wound. If you do something wrong, they will react to what you do wrong. You can literally kill a patient.”

The trainers/mentors also learned to enhance the realism of the mannequins with interchangeable limbs and body parts – some diseased or wounded, some healthy and whole – and moulage. It adds up to using the mannequins to their fullest capabilities, said Staff Sgt. Roger Trotman, a medic and combat lifesaver instructor with First Army Division East’s 72nd Field Artillery Brigade at Fort Meade, Md.

The manikins give instructors a degree of control they never had using Soldiers as simulated casualties, Trotman said. “It’s a little difficult to make Soldiers vomit on command. You have more control (with the manikins). You can really focus in on specific tasks and specific things that you want to get across.”

ting children and the community about nutrition. Throughout the day, the community had the opportunity to be educated at the health fair portion of the challenge. Free blood pressure checks and body mass indexes were given to the community.



First Army Soldiers monitor vital signs on a computerized medical training mannequin at North Fort Hood, Texas.

Training in the West...



Left - Afghan role players interact with Soldiers of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 184th Expeditionary Sustainment Command and its subordinate units during a culminating training event Aug. 23. First Army Division West's 120th Infantry Brigade is preparing the units for their logistics mission in Afghanistan. The 120th uses real-world events and trainers knowledgeable in Afghan culture to train Soldiers deploying to Afghanistan. (Photo by Pfc. Carl Havlik, 166th Aviation Brigade, Division West Public Affairs)



Right- Maj. Gen. Eddy M. Spurgin, left, commanding general of the Texas Army National Guard's 36th Infantry Division, talks with a notional Iraqi military leader, right, as Maj. Gen. Charles A. Anderson, First Army Division West commanding general, observes during a command post exercise at Camp Mabry, Texas, Aug. 24. Division West is training the 36th ID to serve as U.S. Division South in Iraq later this year. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Merrion LaSonde, 36th Infantry Division Public Affairs)



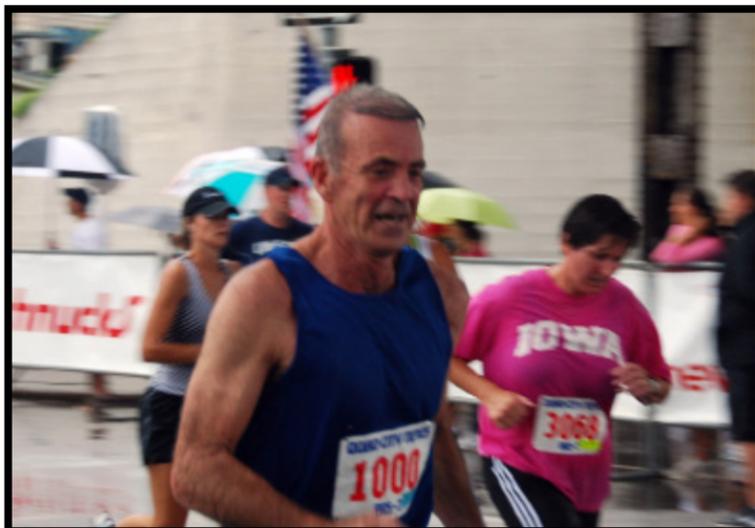
Left - Soldiers practice hitting targets in the ground-fire phase of door gunnery training conducted by First Army Division West's 166th Aviation Brigade Aug. 20 at Dalton Mountain Range, North Fort Hood, Texas. (Photo by Pfc. Carl Havlik, 166th Aviation Brigade, Division West Public Affairs)

First Army runners compete in Iowa race

DAVENPORT, Iowa - A mix of Soldiers and civilians represented First Army in the Bix 7 race here. The seven-mile event featured about 15,000 participants.

Running for First Army were Chaplain (Col.) James DeCamp, Lt. Col. Michael Brantley, Lt. Col. Matthew Ruzicka, Lt. Col. Jeffery Van, Maj. Nikki Blystone, Capt. Richard Palagonia, and Edward Lindeke.

First Army's participation in the race was part of the ongoing cooperation between the unit and the Quad Cities Area as First Army prepares to move to the area in 2011.



Above, First Army civilian Edward Lindeke approaches the finish line of the seven-mile event. (Photo by W. Wayne Marlow, First Army PAO)

Left, the First Army Bix 7 participants after the race. From left are Lt. Col. Jeffery Van, Maj. Nikki Blystone, Capt. Richard Palagonia, Lt. Col. Michael Brantley, Lt. Col. Matthew Ruzicka, Edward Lindeke, and Chaplain (Col.) James DeCamp. (Photo by Robert Saxon, First Army Public Affairs)



Welcome, New Commanders and CSMs at First Army



Colonels and Command Sgts. Maj. attended a Command Team briefing at Fort Gillem on September 8 and 9. From left to right, front row: CSM Isaia T. Vimoto, DIV West, Col. David A. Bushey, 157 IN Bde, Col. Lawrence Madkins, 166 AVN Bde, CSM Steven B. Brown, 479 FA Bde, Col. Patrick J. Dohahoe, 4 CAV Bde, Col. Timothy Newsome, 205 IN Bde, CSM Chris Amagliana, 166 AVN Bde; Back Row: CSM Christopher G. Gilpin, 189 IN Bed, Col. Kirk Nilsson, 402 FA Bde, CSM Darrell L. Dixon, 4 CAV Bde, Col. Gary Brito, 120 IN Bde, Col. William Turner, 479 FA Bde.

Joint venture produces shoot house

By Sgt Belynda Faulkner
Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center Public Affairs

CAMP SHELBY, Miss. – After a decade of planning, the joint venture between the 177th Armored Brigade and Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center has led to soldiers training in a world-class Live Fire Shoot House at Camp Shelby. The shoot house is designed for soldiers to become proficient in clearing buildings with live ammunition – a situation they could encounter while deployed overseas. During the training exercises in the shoot house, soldiers have a brief moment to decide whether a target is combative or friendly and then engage accordingly.

CSJFTC and Range Control initiated the development of the facility, and the 177th Brigade provided input and feedback as to how the training would be conducted and how the certification of deploying units would be handled. The three elements worked together to develop the operational and safety procedures and the official testing and certification of the facility itself.



File Photo

The shoot house was designed by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and allows for live rounds to be fired in any direction without the danger of ricochet or penetration of a wall and causing injury. The walls are covered with AR 500 steel dura block panels, capable of withstanding 2,500 bullets before needing to be replaced. In addition, there is a catwalk above the building that allows Trainer Mentors a safe observation point.

When complete it will also have a state-of-the-art video monitoring and sound system. This system will be used during the unit's after action review to assist the instructors in demonstrating what the unit did correctly and where improvements can be made. The video monitoring system will also allow for the Trainer Mentors to see what the soldiers are doing and make on-the-spot corrections.

Capt. Michael Cahill, CSJFTC Range Control officer-in-charge, was crucial in making the shoot house project a reality. After reviewing standard operating procedures for

other shoot houses, he assisted in writing the SOP for Camp Shelby.

"I used other base documents, molded it and made Shelby's," said Cahill knowing that the training is the most valuable resource we can offer soldiers. "At the end of the day it comes down to a soldier being trained properly and knowing his job."

Sgt. 1st Class Jason McReynolds of the 1-168 Infantry Battalion, 2-34th Infantry Brigade, Iowa National Guard thinks the live fire shoot house is more than just a training lane.

"It's a well-planned complex – the fact that you clear an entire floor instead of just one room is great," he said. "It builds the team, you have to trust someone to shoot live rounds next to you, and you have to know them and what they are going to do. All of this builds a team's flow and cohesion."

1st Lt. Tadashi Abe also of the 1-168 Infantry Battalion, 2-34th Infantry Brigade, is impressed with the Trainer Mentors from the 2-410th Infantry Battalion, 177th Armored Brigade. "They bring more to the table than an Army training manual, you see the combat patch and you know they have recent real world experience. Many of them have been where we are going and you can't get better training than that."

Sgt. 1st Class Anthony McClung of the 2-410 Infantry Battalion, 177th Armored Brigade, is a Trainer Mentor at the live fire shoot house. "I have been to another shoot house when I was deployed. This one is amazing compared to the one we went through overseas.

"Wooden walls re-enforced with sand bags, you could fire in any direction but you really didn't want to, they also did not have a catwalk above like we do here so you had the trainer following the team through, it didn't feel safe," McClung said describing the shoot house overseas.

The first concern during training is always safety, and training needs to be realistic without causing injury to anyone. The live fire scenario in the CSJFTC shoot house is safe, challenging, and relevant to the units' combat missions who train on it. For example, the scenario contains both hostile (shoot) and non-hostile (no shoot) targets and an area where training soldiers find bomb-making material. Every team that executes the training rehearses several times with blank ammunition first, before finally and safely clearing the shoot house with live ammunition.

"The shoot house provides situational awareness in particular scenarios that our soldiers might encounter while deployed in harm's way," explained Sgt. Maj. Roberto Felixrobles of the 2-410 Infantry Battalion, 177th Armored Brigade.

"It builds confidence and leadership; this type of training is a basic skill that all soldiers regardless of MOS should be proficient in."

Construction is scheduled for completion in January 2011. The 177th Armored Brigade, Division East First Army mobilizes, trains and deploys Soldiers, airmen and sailors in support of our nation's overseas contingency operations. The Spearhead Brigade has trained and mobilized over 55,000 soldiers since 2006.



Soldiers with the 827th Engineer Company, New York Army National Guard, practice dismounting procedures during route clearance training at Fort McCoy, Wis. (Photos by Master Sgt. Jerome M. DeBarge, 181st Infantry Brigade Public Affairs)

Units prep for Afghanistan



Soldiers with the South Carolina Army National Guard's 112th Engineer Battalion treat an "injured" Soldier as part of their culminating training exercise at Fort McCoy, Wis., Aug. 3. The 181st Infantry Brigade is training the Soldiers for their deployment to Afghanistan. (Photo by 1st Lt. Jeffrey Gruidl, 181st Infantry Brigade, Division West Public Affairs Office)



Observer controller/trainers with the 479th Field Artillery Brigade's 1st Engineer Battalion, 395th Regiment demonstrate counter-improvised explosive device training during the First Army Division West C-IED conference at Fort Hood, Texas (Photo by Sgt. Erica N. Cain, 479th Field Artillery Brigade, Division West Public Affairs)