

Battle Born



Quarterly Magazine of the Nevada National Guard - Winter 2017

SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

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Commander in Chief
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Brig. Gen. Bill Burks
The Adjutant General
Nevada National Guard

Battle Born

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ON THE COVER: Master Sgt. Laura Magee reads the Quran at the Northern Nevada Muslim Center in Sparks in December. Photo by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus

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DEPLOYMENT ROUNDUP



Deployment tide turns

Photo courtesy Benjamin Hager, Las Vegas Review-Journal

Maj. Beau Vinatieri, 17th Sustainment Brigade, gets a big hug from son's Jeau, 10, and Keaul, 8, in a surprise ceremony at Bunker Elementary School last November in Las Vegas. Vinatieri deployed with the 17th for a nine-month tour in the Middle East.

Staff reports

CARSON CITY — The tide of Nevada Army Guard unit deployments turned from a seemingly endless stream of departures to an incoming flood of returning Soldiers this winter, as three of the Army Guard's four deployed units returned from foreign missions. Only about 120 Soldiers remain deployed, a sharp decline from the 460 Nevada Guardsmen who were deployed last autumn.

Lawdawgs remain on long leash in Middle East

The Reno-based 485th Military Police Company is the lone Nevada Army Guard now deployed; the unit's approximately 120 Soldiers are working as custom border clearance agents in Kuwait and other Middle East countries.

According to company commander Capt. Mark Goulart, the Soldiers support Customs Border Protection agents as they enforce U.S. Department of Agriculture stan-
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dards to ensure no contraband or banned agricultural products enter the United States. Goulart said the Soldiers have inspected and cleared more than \$11 billion in materials and goods destined for the United States.

The unit departed Nevada in August 2016 and promises to be home in the Silver State in July.

17th Sustainment Brigade, 137th MPs mark end of deployments

The largest Nevada Army Guard organization to deploy in five years – the 260-Soldier 17th Sustainment Brigade – marked the end of its year-long deployment odyssey by co-hosting a Welcome Home ceremony with the 137th Military Police Detachment in Las Vegas in late January.

The 137th MPs began to swing the deployment turnstile in the right direction when they returned from Afghanistan in October after spending a year in Afghanistan performing law enforcement operations on military bases. About 40 military

policemen participated in the deployment, the unit's second to Afghanistan in six years.

The 17th Sustainment Brigade spent its nine-month deployment in the Middle East based at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. The 17SB's responsibilities included providing supplies and services in a half dozen countries throughout the Central Command region. Its most high profile mission was supplying more than \$500 million worth of weapons, supplies, and vehicles to allied forces in Iraq via the Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF).

In total, 17SB Soldiers tracked over 2,000 missions, transported more than \$200 million worth of ammunition that weighed more than 1.5 million pounds, processed more than 3 million pounds of mail, and delivered over 2 million bottles of water.

At the end of the deployment, 17th Soldiers were awarded 12 Bronze Star Medals, more than 70 Meritorious Service Medals and more than 100 Army Commendation Medals. The 17th's mission was the largest Nevada National Guard deployment since the 422nd Expeditionary Signal Brigade's

2011 deployment to Afghanistan.

Signal battalion units return to Silver State after Kuwait, Africa

Bravo Company, 422nd Signal Battalion, wrapped up its mission in the Middle East in late January and turned its mission over to Alpha Company, 86th Expeditionary Signal Battalion headquartered at Fort Bliss, Texas. Bravo Company deployed about 140 Soldiers to Kuwait in February 2016. Some of the company's Soldiers eventually worked in Iraq and Syria.

"We had a very successful mission supporting Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command-Operation Inherent Resolve and the two divisions that ran the theater, the 101st Airborne Division and the 1st Infantry Division," wrote Bravo Company 1st Sgt. Ben Krainbrink via email. "The Soldiers supported more than a dozen forward operating bases, air bases and tactical assembly areas."

Krainbrink said B Company Soldiers provided the majority of communications and communications support in Iraq to an extremely diverse force that included all four U.S. military branches, coalition forces, and the host nation of Iraq.

Forty Soldiers in the 422nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion's Horn of Africa element made a timely return to the Silver State just hours before the Thanksgiving holiday.

The signal Soldiers installed, operated, and maintained communications systems for teams operating throughout the vast Horn of Africa area of operations.

The HOA signal Soldiers were set to team with northern 17th Sustainment Brigade Soldiers

in Reno in March to co-host a Welcome Home ceremony that featured Gov. Brian Sandoval.

The HOA Soldiers were among the first American troops to participate in a 10-day communications exchange with the Burundian National Defense Forces.



Photo courtesy Bravo Company, 422nd Expeditionary Support Battalion
Sergeant Maj. of the Army Daniel Dailey, center, meets with Bravo Company, 422nd Signal Battalion Soldiers (l to r) Spc. Anthony Simpson, Sgt. Jason Gordon, Sgt. Jose Hernandez and Pfc. Michael Olandria during the holidays in Erbil, Iraq. Dailey traveled with Gen. Mark Milley, the chief of staff of the Army, to usher in the holidays by visiting Soldiers, commanders and government officials in Afghanistan, Iraq, Jordan and Israel from Dec. 16-22.



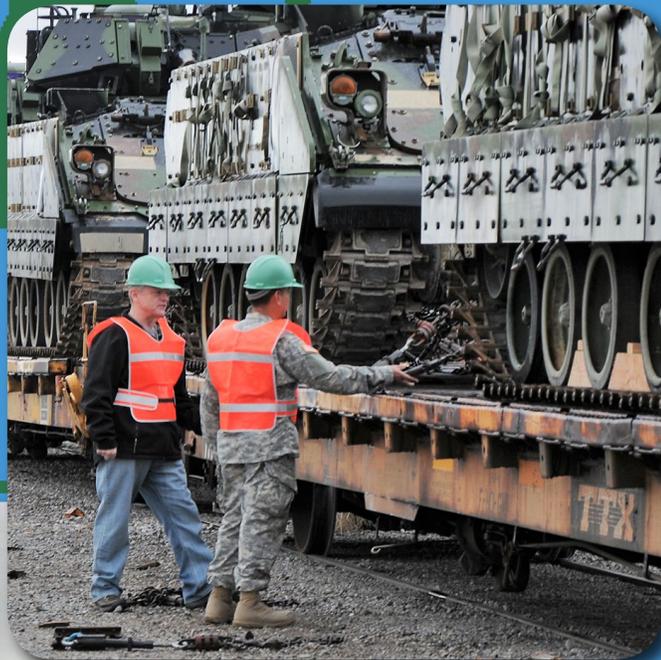
Photo courtesy Nevada Governor's Office
Soldiers of the Nevada Army National Guard's 485th Military Police Company pose for a photo in Afghanistan with Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval last December. Sandoval, along with the governors of Oklahoma and Wisconsin, visited troops overseas as part of a Department of Defense-funded tour.

DROP ZONE



Photo courtesy 106th Public Affairs Detachment

PAHRUMP — Pfc. Victor Adelallana, 23, of Las Vegas, unloads bottled water with other Soldiers from the 1864th Transportation Company at the mock Nye County Point of Distribution during the Vigilant Guard 2017 exercise last November. A point of distribution is a place where the public goes to pick up emergency supplies following a disaster. Co-hosted by both the Nevada and California National Guards, Vigilant Guard 2017 featured an earthquake scenario that required points of distributions for the survivors of the mock disaster. Albeit practice this time, the Nye County POD was the first ever organized and staffed by the Nevada National Guard.



Photos by Sgt. Walter Lowell, 17th Sustainment Brigade, and WOC Juan Sanchez

LAS VEGAS — **Above:** Warrant Officer Candidate Juan Sanchez, right, helps USPFO transportation agent Robert Veader inspect the tie downs on a convoy of 26 outdated M3 Bradley Cavalry Fighting Vehicles in January. **Below:** The scrapped vehicles were loaded by crane destined for California where they were set to become practice targets for various weapons systems. The old Bradleys were shipped out of the state to make room for the 1-221st Cavalry Squadron's new fleet of 45 M2A3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and 14 M1A1 AIM-SA tanks. The squadron received its full complement of new vehicles in order to be properly equipped for its new mission with the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team that began last November.



Photo courtesy Nevada Governor's Office

CAMP ARIFJAN, Kuwait — Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval delivers homemade cookies to Spc. Ryan P. Magera, 485th Military Police Company. Magera's mother, Margaret Crowley, went to law school with Sandoval. When she heard Sandoval was traveling to the Middle East, she asked the governor to take the package of Ginger Snap cookies along in hopes he would encounter her son in Kuwait. The governor made good on his promise in December.



Photo by Tech Sgt. Emerson Marcus

LOCKWOOD, Nev. — Soldiers with the 609th Engineer Company provide assistance and volunteer evacuations for the citizens of Lockwood during the flood here in January. The flood knocked out a bridge and forced citizens of the small town east of Reno and Sparks along the Truckee River to boil water before drinking. Soldiers also responded to rural Nevada areas affected by the flooding, including Sutcliffe and Virginia City. Damaged water pipes left the town of Sutcliffe without water. Additionally, a blizzard in Virginia City buried citizens there as Soldiers helped with snow removal.



Photo courtesy Bravo Company, 422nd ESB

FORWARD OPERATING BASE UNION, Iraq — Spc. Marcos Moreno of Bravo Company, 422nd Expeditionary Signal Battalion, heads for the finish line of the Norwegian Road March test in his attempt to earn a Norwegian badge while deployed in Iraq. In order to win the badge, participants had to complete an 18.5-mile march with a 15-pound ruck sack and rifle in less than 4 hours, 35 minutes. Moreno had time to spare with his clocking of 4 hours, 17 minutes.



A Nevada Air National Guard fire tender re-supplies fire engines from multiple governmental agencies during the Little Valley Fire that destroyed 22 homes in October.

Guard helps douse fire, secure Washoe Valley

WASHOE VALLEY — Tim Daniels rushed to work after he heard about a wind-whipped fire in early October that jumped around Nevada's Washoe Valley and eventually destroyed 22 homes.

"As soon as I woke up, I left for work," said Daniels, a firefighter at 152nd Airlift Wing emergency fire services section. "If all fire assets in the valley are going, and it's an immediate need, you know you're going."

Four Airmen and two civilian firefighters from the Nevada Air National Guard Base in Reno were among more than 1,000 federal, state and county personnel working the blaze, which scorched more than 3,400 acres as wind gusts exceeded 70 mph.

Additionally, about 30 Nevada Army Guard Soldiers provided security and patrols for law enforcement in the area this weekend.

Upon the Nevada Division of Emergency Management's request, the Nevada National Guard Joint Operations Center in Carson City activated Nevada Air Guard

firefighters along with a fire tender and engine shortly after 8 a.m. Friday.

The Air Guard firefighters brought a 4,000-gallon tender — the largest tender available in Washoe County — and a fire engine for property protection and water re-supply.

"The tender is basically a mobile fire hydrant," said Senior Master Sgt. Kevin Bandoni, fire emergency services chief at the base in Reno. "So, as the firefighters go through their operations and run out of water, we fill them up."

The tender provided more than 100,000 gallons of water Friday for several agencies fighting the fire, including Carson City Fire Department, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service and others, Bandoni said.

Along with the fire tender, four base firefighters in the engine provided property protection.

"We basically went into a cul-de-sac with six homes and a lot of brush and buildings," Tech. Sgt. William Duggins said. "We were there for about nine hours to deflect the fire from those homes. For a few moments it looked like it was going to start taking off, but it died down."

The Nevada Air National Guard has one

active Guard member and 17 state employees working full-time at the base in Reno. Additionally, 32 Guard members work one weekend a month at the base fire department.

Two of the traditional Guard members — Staff Sgt. Brian Boyer and Airman Nick Hunter — reported a day early for drill in October. They were among the six called for firefighting.

The Nevada Air Guard has mutual-aid agreements with fire agencies in the region. Friday's request came through the state, not a mutual-aid agreement, but the Air Guard's tender and fire engine has reported to fires in Reno, including the Caughlin Ranch (2011) and Washoe Drive (2012) fires. They also supported federal firefighting efforts last month in the Boise National Forest.

Scott Brandt, who worked 15 years for the Bureau of Land Management fighting wildland fires before he became a full-time firefighter at the base, said he was impressed with the interagency cohesion amid chaos.

"I've never seen multiple agencies come together for an initial attack like that," he said. "It was pretty chaotic, but everyone came together well." ■

—Tech Sgt. Emerson Marcus



Left: Photo courtesy Nevada Air National Guard Fire Department. Right: Photo by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus
Both Nevada Guard firefighter and security personnel responded to the fire along with more than 1,000 other first responders.

Potable water, snow removal provided in wake of atmospheric river

SUTCLIFFE — An atmospheric river that blasted the Sierra Nevada mountain range in January flooded much of western Nevada and resulted in the activation of dozens of Nevada National Guard Soldiers.

Nevada Guardsmen transported potable water, prepared for evacuations and even helped with snow removal for much of the state's most vulnerable citizens living in rural parts of the flood zone.

"The community is extremely supportive," said Sgt. Nathan Spicer, 609th Engineer Company. "We got a lot of thumbs up, waves and many thank you's in passing."

In the early morning hours Monday, as the Truckee River crested through the Nevada cities of Reno and Sparks, 609th Soldiers reported to Lockwood, Nev., where flooding affected the town's water system. Soldiers originally activated to aid evacuation. However, a nearby Walmart distribution center donated pallets of water for the community and Nevada Guardsmen helped with its transportation and distribution. No citizens were evacuated as portions of the Truckee River in Lockwood crested at its banks.

Additionally, Nevada Guardsmen transported a water tank, commonly referred to as a "water buffalo," with 400 gallons for citizens of Sutcliffe, Nev., a town on Pyramid Lake tribal land about 40 miles north of Reno.

"The entire town was without water and the weather isn't making it any easier for them," Sgt. 1st Class Justin Juliot, 991st Multi-Functional Brigade, said Thursday. "They were really thankful to get the water."

Normal water supply to the area was restored within a week.

In the rural, mountain town of Virginia City — a national historic

monument — Guardsmen aided citizens stuck in snow and loaded and moved snow to the outskirts of town via military dump trucks.

Rain totals in the first two weeks of the year in the region equaled about 50 percent of total average expected annual rainfall, not including the more than 5 additional inches of snow measured in Reno — with much more in higher elevations — according to data gathered from the National Weather Service. After the deluge, precipitation continued as snow, dropping several feet in the mountains, enough to close at least one ski resort.

—Tech Sgt. Emerson Marcus



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus
Soldiers with the 609th Combat Engineer Company help Storey County and the Nevada Department of Transportation remove snow in Virginia City after a major storm moved through the region in January.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus

Master Sgt. Laura Magee, left, and Master Sgt. Mark Magee pose for a photo at the annual Nevada Air National Guard Airman of the Year Ceremony at the Nevada Air National Guard fuel cell hangar. The married couple converted to Islam after Laura completed chaplain assistant course in Fort Jackson, S.C.

A spiritual journey

Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Laura Magee remembers questioning her father about religion when she was 8 while innocently combing her hair in front of a large vanity mirror.

It was the first time she can remember asking one of her parents about the existence of a God — which she said her father quickly repudiated.

Her parents identified as agnostic or atheist, she said. For Laura, now a master sergeant in the Nevada Air National Guard, these sorts of questions lingered and often went unanswered, even as she attended Christian services in adulthood.

Three years ago, though, after 12 years in military intelligence, she entered a new

military career field as a chaplain assistant. During her training for the new job at Fort Jackson, S.C., her questions turned to affirmation in something she admittedly knew very little about.

That's where she says she discovered Islam and eventually introduced the religion to her husband, Mark Magee, when she returned home.

A rare change of faith

It's extremely rare for someone to enter the six-week military chaplain course and leave professing a different faith than the one they practiced beforehand, said U.S. Air Force Capt. Rafael Lantigua, a Muslim chaplain with the 502nd Air Base Wing at Joint Base San Antonio.

"I have never heard of that happening before," said Lantigua, a mentor for Laura who attended chaplain school the same time she was at the chaplain assistance course. "I've heard of chaplain assistants coming out of school saying they have a broader understanding, more religiously competent, with more appreciation (of other religions), but when you are talking about changing faiths, having that transition take place — a life changing event such as that — I've never heard of that happening before."

Chaplains have provided spiritual guidance for members of the U.S. military since the creation of the Continental Army in 1775. The modern mission statement, according to the Air Force Chaplain Corps website, is to provide "pastoral care ministry to those of faith and those of no

faith.” But chaplains are encouraged to publicly proclaim a religion, as long as it doesn’t hinder their responsibilities providing spiritual guidance to military members of all backgrounds.

During the six-week training, chaplains and chaplain assistants enter different courses, but often mingle in a classroom setting. That’s where Laura first met Lantigua.

“I had learned little bits and pieces of it (Islam) through documentaries or my world religions class (in college),” she said. “But to me, in the past, I thought, well, all religions have a certain amount of truth to them and Islam was kind of an eastern religion that I really didn’t understand.”

Lantigua — the son of a Catholic father and Southern Baptist mother — converted to Islam when he was a teenager.

During their training in 2014, he gave a short presentation on Islam. Afterward, Laura and other service members approached him for more information.

“I definitely see a rise in interest (in Islam) because the U.S. military has been

engaged with the Muslim world, if you will, the Middle East, at least in the American consciousness for decades,” Lantigua said. “For people outside the military, they want to ask, but are too afraid to offend. In the military, they are more comfortable to engage with other military because we both wear the uniform.”

Lantigua gave Laura an English translation of the Quran and they met frequently during the course to discuss passages from the text.

“From the quality of the questions she was asking, I could tell she was having a rediscovery of her own personal beliefs,” he said.

As the course came to an end, Magee told her husband, Mark, about this rediscovery, which he said “shocked” him at first.

Coming home

“At first she messaged me and told me, ‘Hey what do you think if I told you I was reading the Quran?’” said Mark, a master

sergeant in the Nevada Air National Guard. “It was quite a shock.”

“It was different when she got home and explained the whole thing and explained what it was and how she felt...Her biggest thing was the worship of Jesus as God,” he said. “That was the sticking point. She felt that people were worshipping Jesus as God, when it should be just God.”

Mark engaged the situation with an open mind and read the entire Quran twice.

“The things that are there, versus reading the Bible and the many contradictions between the Old and New Tes-



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus

Master Sgt. Laura Magee, Nevada Air National Guard, speaks with fellow members of the Northern Nevada Muslim Center in Sparks last December. Bottom left: Magee prays at the Mosque in Sparks.

tament — the Quran is more constant all the way through,” he said.

Mark admits that’s tough for many people to understand. He’s even stopped trying to convince several family members of why he converted.

“You can see that some people aren’t happy, but it’s my walk, not theirs,” he said.

As for Laura, the conversion has stymied her relationship with her father, who since professing apathy toward organized religion when she was a young child, has remarried and entered the Christian faith, she said.

“The arguments (with my father) just got so bad,” she said.

Mark and Laura Magee have 6-year-old twins. Mark has a 13-year-old son and 11-year-old son from a previous marriage, and Laura has a 13-year-old son from a previous marriage. Some of the children have struggled with the new religion. They even said one friend of the boys stopped visiting their home after Laura wore her hijab during a birthday party.

“Other than family struggles, it’s been really easy,” Mark said. “There have been a lot of supportive people. Every once in a while, somebody will make a joke about it. But to me...I have a really strong back, I guess. It doesn’t bother me.”

Both Mark and Laura initially worried how their fellow Airmen in the Nevada Air Guard would react to their conversion.

“It’s been really positive,” Laura said.

(See MAGEE, page 27)





Nevada Guardsmen ring in New Year supporting Las Vegas law enforcement

Photos by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Pfc. Bryson Mook, left, and Pfc. Damien Hatton, right, stand aside a Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department officer at McCarran International Airport on Dec. 31, 2016. Mook and Hatton participated in Operation Night Watch, the annual New Year's Eve mission where more than 200 Nevada National Guardsmen support local law enforcement during the city's large street party.

**By Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs**

LAS VEGAS — Amid revelry and about 330,000 partygoers on the famed Las Vegas Strip about 220 Nevada Army National Guard Soldiers supported law enforcement for the 15th consecutive year during the annual New Year's Eve celebration this weekend.

Soldiers patrolled McCarran International Airport and various locations around the city for the mission known as Operation Night Watch.

"We've seen a lot of families. We've seen a lot of different types of people," said Pfc. Damien Hatton, of the 72nd Military Police Company, Nevada Army National Guard. "Probably the coolest thing I saw today was a little boy come up to take a picture with us as his face lit up with a smile."

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department reported about 20 arrests early morning New Year's Day, mainly for minor incidents such as disorderly conduct. No Guard members were involved in making an arrest.

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The 1st Squadron, 221st Cavalry, provided the majority of the Soldiers securing The Strip. Soldiers from the 72nd Military Police Company patrolled the airport. Other units including the 92nd Civil Support Team completed less-visible missions including infrastructure security as the huge street party got started.

The security mission began Friday and lasted through Monday as more than 1 million travelers traveled in and out of the airport this week.

The operation was not conducted because of any specific threat.

"We just want to make sure that both The Strip and McCarran International Airport are as safe as possible," said Lt. James Wesikopf of

the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department Airport Bureau. "Each year we coordinate with the National Guard as well as other agencies along with the fire department. We coordinate all our efforts to make sure we are staffing it appropriately, identifying threats to the counter terrorism center and we work together for the celebration." ■



Photos by Sgt. Walter Lowell, 17th Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

Nevada National Guard Soldiers patrol areas of the Las Vegas Strip last New Year's Eve during Operation Night Watch, the annual mission where more than 200 Nevada National Guardsmen supported local law enforcement during the city's large street party.

Nevada's lone drill sergeant mentors, motivates new Soldiers

By Capt. Valerie Hollenback
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

STEAD — For the dozens of newly-enlisted Soldiers reporting to their first National Guard drill each month, Sgt. 1st Class Elias Perez personifies the entire Nevada Army Guard.

Perez, 35, of Reno, is the lone certified drill sergeant in the entire Nevada Army Guard. With a mixture of mentorship, motivation and guidance, he prepares all of the Nevada Guard's newly-recruited privates for their future training while simultaneously providing administrative support as the readiness sergeant of the Recruit Sustainment Company.

With his occupation comes a clothing perk. Perez is the only Soldier in the state who wears the Army's iconic campaign hat during drill weekend. A campaign hat is a broad-brimmed felt hat with a high crown pinched symmetrically at four corners. The campaign hat has been worn by Army drill

instructors since 1964 and remains a symbolic accoutrement that strikes a slight chord of fear in new recruits while concurrently acting as a symbol of Army pride, motivation and discipline.

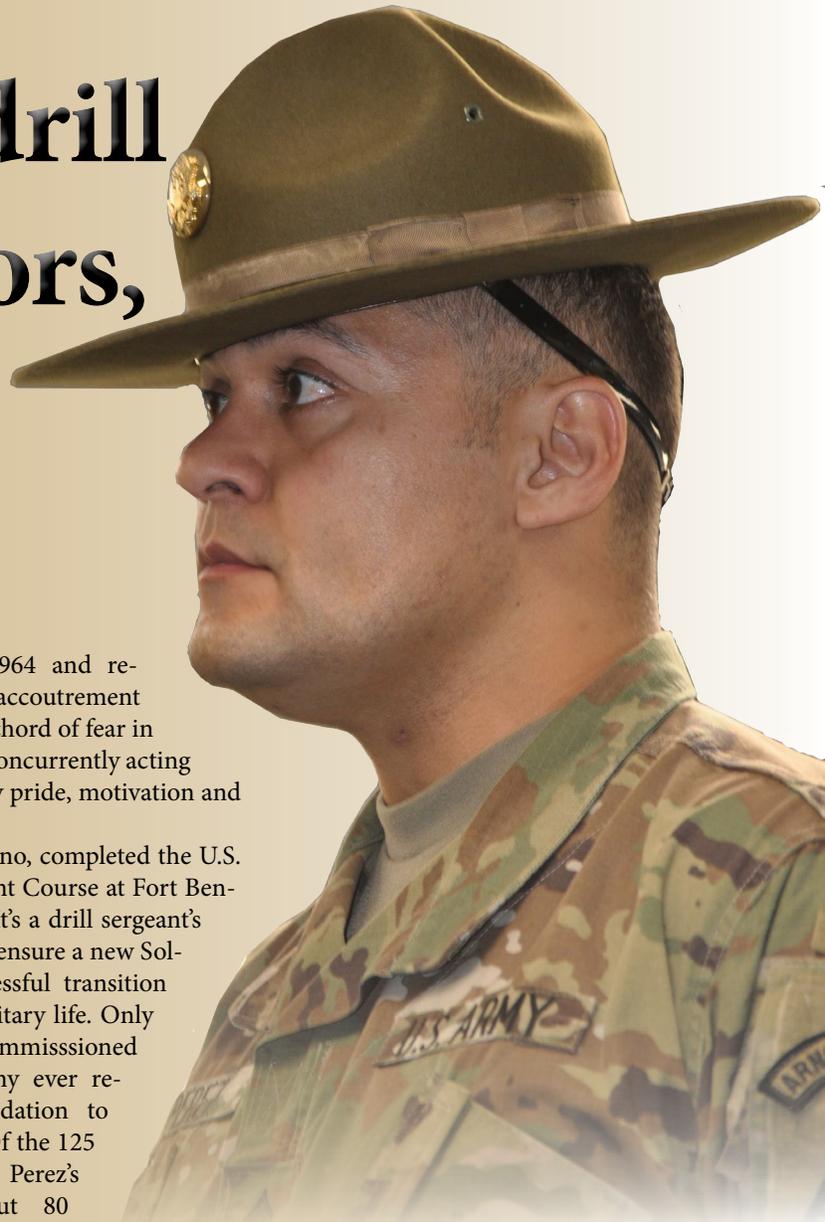
Perez, 35, of Reno, completed the U.S. Army's Drill Sergeant Course at Fort Benning, Ga., in 2007. It's a drill sergeant's challenging duty to ensure a new Soldier makes a successful transition from civilian to military life. Only the sharpest non-commissioned officers in the Army ever receive a recommendation to attend the course. Of the 125 Soldiers enrolled in Perez's course, only about 80 made it to graduation day.

Perez said the job of drill sergeant is primarily a balancing act. While remaining calm and composed at all times, he must provide direction, instruction, advice and – gasp – compassion while also preparing privates for upcoming challenges.

"I want to make sure that I prepare the Soldiers mentally for what lies ahead," said Perez, a native Nevadan who graduated from Reno High in 1999. "I want them to learn how to make decisions while under pressure."



Photos by Capt. Valerie Hollenback, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs
Sgt. 1st Class Elias Perez of the Recruit Sustainment Company briefs newly-enlisted Soldiers on the rules of the Occupational Physical Assessment Test in December. Perez serves as a drill sergeant for the RSC on weekends and as the company's readiness sergeant during the work week.



Prior to joining the Nevada National Guard in 2003, Perez was an active-duty cavalry scout stationed at Fort Carson, Colo. His first job with the Nevada Guard was as an administrative specialist with Joint Force Headquarters and he quickly joined the full-time Counterdrug Task Force, where he worked for seven years.

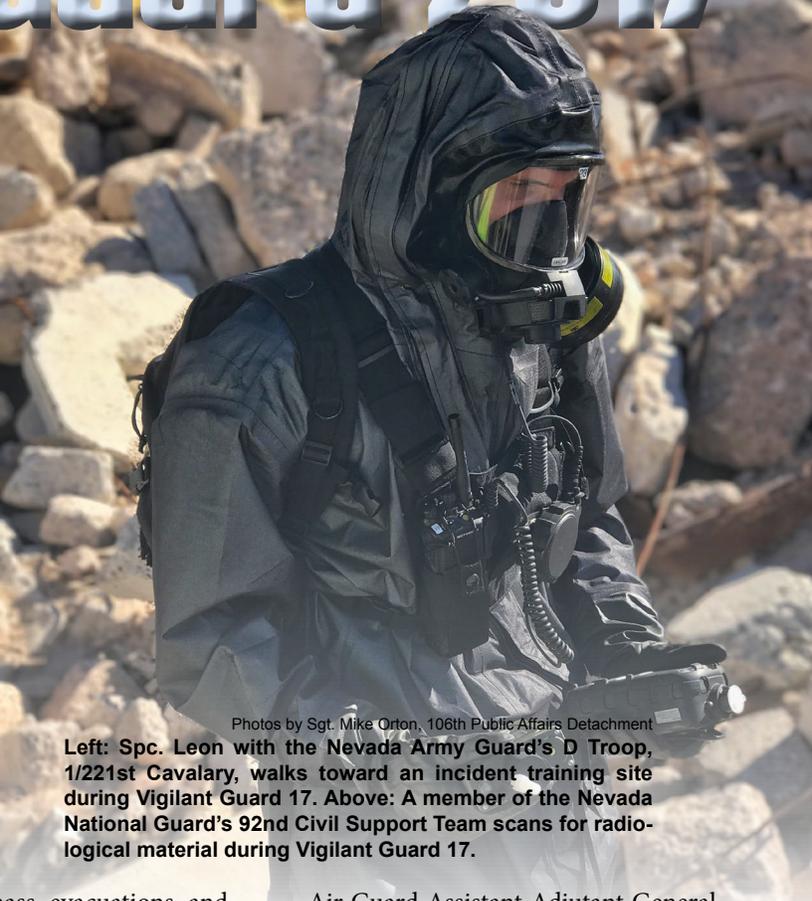
After transferring from JFHQ to the Recruiting and Retention Battalion, the recruiting staff asked him to become a drill instructor. The opportunity fulfilled a life-long desire for Perez.

"I've always wanted to be a drill sergeant – they are the epitome of an Army non-commissioned officer," Perez said. "I base my own instructional style on those good drill sergeants I had during my own initial training."

Perez said the drill sergeant's course proved "super challenging and demanding."

(DRILL SGT., page 28)

Vigilant Guard 2017



By Tech. Sgt. T.J. Emerick
152nd Airlift Wing Public Affairs

NORTH LAS VEGAS — The Vigilant Guard 2017 Exercise here in November was the first of four joint operational disaster readiness exercises this year hosted by United States Northern Command. The exercise involved multiple local, federal and state agencies, including the Nevada Division of Emergency Management and both the Nevada National Guard and the California National Guard.

According to NORTHCOM officials, VG 17 was the first Vigilant Guard exercise to simultaneously test two states' ability to co-respond to simulated catastrophic events across state lines.

The scenario involved a mock 6.7-magnitude earthquake in Nevada that struck along the Frenchman Mountain Fault at the base of the Frenchman Mountain range between Lake Mead and Las Vegas, causing fatalities and major damage to the infrastructure.

A subsequent mock earthquake in southern California then forced emergency-response officials to react to situations

such as interstate mass evacuations and shortages of goods and services in multiple large population centers.

Nevada National Guard response elements involved in the exercise included its CERFP (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package) and Civil Support Team. The California National Guard deployed its Homeland Response Force (HRF) for the exercise.

The Nevada Guard also set up its first-ever mock Point of Distribution. A POD is a site for the distribution of staple goods and materials for a population in the aftermath of a disaster. The VG 17 POD was set up in Pahrump at the request of Nye County officials.

During the scenario, emergency response assets were requested to assist the City of North Las Vegas with victim recovery, hazardous material operations, security, communication operations and area search and rescues.

VG 17 tested responders in all facets of emergency management, including some situations they had never previously experienced.

Photos by Sgt. Mike Orton, 106th Public Affairs Detachment

Left: Spc. Leon with the Nevada Army Guard's D Troop, 1/221st Cavalry, walks toward an incident training site during Vigilant Guard 17. Above: A member of the Nevada National Guard's 92nd Civil Support Team scans for radiological material during Vigilant Guard 17.

Air Guard Assistant Adjutant General stressed the importance of the National Guard to be ready to respond to any sort of contingency, even to the most devastating scenarios imaginable.

"Disaster-response preparedness is one of the top priorities of the military. People are counting on us to do our best work no matter what is going on in the environment. Regardless of what is going on in our community, we have to show up and get things right," Berry said.

The Nevada Guard invited emergency-response officials from several foreign countries to observe the exercise, including Tonga, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Taiwan.

As VG 17 came to a close, participants said the exercise had helped them prepare for a real-world natural disaster.

"I've learned no two disaster responses will ever be the same," Lynch said. "We've gone to two different locations and it has made me realize that if there is an earthquake or natural disaster, it's not going to be at one specific place.

"It's a fact we'll have to do a wide-area search to extract and save victims." ■

Daughter promises to continue family piping tradition

By Mike Higdon
Reno Gazette-Journal

RENO — Even during the height of Operation Desert Storm in the 1990s, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Connell practiced his bagpipes outside every day. He practiced at a Kuwaiti military base while wearing his kilt, sporran, dress shoes and other traditional Highland dress. He remembers one particular day when a large group of U.S. Marines swarmed around him to listen. Usually, that's when he hears the snickers accompanying the question: "What's under your kilt?"

"So I stopped playing for a moment and asked, 'Got any questions, fellas?' and they said 'No, keep playing, Sarge.'"

So he did. Connell played every type of tune he knew — marches, drills, jigs, dances — and the Marines stood there transfixed by the music.

Connell always had a connection with the music and history of bagpipes in wartime. He can trace the instrument through history and knows they have motivated infantry soldiers through the centuries.

"When I'm playing and playing well, I become consumed by the music that I'm playing and it's incredible," Connell said.

During Desert Storm, Connell was in the Nevada Air Guard; he ended his military career in December in the Army Guard. Now that he's retired, his daughter, 23-year-old Air Guard Airman 1st Class Mariah Connell, has taken over as the sole military piper in the Nevada Guard.

To mark the passing of the pipes from father to daughter in November, the elder Connell filled two silver cups — called a quaich (pronounced quake)— with

Laphroaig 10-year Scotch. He toasted his daughter and quickly downed the whisky, then held the quaich over his head to show that he emptied it. He obliged Mariah to do the same.

"My chest is burning," she said after finishing her whisky and flipping the quaich over her head.

Mariah hopes her position as piper eventually receives official recognition. Becoming the only military piper in the state came as a surprise because she didn't expect her father to retire this winter.

"Taking my dad's place wasn't part of the plan, it just kind of happened," Mariah said.

Mariah started playing bagpipes at age 8 after she saw her father giving lessons to other people and thought it look fun. She has stopped-and-started playing a few times during the last decade. She said reading about her father in a local newspaper a few years ago inspired her to resume playing. When a family friend and fellow Airman died last year, she played at the memorial while Michael was out of town.

"I felt like it was an honorable thing to do," she said.

Now, she feels compelled to carry on the Connell legacy.

"She's filling my shoes and she's actually a really good piper," Michael said.

Portraits, medals, awards and war



Photo and photo on Page 26 by Spc. Jorge Garcia, 106th Public Affairs Detachment Airman 1st Class Mariah Connell, right, became the Nevada Guard's unofficial bagpiper when her father, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Connell, retired in December. According to Michael, Mariah is the superior piper.

memorabilia adorn the walls, tables and display cases throughout the Connell household, including numerous bagpiping awards. A quick count reveals Mariah has more awards than Michael. Dad joked that she's the superior piper because he taught her. He added her nimble, young fingers allow her to play faster and more accurately. Mariah also runs, which she said makes the bagpipes a breeze.

"I'm proud because her career is taking off," he said. "This is about passing the torch and following tradition."

In addition to serving in the Nevada Air Guard, Mariah attends the University of Nevada, Reno. On the base, she manages airplane maintenance schedules and compliance; after graduation, she plans to pursue a commission and become an officer.

Mariah is the latest in a long line of military succession in her family. Her mother,
(See BAGPIPES, page 26)



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka

Pvt. Brittany Sears, 18, of Virginia City Highlands, completes the dead lift portion of the Occupational Physical Assessment Test in Stead before leaving for basic training last autumn. Sears is set to become the first woman in the Nevada Army Guard to hold a combat-occupation job in a front-line unit. If she passes her courses, she'll return from training in March as a qualified combat engineer in the 609th Engineer Company located in Fallon.

Former cheerleader poised to become Nevada Guard's 1st female combat-occupation Soldier

By Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

STEAD — With her slight build and soft-spoken mannerisms, former high school cheerleader Pvt. Brittany Sears seems an unlikely candidate to become the Nevada Army Guard's first woman to hold a combat-occupation job in a front-line unit.

But Sears, who began her quest in November to become a combat engineer (12B military occupation specialty) for the 609th Engineer Company in Fallon when she left for basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., determinedly stated she's rugged enough to hold a combat job in the Army. She realizes she's the first Nevada Army Guard female Soldier to attempt to pass a combat course — Army combat occupation

gender restrictions were just lifted last winter — but it's a fact she doesn't dwell upon.

"I like a challenge and am nervous, but I really don't feel like a pioneer," said Sears before departing for basic training. "I'm excited to begin the process, but not too worried about being a female Soldier in the courses.

"I expect to be treated no differently than any other Soldier; so far, I've always been treated fairly."

Sears, 18, of Virginia City Highlands, graduated from Galena High in Reno last spring. At Galena, she participated in ROTC for four years (instructed by retired Chief Warrant Officer 5 David Anderson) and could also be seen on the sidelines cheering on the Grizzly athletic teams.

"The only 'girly' thing I've done in

my life was cheerleading," Sears said. "I've grown up immersed in a 'boyish-type' lifestyle."

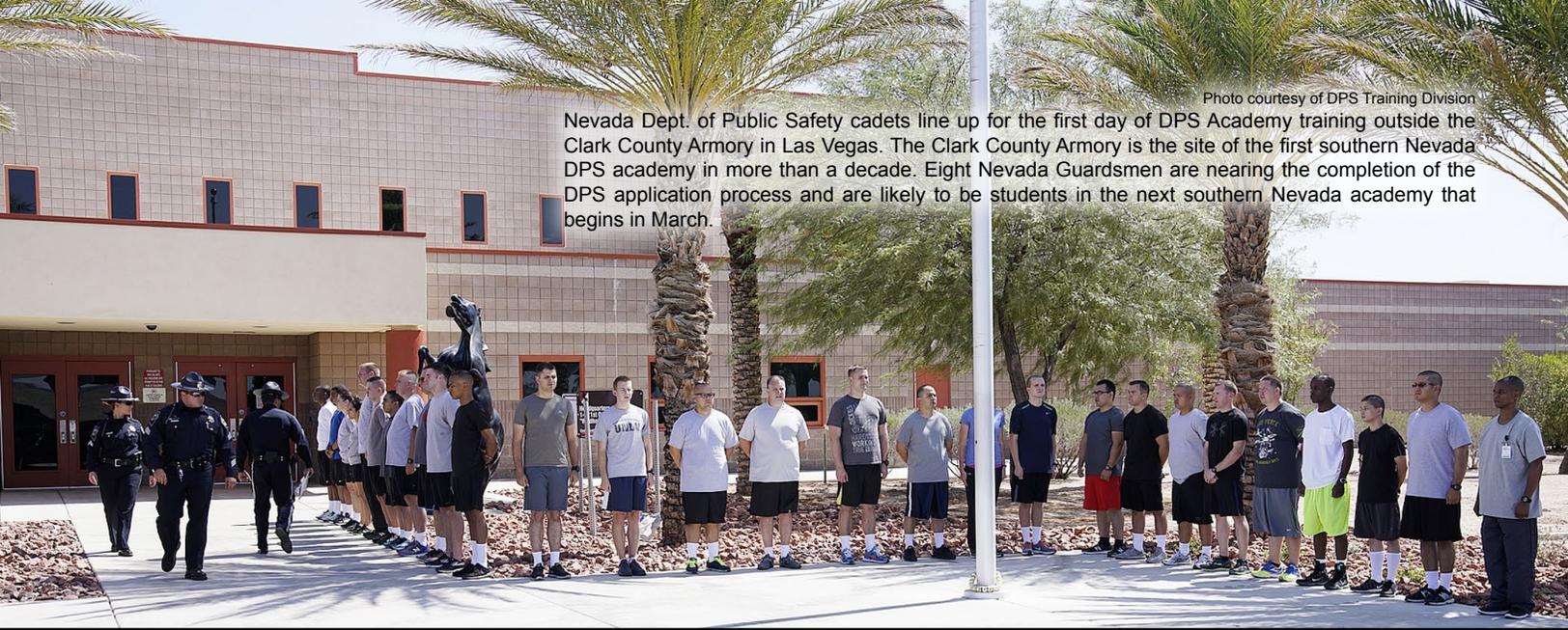
Judging from her family's military pedigree, Sears has a good chance of graduating from her combat courses. Her mother is Nevada Army Guard Maj. Tammy Sparkes, the administrative officer for the 757th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion, and her father is Daniel Sears, a Marine Corps veteran whose career included a stint at the Pentagon.

"There is military tradition within our family," Sears said. "My mom is tough as nails and I like to think I take after her."

Sgt. 1st Class Elias Perez, the Recruiting and Retention Detachment's senior drill instructor, said Sears is a good candidate to
(See COMBAT, page 28)

Photo courtesy of DPS Training Division

Nevada Dept. of Public Safety cadets line up for the first day of DPS Academy training outside the Clark County Armory in Las Vegas. The Clark County Armory is the site of the first southern Nevada DPS academy in more than a decade. Eight Nevada Guardsmen are nearing the completion of the DPS application process and are likely to be students in the next southern Nevada academy that begins in March.



Guardsmen attractive applicants for Dept. of Public Safety job vacancies

By Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

LAS VEGAS — A burgeoning relationship between the Nevada National Guard and the Nevada Department of Public Safety promises to reduce unemployment and underemployment among the state's Guardsmen while simultaneously bolstering the ranks of the department's nine divisions. The DPS is the state's law enforcement department that includes highly-visible state entities such as the Nevada Highway Patrol, the Capitol Police and the state fire marshal.

This past autumn, the DPS began leasing space in the Nevada Guard's Clark County Armory for its academy training course. In conjunction with the lease, the Nevada Guard's Work for Warriors program collaborated with the DPS to provide one-day written, physical and interview assessments at the armory for Nevada Guardsmen applying for DPS employment. The assessment process for the general population usually takes 3-9 months to complete.

Lt. Todd Ellithorpe of the DPS training division said the budding relationship benefits both organizations.

"It's a symbiotic relationship between the Nevada Guard and DPS," Ellithorpe said. "We need employees and the Guard provides a good pool of candidates."

Ellithorpe said Guardsmen make at-

tractive candidates for DPS employment because they usually can exceed the department's minimum physical requirements and pass background checks at a higher rate than applicants from the general population.

Once initial written, physical and interview assessments are completed, prospective applicants then advance to the background check portion of the applica-



tion process. At that stage, the DPS once again expedites the process for Guardsmen and places the Soldiers' applications at the top of the stack of paperwork.

Ellithorpe said the attributes of a Guard applicant usually surpass "by far" the traits

of an applicant from the general public.

"Guardsmen have the foundation for a law enforcement academy," Ellithorpe said. "They are not new to stressful training environments. Some people from the general public who come are not ready (for stressful training). Many applicants come to the academy after we've spent a considerable amount of dollars recruiting, conducting backgrounds and hiring them and then we lose them because they can't handle the stress of the academy."

Ellithorpe recounted some startling statistics demonstrating Guardsmen's success in the DPS application process. Out of 100 applications from the general population, two usually reach the background check stage of the application process. Among Guard applicants participating in the one-day assessments, 50 percent reach the background stage of the process. In fact, all Guardsmen taking the written and physical assessments have passed the standards; the interview portion of the assessments have been the only stumbling block for Guardsmen.

Forty-three Guardsmen have completed their assessments and are in the process of having their backgrounds reviewed. Eight Nevada Guardsmen are nearing the completion of their background checks and are likely to begin the next southern Nevada academy in March.

(See **WORK**, page 27)

Cav creates realistic mock battlefield at U.S. Air Force's elite Weapons School

By Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

CREECH AIR FORCE BASE, Nev. – Deep in the canyons and valleys of the expansive test and training ranges here, Nevada Army Guard cavalry troopers collaborated with A-10 jet fighter pilots in autumn to create the realistic backdrop for one of the most advanced courses offered at the U.S. Air Force Weapons School, the Joint Terminal Attack Controller Advanced Instructor Course. Joint Terminal Attack Controllers direct the actions of combat aircraft providing close air support and other offensive operations on the battlefield.

More than 60 1-221st Cavalry Soldiers, including mortarmen from five subordinate troops and four of the squadron's forward observers, spent their annual training creating a realistic, challenging battlefield for the students enrolled in the advanced JTAC and the class of A-10 student pilots. Twenty Soldiers from the Forward Support Company, 15 from the Headquarters and Headquarters Troop, and 25 from the troops' mortar sections composed the cavalry contingent that supported the schoolhouse headquartered at Nellis Air Force Base.

The 1-221st Cavalry primarily participated in the course for the first time to test the JTACs in the most realistic manner possible. The mortarmen bombarded multiple targets with more than 750 live, 120mm high-explosive, white phosphorous and illumination rounds. The Cavalry mortarmen fired the rounds from M1064A3 armored mortar-carrier platforms to force the JTAC students to carefully coordinate their aerial airstrikes and gun runs while also synchronizing ground attacks.

In addition, the joint operation also provided a rare opportunity for some cavalry specialists – including the cav's own internal fire support platoon – to train on the massive, multifaceted range. During combat, the cav's fire support platoon will have to work directly with Air Force JTACs to maintain battlefield synchronization of air support.

Even long-time troopers were impressed with the collaborative operation.

"In my 12 years in the mortars section, I have only been able to do these things in combat," said 1-221st Cav senior mortarman Staff Sgt. Benjamin Rogers. "I've never seen this type of training anywhere else in the military. This is the training Soldiers envision when they sign up for the infantry."

"In 19 years, I haven't seen the cavalry conduct a live, joint training event that featured so much fire power and coordination," said squadron master gunner 1st Sgt. Michael Davis. "It took our Soldiers three years of training to ensure flawless support of the U.S. Air Force Weapons School. I'm confident the squadron can perform this mission several times per year and possibly even incorporate direct live fire with tanks and Bradleys in the future."

First Lt. Eric Mangino, the squadron's fire support officer, coordinated the cavalry's live fire with the weapons school. He said



Photo illustration by Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka

More than two dozen 1-221st Cavalry mortarmen, including Sgt. Jose Manuel Caceres of Las Vegas, center, spent their annual training in autumn at Creech Air Force Base contributing to the realism of the Joint Terminal Attack Controller Advanced Instruction Course.

opportunities for this type of training rarely arise, especially for National Guard units.

"The opportunity to train with live ordnance and close air support is invaluable," Mangino said. "As an armored reconnaissance squadron, we have limited fire support assets due to the fact we are usually forward of the main (combat) effort. The only things that are often available are our organic mortars and close air support."



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka

1-221st Cavalry Soldiers move into position aboard M113 Armored Personnel Carriers at Creech Air Force Base before beginning a mortar bombardment on range No. 65-7A in order to create a realistic training scenario for the U.S. Air Force Weapons School's Joint Terminal Attack Controller Advanced Instructor Course.

Sgt. 1st Class Brandon Pick, the squadron's fire support sergeant and the HHT's readiness sergeant, said a realistic battlefield must account for the operation of multiple military branches, not just the Army.

"With the weapons schoolhouse, we created a joint operation where coordinated fires planning and close air support into maneuver plans, including ground maneuvers for Strykers, light infantry, armor and special operations," Pick said. "The Army's participation definitely makes the training more realistic. The training directly correlates to us performing our mission if we're ever deployed."

"This is real world training for mortarmen," Rogers said. "There are subtle tasks and considerations that come into play when we coordinate with close air support."

Pick and fire support Staff Sgt. Johnathan Marquez said the operation provided unprecedented training opportunities for the cavalry's forward observers (military occupation 13F). Forward observers are responsible for directing artillery and mortar fire onto a target.

"The ability to describe to an aircraft what I am seeing on the ground and ex-

ecute close air support in coordination with ground maneuver is a perishable skill," Marquez said. "All of the forward observers and mortarmen who participated in the operation attained their respective qualification to conduct a live fire exercise."

"The forward observers, with their opportunity to call for close air support missions while integrating mortars simultaneously into a direct fight, were able to do something we hadn't previously trained on except when in a simulator," Pick said. "There are only a few places in the United States where this type of training is even possible."

Pick, a former 82nd Airborne Soldier, worked with instructors at the Weapons School to devise the premise for the joint training. After he became the squadron's fire support sergeant, he approached the weapons school about three years ago with his ideas on how to incorporate the cavalry squadron into Air Force training.

"The Weapons School wanted to integrate mortars into their training; before, they had just been notional. That was an asset to the training they couldn't produce," Pick said. "For qualification purposes, the

training helps both the Air Force JTACs and Army forward observers reach joint qualification standards while simultaneously allowing the mortars section and ground force to maneuver on objectives and validate their training to deploy.

"There were a lot of barriers to the training that we had to overcome and figure out. It took a lot to get the ammunition, fuel, maintenance, transportation and personnel into place so the mission could work out."

Mangino said he trusts the integrated training will continue next year after the 1-221st transitions to its new affiliation with the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team headquartered in Idaho. For the past two decades, the 1-221st Cav was a subordinate squadron of the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment headquartered in California.

"The logistical barriers, although daunting at times, are absolutely worth the effort to overcome in order to sustain this type of training," Mangino said. "With the squadron aligning with the 116th CBCT, it gives us a great opportunity to share an amazing training resource with our new unit."

(See CAV, Page 28)

Legendary Nevada coach's esteemed military service included Guard command



University of Nevada Reno Special Collections photo
Nevada men's basketball head coach John E. "Doc" Martie, back row, far right, poses with members of the 1926 team in front of the John Mackay statue on the campus of the University of Nevada, Reno. UNR Special Collections

**By Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus
State Historian, Joint Force Headquarters**

In Nevada, Guardsmen represent the state's "citizen soldiers," attending monthly drills while working full-time in the community as police officers, doctors, mechanics and many other occupations.

Turns out, that occupational list at one time included University of Nevada, Reno athletic director and head basketball coach.

Capt. John "Doc" Martie, the first commander of the 40th Military Police Company following the Nevada National Guard's re-organization in 1927, led Nevada as its

head men's basketball coach in the 1920s and 1930s, winning four Far Western Conference championships. The award for best Nevada male athlete given annually since 1960 is named in his honor, the "Doc Martie Award."

Little is known, though, of Martie's two-year career in the Nevada National Guard. Even his son, John A. Martie, 83, of Reno, said he did not know his father served in the Guard.

"He was a patriot," his son said in a phone interview. "He was a war hero. He was vice commander of the American Legion in the western region. But I did not

know he was in the Guard."

While brief, Martie served during the re-organization as the commanding officer of the newly-created military police unit from 1927 to 1929. He had a good resume for the job, given his prestigious military career, connections in the community and background in recruiting. For two decades before 1927, Nevada was the only state without a National Guard, largely because mine workers feared a state militia would serve as an arm of business interests during labor disputes. Those fears waned in the 1920s, which permitted Nevadans with military backgrounds, such as Martie, to re-

organize the Guard.

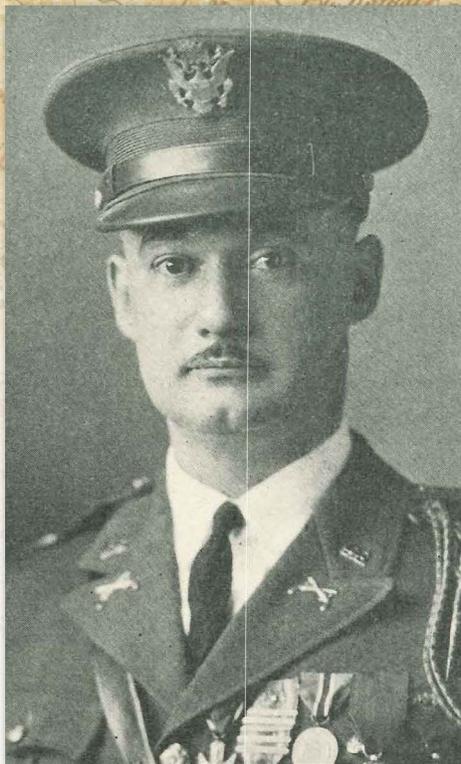
Before his Guard tenure, Martie served in the 16th Infantry, 1st Division in France during World War I. He was shot by machine gun fire at the Battle of the Marne, his son said.

Martie received the Distinguished Service Cross and a Purple Heart.

During his life, Martie declined to divulge many of his battlefield experiences, his son said, but his oral history at UNR Special Collections includes colorful anecdotes about his time off the battlefield in Europe. He crossed the Rhine River with one of Teddy Roosevelt's sons, met Gen. John J. Pershing and he remembers one time when Winston Churchill bought him a drink, according to an oral history interview he did in 1978.

"At the time I had no idea who he (Churchill) was," he said. After the war, he served in the American Legion from 1919 until his death in 1982. For 26 years, he was chairman of the Legion's Counter-Subversive Commission monitoring Communist activities in the United States.

He's most notably remembered today as a longtime basketball coach and athletic



Capt. John E. Martie poses for a photo in his military uniform. Photo appears in the 1929 Biennial Report to Nevada Gov. Fred Balzar. Martie served 37 years

in the athletic department. Since 1960, the university has awarded the best male athlete on campus with the "Doc Martie Award," given to Nevada greats Frank Hawkins, Nick Fazekas, Colin Kaepernick and dozens other standout Wolf Pack athletes.

"At that time, they didn't have a coach and umpteen assistants. He ran things on his own," said Dick Trachok, who graduated from Nevada in 1949 and served as the university's head football coach (1959-68) and athletic director (1969-85). "When I was a student here, he was on the staff and we learned quite a bit from him. He was a good instructor."

He also ran the physical education department. Each Nevada student was required to take physical education at the time or join ROTC, Trachok said.

Martie, known as "Doc" for his ability to "handle athletic injuries," led Nevada basketball to Far Western Conference championships in 1927, 1928, 1932 and 1938.

The university honored Martie as a "Distinguished Nevadan" in 1969. He was inducted into the Wolf Pack Hall of Fame in 1976. ■



University of Nevada Reno Special Collections photo
Nevada men's basketball head coach John E. "Doc" Martie, far right, speaks with members of the 1939 team.

Recruit Sustainment Company privates take the Interval Aerobic Run portion of the Army's Occupational Physical Assessment Test in October at the Washoe County Armory in Stead. Beginning this winter, new Nevada Army Guard Soldiers must attain requisite scores on their OPAT tests before they can attend their initial military training.



New troops face military heptathlon to become full-fledged Soldiers

By Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka
Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

STEAD — New Nevada Army Guard privates must pass a heptathlon of military fitness events in both the Occupational Physical Assessment Test and Army Physical Fitness Test before they can claim to be full-fledged Soldiers. The Army has added the OPAT as a requisite for Soldiers set for their initial training to predict the Soldiers' ability to meet the physical demands of their respective military occupational specialties.

Beginning in January, new Soldiers in the Recruit Sustainment Company will have to meet minimum OPAT scores associated with their MOSs just to ship out for basic training.

Soldiers failing to meet minimum scores in the four OPAT events will remain in Nevada and be forced to wait for future training slots in other available occupations. All Soldiers graduating for their Advanced Individual Training must pass the three-event Army Physical Fitness Test before they can join their permanent unit.

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Even long-serving Guardsmen may be affected by the OPAT in the future, as the Army is likely to add the stipulation that Soldiers wanting to transfer into a new military job must meet minimum OPAT scores associated with the Soldier's desired new military occupation specialty.

The OPAT consists of four individual tests designed to test various components of physical fitness. The events include:

The Standing Long Jump: The standing jump assesses lower-body power. Soldiers stand behind a take-off line and jump as far as possible with a two-footed leap and landing. The jumps are measured in centimeters.

The Seated Power Throw: The throw tests upper-body power. Soldiers sit on a floor with their upper back against a wall and toss a 2-kilogram (4.4 pound) medicine ball with both hands at a 45 degree angle. The throw is measured in centimeters.

The Strength Deadlift: The lift assesses lower-body strength. Soldiers stand inside a hex-bar and begin a series of lifts starting

with 120 pounds. The maximum lift is 220 pounds. Soldiers are scored by the heaviest amount in pounds they properly lift.

Interval Aerobic Run: The run tests aerobic capacity with a series of sprints between points 20 meters apart. The pace is synchronized with "beeps" from a loud speaker. As the test progresses, the time intervals between beeps decrease and force the Soldiers to run faster and recover more quickly between sprints. Soldiers are scored by the number of sprints they complete before they fail to meet the "beep" intervals.

Depending on their marks, Soldiers, regardless their gender or age, are scored with "heavy," "significant," "moderate" and "unqualified" standards.

Some Nevada Army Guard military occupations including combat engineer (12B MOS) and motor transport operator (88M MOS) require "heavy" standards in all four OPAT events. The majority of MOSs in the Nevada Army Guard require moderate scores.

(See TEST, Page 28)

Depleted Honor Guard remains face of military



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka

Sgt. Nicholas Gonzales of the Nevada Military Funeral Honors Program presents the U.S. Flag to Elizabeth Huntzinger in Boulder City during the funeral ceremony for her father, Vincent Cravero. Cravero was an Army veteran who served four years in Alaska during World War II.

By Sgt. 1st Class Erick Studenicka Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

BOULDER CITY — Although he spent just four of his 90 years of life in uniform and never advanced above the rank of private, Vincent Cravero always proudly identified himself as veteran Soldier of World War II. Cravero was a communications specialist who spent the majority of the war serving in Aleutian Islands in the then-territory of Alaska.

So when the Henderson resident passed away in September, it was an easy decision for his family to request military funeral honors at his final resting place in the Southern Nevada Veterans Cemetery. He was interred by a Nevada Military Funeral Honors Program detail that included Sgt. Nicholas Gonzales, Spc. Fabian Guerrero and Spc. Gilbert Lemos.

“His military service was among the proudest moments of his life,” said daughter

Elizabeth Huntzinger while clutching the American flag Gonzales had just given her on behalf of the President of the United States.

Although each funeral with military honors is unique and poignant, the tasks assigned to Nevada Army Guard's Military Funeral Honors Program are performed across the state hundreds of times each year. Because the Nevada Army Guard is the largest Army entity in a state bereft of major active-duty Army bases (Hawthorne Army Depot has just one active-duty Soldier), it performs the majority of military funeral honor details within Nevada for Army veterans. Soldiers on military funeral details usually perform flag folding, flag presentation and the playing of Taps. Tasks may also include rifle detail, duty as a pallbearer and caisson movement.

“For the majority of the population of Nevada, the honor guard is the face of the military,” said Susan Mead, the contractor

who works as the coordinator of the Nevada Military Funeral Honors program. “A family may not remember who attended their loved one's funeral, but they will remember the Soldiers who came to pay the military's respects.” When not working as Nevada's contracted coordinator, Mead is a sergeant in a chemical unit in the California National Guard headquartered in Turlock, Calif.

In 2016, the small but incredibly busy team conducted military honors at a record 770 funerals, easily surpassing the 704 funerals the detail attended in 2012, which was the previous high for one fiscal year. The team usually conducts honors at about 40-50 events monthly in southern Nevada and at about 10-15 events in northern Nevada.

While the number of events the squad attends continues to increase, the number of full-time team members was cut in half

(See HONOR GUARD, Page 26)

And the winner is...Airman of Year goes to maintenance squadron's Greb

Staff reports

RENO — The top performers in the Nevada Air National Guard in 2016 were recognized here in January during the annual Airman of the Year Banquet at the ballroom in the Eldorado Resort and Casino.

Airman 1st Class Ryan Greb of the 152nd Maintenance Squadron took Airman of the Year honors. Tech. Sgt. Jose Escobar of the 152nd Airlift Wing won the Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year title and the Senior Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year award went to Master Sgt. Jeanie Beck of the 152nd Logistics Readiness Squadron. Master Sgt. Eric Redinbaugh of the 152nd Intelligence Squadron won the First Sergeant of the Year award.

Honors for Company Grade Officer of the Year went to Capt. Kyle Carraher of the 152nd Operations Squadron. Master Sgt. Mark Magee won Honor Guard Member of the Year.

"I think this year's banquet was one of the best," said Chief Master Sgt. Michael Drisdale, Nevada Air National Guard State Command Chief. "We had a great turnout and everyone had a great time celebrating our single most valuable asset and the best that the Nevada Air National Guard has to offer — our Airmen. I am already looking forward to next year's event."

The winners will go on and represent the Nevada Guard in national level Airmen of the Year competitions.

The ceremony also honored local businesswoman Kellie George of United Federal Credit Union, a longtime supporter of the National Guard. She was presented with the Nevada State Comendation medal for her outstanding business development support of the Airmen and families



Photo by Senior Master Sgt. Paula Macomber
Airman 1st Class Ryan Greb, left, stands with Brig. Gen. Ondra Berry during the Airman of the Year Ceremony at Eldorado Resort and Casino in Reno in January.

of the Nevada Air National Guard via the credit union.

Red Cross recognizes retired Nevada Army Guard colonel

The American Red Cross of Northern Nevada honored a retired Nevada National Guard lieutenant colonel in November during its annual Everyday Heroes breakfast ceremony.

Lt. Col. John Strahan, who spent nearly two decades in the Nevada Army National

Guard and several years with active duty and the reserves, was one of eight northern Nevadans recognized for courageous acts and work during the ceremony at the Atlantis Casino Resort in Reno.

In 2014, while deployed as the commander for a U.S. Army Reserve Security Forces Advisory and Assistance Team (SFAAT), in Afghanistan, Strahan, of Carson City, quickly developed a bond with his interpreter, Shafiulla Nasratdada.

"In the villages and at the street level, he had such a wealth of knowledge living there," Strahan said. "He could tell who was

good, who was not good, who to trust, who not to trust and where our forces were best needed.”

When Strahan’s tour ended at the end of 2014, he assisted Nasratdada in becoming an American citizen through a U.S. Department of State refugee program available for interpreters. Nasratdada had worked about six years as an interpreter for U.S. military forces in Afghanistan.

Strahan eventually funded Nasratdada’s apartment, enrollment at the Western Nevada College and even got him a job at a local market in Carson City.

“My goal is to be at peace and stay safe, work hard and try to help other people who are needy, along with providing a good future for my family,” Nasratdada said after the ceremony Tuesday.

Nasratdada hopes to enter the electrical field someday and mentioned a desire to work for Tesla.

“The information (Nasratdada) provided was vital to our safety and security as we did our missions,” Strahan said of time spent with Nasratdada during his deployment. “He was a good weather vane for the areas we operated in, the people we dealt with. We were down in the weeds at the village levels and he could tell if this guy was clean, this guy was dirty, a known insurgent or a Taliban sympathizer.”

Before joining the U.S. Army Reserves, Strahan served in the Nevada Army National Guard from 1987-2003 and again from 2009-2011.

This isn’t the only time a retired Nevada Guardsman helped resettle and put an Afghan interpreter through college. Kurt Neddenriep, then a lieutenant colonel in the Nevada Guard’s 1st Squadron, 221st Cavalry, promised Aimal Halim back in 2009 he would pay for his college education if he could get accepted at Nevada. He ended up graduating with a 3.21 grade point average.

Col. JoAnne Meacham, commander of the 152nd Airlift Wing’s Mission Support Group, introduced Strahan and Nasratdada at the event and presented the award during the ceremony.

“I was extremely touched when I first heard about Lt. Col. Strahan’s bond with Shafiulla,” said Col. JoAnne Meacham, commander of the 152nd Airlift Wing’s Mission Support Group. “I was honored to present the award because these types of anecdotes embody the generosity of not only our community in northern Nevada but also the Nevada National



Photos by Tech. Sgt. Emerson Marcus
Retired Lt. Col. John Strahan, left, and Shafiulla Nasratdada reunite at the Everyday Heroes ceremony in November

Guard.”

Other honorees included Ashley Saibini, Peggy Rew, Note-Able Music Therapy Services, Northern Nevada International Center, Lt. Col. John Strahan, Detective Arnel Ramilo, Colton Keith and Verna Mejia.

For information on Red Cross Everyday Heroes sponsorship opportunities, email nnvheroes@redcross.org.

Veterans status granted to Guardsmen with 20 years

FALLON — After years of false hopes and disappointments from Congress, military personnel with at least 20 years of service who did not spend more than 179 consecutive days on federal active duty received good news from both Congress and the president just before the holiday season .

President Barack Obama signed into law in December legislation known as the Jeff Miller and Richard Blumenthal Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2016 that grants veteran status for National Guard Soldiers and Airmen and reservists from all branches of service.

Also, the 114th Congress approved legislation to expand the legal definition of a veteran for Guardsmen and reservists who honorably serve or had served in the military for 20 years but were never called up for federal active duty for an extended period of time.

Cav Soldiers receive new brigade patches, commander

NORTH LAS VEGAS — The leadership team from the 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team traveled from Idaho to welcome the Nevada Army Guard’s 1st Squad-

ron, 221st Cavalry, into the team’s fold here during a re-patching ceremony at the Clark County Armory in November. The squadron also held change of command in conjunction with the re-patching ceremony.

After several decades of association with the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, several hundred 1-221st Soldiers marked the squadron’s new association with the 116th by donning the patch of the combat team headquartered in Boise.

To signify the start of the squadron’s new era, 116th CBCT commander Col. Farin Schwartz and Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Elgan placed the 116th shoulder insignia on both the incoming and outgoing 1-221st command teams and welcomed the Nevada troopers into the vast team that includes more than 3,000 Soldiers and spans four states.

In addition to the new brigade patches, the cav Soldiers also welcomed their new commander, Maj. Nicholas Soapes, 38, of Peyton, Colo. He succeeded Lt. Col. Michael Peyerl, 43, of Reno. Peyerl had guided the squadron since March 2015.

Capital city civilians 1st to earn military certification

CARSON CITY — The Nevada National Guard is partnering with civilian business ally Click Bond Inc. to streamline the manufacturing and marketing processes at the largest manufacturer in the capital city.

Three of the company’s employees completed the Nevada National Guard’s Lean Sigma Six Green Belt certification. Green Belt certification signifies an individual who has received improvement methodology training and can lead a process improvement team

Click Bond manufactures adhesive-bonded fasteners for planes, trains, boats and more that are used in a wide array of industries including defense, naval, transportation and energy.

The first Click Bond employee to enroll and complete the Green Belt course was David Koepper, who was awarded his Nevada National Guard’s Green Belt certification in November. Koepper’s certification was the first recorded by a civilian businessman in the Nevada Guard’s military Lean Sigma Six program.

In December, Click Bond employees Shaun Fisher and Leah Ochs also earned their green belt certifications.

Suicide devastates Guard readiness

By Jose "Greg" Aragon
Suicide Prevention Program Manager

CARSON CITY — Suicide is a worldwide social issue that affects everyone, including the toughest and hardest of Nevada Guard Soldiers, Airmen, civilian employees and families. No one is immune to the damaging effects of suicide.



Eliminating suicide to save lives is essential to the readiness of the Nevada National Guard. It is a fact the Nevada Guard's ranks were devastated by multiple suicides last year.

When a person's life reaches an all-time low, they may lose hope, which can lead to suicidal ideations (thoughts or actions indicating a possible attempt to take one's own life), attempts, or completions.

Soldiers and Airmen must maintain essential skills in suicide intervention and prevention. Suicide intervention and prevention skills promise to lead to a reduction in the amount of ideations, attempts, and completion of suicides in the Nevada Na-

tional Guard community and in our Silver State communities as a whole.

It goes without saying that there are many people in our midst struggling with overwhelming mental and/or physical pain in their lives. Although it may not be possible to prevent all suicides, all people with suicide ideations or attempt contemplations should be afforded help. It is essential Soldiers and Airmen reach out to fellow Battle Buddies and Wingmen and provide assistance at even the slightest inkling of a suicide ideation or attempt.

People sometimes feel unprepared or uncomfortable assisting in suicide prevention and intervention situations. In order to improve interactions in those situations, the National Guard has created a curriculum surrounding those subjects. Oversight of the curriculum is provided by the Nevada National Guard Suicide Prevention Program

A primary goal of the Nevada National Guard Suicide Prevention Program is to instruct Soldiers and Airmen about Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST) and Ask, Care, Escort, Suicide-Intervention (ACE-SI). There is also a 90-minute ACE class (Ask, Care and Escort) that can be facilitated by unit personnel.

The ASIST program is a two-day workshop that teaches Soldiers and Airmen how to pose the question: "Are you contemplating

suicide?" The ACE-SI is a four-hour class that instructs people how to identify Soldiers and Airmen displaying signs of ideations or potential attempts and how to refer those people to available resources and assistance.

It is often difficult to know how to help someone who does not ask for help and/or does not seem to want help. In addition to training Soldiers and Airmen in suicide intervention and prevention, another primary goal of the Nevada National Guard Suicide Prevention Program is to reduce the stigma sometimes associated with asking for help at crucial moments of an individual's life.

Several ASIST course dates are set for 2017, including: May 3-5 at the Nevada Air Guard base in Reno and May 24-26 at the North Las Vegas Readiness Center.

Soldiers and Airmen interested in attending a course are welcome to call Suicide Prevention Program Manager Jose "Greg" Aragon at 775-384-5846 or cell 775-842-0163 or write to: jose.g.aragon2.ctr@mail.mil. Funding for Soldiers and Airmen to attend a course may be available; contact Aragon for details.

Soldiers and Airmen who need help quickly when they believe a friend may hurt himself or herself can call Aragon or call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (press one for the Military Crisis Line.)

Home loan benefits remain attractive perk for vets

By David Will
Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals

CARSON CITY — There are countless numbers of loan types for borrowers to consider, especially for those who have served in the military and have acquired Veterans Administration loan eligibility.

Remember, a certificate of eligibility is required to be considered for a VA loan. The certificate is the document forwarded to qualified veterans and active-duty service members that entitles them to VA guaranteed loans for homes, businesses and mobile homes. Certificates of eligibility may be obtained through the VA website (ebenefits.va.gov) or by sending a DD Form 214 (Discharge papers and Separation document)



to the local VA office with Form 1880 (request for Certificate of Eligibility).

(Note that the National Guard's new definition of a veteran may not correlate to VA loan eligibility, see related article.)

Once the certificate of eligibility is secured, here are some advantageous aspects of a VA home loan to ponder:

No down payment is required in most cases: Conventional loans typically require a 5 percent down payment and Federal Housing Administration loans require 3.5 percent.

No monthly mortgage insurance premium required: FHA loans come with both an upfront and an annual mortgage insurance charge. Conventional buyers typically need to pay for private mortgage insurance unless

they're making a down payment of 20 percent or more.

Limitations on buyer's closing costs: Sellers can pay all of a buyer's loan-related closing costs and up to 4 percent in concessions.

Lower average interest rates than other loan types: VA loans continue to have the lowest average interest rates out of all loan types.

No prepayment penalties: VA buyers can pay off a loan early without any financial penalties.

An assumable mortgage, typically subject to VA and/or lender approval: Veterans may have someone else take over their mortgage payment, which can be a big benefit in an economy experiencing rising interest rates.

(This unsolicited article was submitted by David Will on behalf of the Veterans Association of Real Estate Professionals. For information on VA loans, call 775-445-9207)

AWARDS • PROMOTIONS • RETIREMENTS

MOVING UP AND MOVING ON • AUGUST 2016 - DECEMBER 2016

Legion of Merit



CW4 Sherlyn Aboumrad JFHQ
LTC Michael Heil JFHQ

Meritorious Service Medal



TSgt Joshua Johnson 232nd Operations Sqdn
SMSgt Douglas Barron 152nd Maintenance Group
MSG Suzanne Connell 152nd Airlift Wing
Lt. Col. Robert Nicholas 152nd Civil Engineer Sqdn
MSG Lyle Smith 192nd Airlift Sqdn
MSG Chestin Aadaog 232nd Operations Sqdn
ISG Troy Anderson JFHQ
SFC Joseph Babb 1864th Transportation Company
MSG Michael Clark 421st Regional Training Institute
SFC Michael Connell JFHQ
ISG Jason Elfberg 72nd Military Police Company
CAPT Jeffrey Fanelli 1/221st Cav
MSG Leon Ferran 991st MFB
SGM Don Gable 1/168th GSAB
MAJ Geir Gabrielson JFHQ
MAJ Phillip Gingrich 1/221st Cav
CAPT Kandace Gonzales JFHQ
MSG Jacob Gonzales 17th Sustainment Brigade
SFC Autumn Janoss JFHQ
LTC Matthew Jonkey 991st MFB
ILT Sarah Kennard Medical Detachment
CSM Paul Kinsey 1/221st Cav
ISG Elizabeth Liemandt 422nd ESB
ISG Joseph Loader 421st RTI
CW4 Thomas McElroy JFHQ
MAJ Ronald McKimmy JFHQ
CSM Patrick Moore 991st MFB
ISG Michael Nelson 1/221st Cav
MSG Jamie Olson 757th CSSB
CPT Dustin Petersen 1/168th GSAB
LTC Michael Peyerl 1/221st Cav
ISG Jason Shipp 609th Engineer Company
CW5 Glen Spadin Det 45 OSA
ILT Terence Sterba 422nd ESB
MAJ Daniel Thielen JFHQ
SSG Roberto Torres Vargas 1/221st Cav
MSG Brent Whipple 757th CSSB
SSG Eric Wood 1/221st Cav

Army Commendation Medal



SGT Jonathan Barton 17th Sustainment Brigade
SSG Shakur Beavers RSP South
SPC Anthony Blankes NVARNG Rec/Ret
CW2 Kimberly Boeckman USPFO
Lt Col Kyle Cerfoglio Headquarters NVANG
SFC Shawn Fidler 1864th Transportation Company
SSG Edward Goosun 240th Engineers
SFC Justin Harris 92nd Civil Support Team
CPT Howard Hoover 17th Sustainment Brigade
WO1 John Koch 2/238th Aviation
SPC Aaron Laforteza 422nd ESB
SPC Gilbert Lemos 240th Engineers
SGT Brittney Lynch 240th Engineers
SGT Juan Marquez 150th Maintenance Company
SPC Christopher Mendell 1/221st Cav
SGT Edward Ojeda 240th Engineers
SSG Aaron Parks 150th Maintenance Company
SPC Jason Pavon 240th Engineers
MAJ Alesha Perez JFHQ

SPC Jonathan Perez 422nd ESB
ILT Lewis Roberts 152nd OSS/IN
SPC Melissa Urbano 1/140th Aviation
SPC Jorge Wilson Perez Medical Detachment
SSG Alfonso Zafrá 17th Sustainment Brigade

Air Force Achievement Medal



SMSgt Dean Long 152nd Airlift Wing
SSgt Bradley Day 152nd Force Support Sqdn
SrA Kimberly Ann Belen 152nd Force Support Sqdn
SSgt Kayla Hudson 152nd Operations Support Sqdn
TSgt Matthew Whitlow 232nd Operations Sqdn
TSgt Michael Jimenez 232nd Operations Sqdn

Army Achievement Medal



LTC Michael Glynn JFHQ
ILT Brian Gonzales JFHQ
SrA Kathryn Heeran 152nd Operations Support Sqdn
MAJ Brian Hunsaker JFHQ
SMSgt Scott Jasper 152nd Operations Support Sqdn
SSG Michael Kostak JFHQ
TSgt Joshua Leggett 192nd Airlift Support Sqdn
LTC Christopher Patterson JFHQ
ILT Jeremiah Trapp JFHQ
SSgt Zane Walker 152nd Operations Support Sqdn
TSgt Curtis Wiersma 152nd Operations Support Sqdn

Nevada State Commendation Medal



SGT David Barajas 137th Military Police Detachment
SPC Jesse Berry 609th Engineer Company
SPC Jessica Done 3665th EOD
SSG Adam Dubois 277th Engineers
SSG Edward Goosun 240th Engineers
SSG Michael Kostak JFHQ
SPC Cameron Kramer 3/140th Aviation
SPC Gilbert Lemos 240th Engineers
SPC Jason Pavon 240th Engineers
SPC Jonathan Perez 422nd ESB
SrA Melanie Prentiss 152nd Force Support Sqdn
SPC Russell Underwood 240th Engineers
SPC Melissa Urbano 1/140th Aviation
SPC Jorge Wilson Perez Medical Detachment
SPC Douglas Zamora 240th Engineers

Nevada Distinguished Service Medal



CSM Patrick Moore 991st Aviation

Nevada Medal of Merit



SSgt Robert Winder 152nd Operations Sqdn

LTC/Lt Col

Matthew Jonkey 92nd CST
Ricardo Bravo 192nd Airlift Sqdn
Jerome Guerrero JFHQ
Ryan Swindell JFHQ

MAJ/Maj

Jonathan Auch 17th Sustainment Brigade
Brian Capra 92nd CST
Lee Gaston 421st RTI
Richard Jordan JFHQ
Brett Eklund JFHQ
Michael Schiemer HHT, 1-221st Cav
Nathaniel Taylor 92nd CST
Diosado Quinton HHT, 1-221st Cav

CPT/Capt

Justin Klatt 422nd ESB
Jeremy Dries 17th Sustainment Brigade
Timothy Baird 17th Sustainment Brigade
David Paxton 17th Sustainment Brigade
Eric Mangino HHT, 1-221st Cav
Randolph McGeorge 137th MP Co.
Daniel Thomassian 1864th Transportation Co.
John Sivia 757th CSSB
Christopher Staggs 17th Sustainment Brigade
Jasmin Herrera 17th Sustainment Brigade
Cameron Smith HHT, 1-221st Cav
Nicolas Galbiso 777th FSC
Alex Stackhouse 757th CSSB
Timothy Jeffers 137th MP Company

1LT/1st LT

Mark Gomez Medical Detachment
Joshua Rogers 192nd Airlift Sqdn
Dean Thorpe 192nd Airlift Sqdn
Leif Dawson 777th FSC
Nicole Espinoza 17th Sustainment brigade
Patricia Mendoza 17th Sustainment Brigade

CW4

Ben Valdez 150th Maint. Company

CW3

Justin Stracher 17th Sustainment Brigade
Mark McAllister 17th Sustainment Brigade
Jonathan Wesley 17th Sustainment Brigade

CW2

Jacob Houser 1/168th GSAB
Sean Reiter 422nd ESB
Brian Bitner 17th Sustainment Brigade

SGM/CMSgt

Richard Deutch HHT, 1-221st Cav

ISG/MSG/SMSGt

Tristan Cornett 152nd Maintenance Spt Sqdn
William Duggins 152nd Civil Engineer Sqdn
David Hill 152nd Force Support Sqdn
Ian O'Grady 152nd Communications Flight
Anthony Williams 152nd MOF
Joshua Leggett 192nd Airlift Sqdn
Martin Meinhardt 152nd Force Support Sqdn
Scott Berry Sr. 150th Maintenance Co.
Kevin Johnson JFHQ

SFC/MSGt

Preston Crossman 1859th Transportation Co.

Michelle Ochoa

Michelle Ochoa Recruiting and Retention

SSG/TSgt

Brian Bradley Recruiting and Retention
John Cooley 3/140th Aviation
Michael Kostak JFHQ
Stephen Lawson 1859th Transportation Co.
Kristopher Maccario 991st TC
Nicholas Mapes 3/140th Aviation
Rebecca Martinez Soto 421st RTI
Linda Nelson HHC, 422nd ESB
Patrick Hall 152nd Security Forces Sqdn
Anthony Haley 152nd Security Forces Sqdn
Conrad Denshire 152nd Maintenance Sqdn

PROMOTIONS

COL/Col

Michael Glynn JFHQ
Richard Ferguson JFHQ
Michael Peyerl JFHQ

Gregory Fellows..... 152nd Medical Group
 Brandy Vaughn 152nd Medical Group
 Larry Morante..... 152nd Maintenance Sqdn
 Joel Garza..... 152nd Aircraft Maintenance Sqdn
 Christopher Washington..... 152nd Airlift Wing
 William Young..... 152nd Civil Engineer Sqdn
 Andrew Kapczynski 152nd Maintenance Sqdn
 Marshall Sprott 152nd Medical Group
 Bryan Bledsaw..... 232nd Operations Sqdn
 Brandon Carney 152nd Security Forces Sqdn
 Joshua Johnson 232nd Operations Sqdn
 Matthew Whitlow..... 232nd Operations Sqdn
SGT/SSgt
 Jami Harris 152nd Maintenance Group
 Sandelle Mancilla..... 152nd Aircraft Maintenance Sqdn
 David Higgins 152nd Maintenance Sqdn
 Arron Wood..... 152nd Maintenance Sqdn
 Trevor Schmidt 152nd Communications Flight
 Marisa Moreno 152nd Security Forces Sqdn
 Melanie Prentiss..... 152nd Force Support Sqdn
 Zhar Mendoza..... 152nd Communications Flight
 Bryanna Richard..... 152nd Logistics Readiness Sqdn
 Paul Ivey..... 152nd Maintenance Operations Flight
 Skylar Vanrenselaer 152nd Maintenance Sqdn
 Luis Sainz..... 152nd Maintenance Sqdn

Christopher Pope..... 152nd Maintenance Sqdn
 Emily Conway-Striggow..... 152nd Logistics Readiness Sqdn
 Amberley Dorrell 100th Quartermaster
 Romell Royce Fabella..... C Troop, 1-221st Cav
 Tawny Fields..... 1864th Transportation Co.
 Dillin Hart 422nd ESB
 Deborah Hurtado..... Army Medical Detachment
 Charles Julian 1864th Transportation Co.
 Sara Lee Holton 100th Quartermaster Co.
 Janette Mejia..... 17th Sustainment Brigade
 Jesus Mendoza Jr..... B Troop, 1-221st Cav
 Sergio Rodriguez Perez..... 277th Engineer Co.
 Tyler Roll 485th Military Police Co.
 Taylor Rose 609th Engineer Co.
 Jeremy Trader..... 3/140th Aviation

MSG Donald Fleming..... 150th Maint. Co
 MSG Jamie Olson..... 757th CSSB
 MSgt David Clarke..... 232nd Operations Sqdn
 MSgt Brandon Renfro..... 152nd Logistics Readiness Sqdn
 MSgt David Buttong..... 152nd Airlift Wing
 MSgt Dennis Chanez 152nd Aircraft Maintenance Sqdn
 MSgt Randy Moorhous..... 152nd Logistics Readiness Sqdn
 MSgt Suzanne Connell 152nd Airlift Wing
 MSgt Johnny Vance..... 152nd Logistics Readiness Sqdn
 SFC Charles Coleman..... 72nd Military Police Co.
 SFC Bryan Sulanke..... Charlie Troop, 1-221st Cav
 SFC Michael Connell JFHQ
 SFC Ryan Bongiovanni..... Alpha Troop, 1-221st Cav
 SSG Timothy Maguire 421st RTI
 SSG April Adams..... Stead Training Site
 TSgt Richard Perry..... 152nd Civil Engineer Sqdn
 TSgt William Whalen 152nd Logistics Readiness Sqdn
 TSgt Pat Meadows 152nd Logistics Readiness Sqdn
 TSgt Gabriel Gamboa 232nd Operations Sqdn
 SSgt Billy Robinson 152nd Maintenance Operations Flight
 SGT Gerald Terlaje JFHQ
 SGT Wilfredo Mercado HHC, 422nd ESB
 SGT Mikhail Arnold JFHQ
 SPC Robert Hindman HHC, 422nd ESB
 SPC Dominic Ruiz JFHQ
 SPC Albert Francia..... HHT, 1-221st Cav

RETIREMENTS

COL Scott Maylath..... JFHQ
 LTC Michael Heil JFHQ
 Lt Col Robert Nicholas 152nd Civil Engineer Sqdn
 Maj Michael Ramsay 192nd Airlift Sqdn
 SMSgt Clay Gardner 152nd Maintenance Sqdn
 1SG Jerry Hughes 991st TC
 1SG Jacob Gonzales..... 17th Sustainment Brigade
 MSG Brett Penny..... 1864th Trans. Co.

(HONOR GUARD, from Page 21)

in October when funding for the squad's personnel decreased from eight to four full-time Soldiers.

Mead said she hopes traditional (Soldiers serving one weekend per month and two weeks of annual training) will assist the team and help fill potential personnel shortfalls. Soldiers performing funeral honor guard duties receive compensation from additional uniformed training assembly funds as well as retirement points; Soldiers can also receive pay and retirement points for funeral honor guard training.

Despite the reduction in the number of full-time honor guard Soldiers, Mead said the Nevada Funeral Honors teams continue to maintain a perfect record of fulfilling all

requests for military funeral honors, except for a few times on drill weekends when the honor guard Soldiers must prioritize training with their home units.

In order to serve on a military funeral honors team, a Soldier must not be flagged, meet the Army height and weight standards and receive a letter of recommendation from his or her first sergeant. Soldiers must also have a serviceable Army Service Uniform.

Soldiers new to the team will receive instruction from the coordinator and other experienced Soldiers. Soldiers will be allowed to serve on funeral details once deemed proficient. Members of the team may also pursue attendance at the 40-hour Honor Guard course where they will refine and perfect their skills.

Although the majority of World War II veterans have passed away, hundreds of thousands of Nevadans remain eligible for military funeral honors. Those eligible for military funeral honors include: military member who die on active duty or in the selected reserve; former military members who served on active duty or selected reserve and received a discharge other than "dishonorable;" and military members who completed at least one term of enlistment in the selected reserve and received a discharge other than "dishonorable."

Visit: www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/benefits_chap08.asp to determine eligibility.

For information on serving in the Military Funeral Honors Program, call 702-339-1297. ■

(BAGPIPES, from Page 13)

Air Guard Master Sgt. Suzanne Connell, and Michael both said their grandparents, parents, aunts and uncles served in different U.S. and German military branches as far as back as WWII.

Michael said his older brother was one of the only family members on his side who did not serve in the military.

Mariah's younger sister, Caitlyn Connell, also wants to join the military and become a pilot.

Michael has already landed an agriculture job and is set to work on a ranch away from home for a while. He said he loves "cowboying around," working with livestock and using his new agriculture sciences degree. The walls of his house, in addition to military awards, are decorated with

Western photography, paintings and tack. He owns a vintage military saddle that he's afraid will no longer fit modern horses.

Michael found a kinship with farmers and ranchers during a break in service between his Air Guard and Army stints. He said farmers and ranchers understand what it takes to work hard without complaining, just like military personnel.

"(The military) is about discipline," he



Longtime Nevada Guard bagpiper Sgt. 1st Class Michael Connell retired in December..

said. "They're some of the best people I've ever met in my life."

He said soldiers and para-military first responders are the type of people who run toward danger instead of away from it. They take care of each other.

"It's not about God and country. It's about that person next to you — or those people next to you — that you're fighting for," he said.

Michael's long-term goal is to assimilate back into ranching and then work his way toward running a cattle operation.

In the meantime, he said he'll try out a few new things he's never done before, such as grow a handlebar mustache and experiment with photography.

This article appears courtesy Reno-Gazette Journal.

(MAGEE, from Page 9)

Finding acceptance

“Amazingly positive, actually. When I get questions, the two I get most are: ‘How did you come to Islam?’ Not necessarily in a judgmental way, but a curious way. The other question I get is, ‘How are people treating you? Are you being treated OK?’ Because everyone is worried about Islamophobia and worried I’ll be treated in a bad way. There’s more of a fear of me being treated badly...it’s kind of touching.”

The Nevada Guard’s pursuit of diversity and inclusion in the workplace goes beyond Laura’s case, having claimed four of the five Excellence in Diversity awards at the 2016 National Guard Diversity Training and Workshop last summer in Norman, Okla. The Nevada Guard also hosted the Joint Diversity Executive Council conference at the Eldorado Resort and Casino ballroom, Jan. 11-13. Representatives from more than 20 states and territories attended the conference.

Since their conversion, Mark and Laura are the only two Airmen in the Nevada Air Guard that currently have Islam as their declared religious preference, according to personnel records. According to Pentagon data released in 2015, more than 5,000 Muslims serve in the U.S. military.

Along with the positive reception among their fellow Airmen in the Nevada Air Guard, both said the Northern Nevada Muslim Center Mosque in Sparks has welcomed them with open arms.

“(Members of the local Muslim community) have all been really nice,” Mark said. “When I first went there with my kids (at the Mosque). It felt weird. It took two times going there. ...They eventually start-

ed asking questions and soon welcomed us. They were so nice about the whole thing. They were curious about us and the situation.”

NNMC President and University of Nevada, Reno professor Sherif Elfass was one of the first people to greet Mark and Laura at the Mosque.

“We understand conversion is not an easy step,” Elfass said. “We have a support group for them. That is something the Mosque provides. Not classes, per se, but we do assign a person to take care of their needs.”

When Laura asked if Elfass would speak at the Nevada Air Guard Base in Reno, he did.

“I was supposed to go there and talk about what Islam is,” he said. “Obviously, the discussion turned to ISIS and what I think about them.”

A ‘hijacked’ religion

Being in the military, Laura says many people she works with feel her new religion and its practices helped bring about radical groups — specifically ISIS — in the same region the U.S. military is actively engaged.

ISIS, designated as a terrorist organization by the United Nations, seeks to build its caliphate, or religious state, with goals of waging holy war against “disbelievers.”

Laura feels the portrayal of Islam in news reports and on social media has led to great misconceptions about the religion, largely because of ISIS.

“I think a lot of Muslims feel that what ISIS is doing is directly attacking Islam and the religion,” she said. “They are trying to change it into their image. A lot of Muslims feel personally attacked.”

Laura said she feels, on some levels, it’s

recently become more personal for her because ISIS has not only declared war on the West, but also the religion she now practices.

Mark agreed and equated ISIS to the KKK of Islam.

“Technically, I wouldn’t call them Muslims,” he said.

Elfass agreed.

“They hijacked the religion,” he said.

Laura says her spiritual journey, from questioning her father about the existence of God to discovering Islam at chaplain school, has presented her with more than a religion, but also a desire to be an active voice for the Muslim community — taking a stand against the radical elements of the religion.

“For the most part, people don’t care if you are in the Chaplain Corps as a Jew, a Christian, a Muslim or a Buddhist,” she said. “They don’t make a big deal of your religion. But because of the nature of things today and how negative the outlook is on Islam right now, there is sort of a need for a Muslim presence in the Chaplain Corps.”

Laura recently appeared on “The Stream” — an Al Jazeera network show — titled “Muslim in the Military.” She was granted permission to wear her hijab at work while in her U.S. Air Force uniform, which was quickly endorsed by her chain of command, Magee said. She also writes a blog on her conversion experience titled, “For the Love of Deen” (Deen is an Arabic word meaning “religion”).

“I want people to know about Islam,” she said. “I want people to know it is not evil. I want people to know how the overwhelming population of Muslims are good people.” ■

(WORK, from Page 15)

The Work for Warriors Nevada program provides service members, veterans and their immediate family with employment assistance to ensure job seekers realize their employment goals. The free program has offices and staff in both southern and northern Nevada and matched 568 people with jobs in 2016. Work for Warriors recently hosted an invitational summit featuring 17 states in Carson City that explored the best practices available to combat National Guard unemployment and underemployment.

According to Work for Warriors Ne-

vada statistics, the Silver State’s overall unemployment rate is 6.3 percent and the Nevada Guard’s unemployment rate is slightly lower at 6.0 percent. Underemployed statistics are not available; underemployment includes highly-skilled workers employed in low-paying jobs and part-time workers who would prefer to be full time.

The academy that began in autumn at the Clark County Armory is the first conducted in southern Nevada in a decade. For the past 10 years, all DPS academies were held in Carson City. Each class includes 28 cadets. The DPS leases space at the Clark County Armory in 16-week increments for about \$2,200.

Ellithorpe said DPS annually hires about 120 new employees in its law enforcement division. Visit http://hr.nv.gov/Sections/Compensation/2015/Compensation_Schedules_July20_2015/ to see the current compensation schedule.

There are no age or weight limits for DPS employment, but applicants must pass physical tests that include push-ups, sit-ups, a 300-meter sprint and a 1.5-mile run.

For information on DPS employment or employment placement assistance, call Work for Warriors Nevada at 702-632-0551 (southern Nevada) or 775-384-5812 (northern Nevada). ■

(DRILL SGT., from Page 11)

“It’s been my only experience in the Army where the students weren’t afforded access to their regulations and manual – everything was learned by rote memorization,” Perez said.

After deploying with the cavalry in 2009-2010, Perez became an Army Guard recruiter in 2012 and promptly earned the “Rookie of the Year” award. In 2013, he was named “Nevada’s Top Recruiter” and made the “Chief’s 54” list by being the leading recruiter in the Silver State with more than 30 enlistments. He went on to win the Region VII recruiting board that year and represented the region at the national recruiting board in Arkansas.

After his successful stint in recruiting,

Perez became the RSC’s administrative sergeant in 2015.

Perez said he doesn’t have too much trouble changing gears from drill sergeant to “Daddy” during drill weekends. He and his wife, Rochelle, have three children: Citlalic, 6; Elias Jr., 4; and Cruz, 1.

“I might have been accused of being strict once or twice, but I realize they’re my kids and not Soldiers,” Perez said with a laugh. “But just like the Soldiers in the RSC, I want my kids to be respectful and develop into good citizens.”

Soldiers in the Recruit Sustainment Company experience different phases of time in the unit that closely parallel the phases of initial Army training. While attached to the RSC, new Soldiers learn

foundational Army knowledge. They begin each drill with the Army Physical Fitness Test and then they learn about Army basics, including drill and ceremony, the military rank structure and Army policies.

The newly-recruited Soldiers then drill with the RSC until they depart for basic training. After basic training, they report back to the RSC one last time before a representative from their permanent unit comes and welcomes them to their ultimate position in the Nevada Guard.

“Seeing the full-fledged Soldiers in their uniform and realizing the transformation they have experienced gives me a feeling of accomplishment,” Perez said. “It’s a good feeling to know that I was a small part of their growth and maturation.” ■

(TEST, from Page 20)

For example, a Soldier aiming to attend motor transport operator training any time after January must score “heavy” in all four OPAT events and must jump a minimum of 5 feet, 3 inches, throw at least 14 feet, 9 inches, lift 160 pounds and run 43 interval sprints in the allotted time.

Although the conduction of the OPAT takes a considerable amount of time to complete each drill weekend, Recruit Sustainment Company 1st Sgt. Shauna Reese said the test appears to be a good indicator of the physical requirements needed for specific occupations.

“An 88M needs to have the strength to change a tire – that’s the reality of the job,” Reese said. “If a new Soldier can’t lift a certain weight before training, that is good in-

dicator they’ll be unable to meet the physical requirements of their job.”

Army officials initially wanted to use the OPAT as a way to assess the physical abilities of recruits, similar to the way the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) tests recruits’ potential academic success. However, due to the potential for injury, the OPAT is only administered to Soldiers in duty status and is not given to recruits.

Once a new Soldier passes the OPAT conducted by the Recruit Sustainment Company, he or she will not receive subsequent OPAT tests at either basic training or Advanced Individual Training.

Reese said Nevada’s Soldiers are performing well on the OPAT and she does not anticipate a large number of Nevada Guard

Soldiers will be forced to postpone their training once the OPAT requisite becomes official in January.

“We are really surprised how many Soldiers are scoring ‘heavy’ on the events,” Reese said. “At least 80 percent are scoring ‘moderate’ in all events.

“Right now, with the current passing rate, it doesn’t seem to be a big issue and we don’t anticipate canceling many training seats.”

Experienced Soldiers interested in changing military occupations will likely be required to take the OPAT in the future, but the final implementation date has not been established. The OPAT for experienced Soldiers will be administered by Regional Training Institute staff.

For information on the OPAT, call 775-884-8436. ■

(COMBAT, from Page 14)

become the state’s first combat engineer because “she has the will and determination that a lot of young Soldiers don’t possess.” He said she has a good chance of passing the course but also doesn’t mince his comments about the difficult training she will experience.

“I have no doubt she will give (the combat engineer course) all she has, but I also know the 12B Soldiers go through some very rigorous training,” Perez said. “She will do great at basic training, but the

ruck marches at a combat arms school are no joke. I was at 19D (cavalry scout) and many men were not physically capable of doing all of the training.”

Sears said she wants to become a combat engineer because she is interested in the explosive ordnance disposal branch of the Army. A combat engineer’s job includes constructing obstacles and defensive positions as well as placing and detonating explosives in combat situations. When she returns from her courses, likely in March, she plans to begin applying to state univer-

sities and colleges and start work toward an engineering degree.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter lifted all gender-based restrictions on military service in January 2016, opening the Nevada Army Guard jobs of combat engineer (12B), indirect fire infantryman (11C), fire support specialist (13F), cavalry scout (19D) and armor crewman (19K) to women.

Anyone interested in a combat military occupations – including female Nevada Army Guard Soldiers seeking reclassification – can call 775-884-8436 for information. ■

(CAV, from Page 17)

“This operation didn’t cost the Nevada Guard anything extra in terms of funding or resources. Instead of conducting our live fire at the National Training Center (at Fort Irwin, Calif.) this year, we planned for this event at Creech three years ago. There is no doubt in my mind that all parties involved will continue to maintain this relationship and train to cooperatively meet and defeat our poten-

tial future enemies on the battlefield.”

The ceremony marking the squadron’s transfer from the 11th ACR to the 116th Cavalry Brigade team was held in November. The 116th is the lone cavalry brigade combat team in the National Guard and is the largest organization within the Idaho National Guard. In addition to Nevada, it oversees units in Oregon and Montana. ■

CALENDAR



Federal Holiday



Nevada Holiday and History



Other Events and Functions

March 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 1861: Nevada becomes a territory	2	3 Navy Reserve Birthday	4
5 Seabee Birthday	6	7	8	9	10	11
12 Daylight Savings Time Resumes	13 U.S. K9 Corps birthday	14	15	16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18
19 1931: "wide open" gambling legislation approved in Nevada Leg.	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30 Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day	31	

April 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1
2	3	4 1949: 12 countries sign NATO treaty to unite against Soviet expansion	5 Gold Star Wives Day	6	7	8
9 Palm Sunday 1996: first C-130s arrive at Air Base in Reno	10	11	12	13 Thomas Jefferson's Birthday	14 Air Force Reserves Birthday	15
16 Easter Sunday	17	18	19	20	21 1948: Nellis AFB jet collides with passenger jet, killing 49	22
23 Army Reserve B-day	24	25	26	27	27	27
30						

May 2017

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 1950: Las Vegas Air Force Base renamed Nellis Air Force Base	2	3	4	5	6
7	8 1792: Militia Act signed requiring free, able-bodied men to enroll in militia.	9	10	11	12 1860: Pyramid Lake War's first battle.	13
14 Mother's Day	15	16	17	18	19	20 Armed Forces Day with annual parade in Hawthorne.
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29 Memorial Day	30	31			

Top New Year's Environmental Compliance Resolutions

1. Properly label hazardous wastes

Proper labels are available from the environmental office.

2. Keep hazardous waste containers closed

Only open containers when adding or removing waste.

3. Label empty containers with an "Empty" label

Empty containers must be segregated and clearly identified.

4. Inspect hazardous waste storage areas

Hazardous material storage area needs inspection, too.

5. Maintain hazardous waste weekly inspection logs

Keep records available for inspectors.

6. Properly manage common universal waste

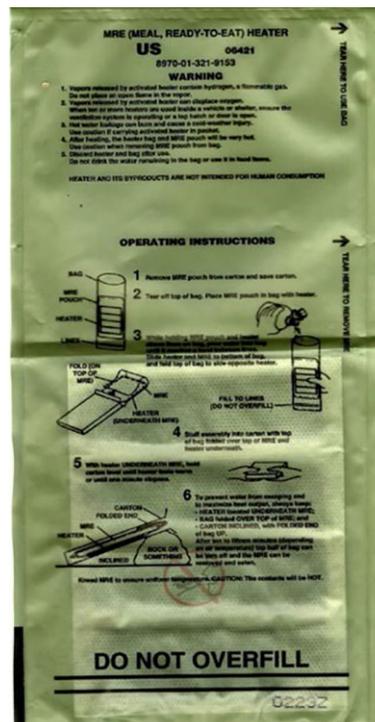
Waste such as light tubes and batteries require proper disposal.

7. Just say 'No' to burn barrels

Like the Green Class A uniform, burn barrels are a thing of the past.

8. Avoid illegal dumping

Illegal dumping leads to a huge, unsightly pile of violations.



Proper MRE disposal is current hot topic

The heaters included in Meals Ready-to-Eat (MREs) are considered Class D3 reactive hazardous wastes under federal law. The material in MRE heaters can create potentially explosive reaction when mixed with water.

Although one MRE heater would probably not pose much of an explosive threat, a violent reaction could result if several unused heaters were thrown into a trash receptacle and subsequently came into contact with water or liquids.

For information of the Nevada Guard's environmental policies and compliance, call the Environmental Office at 702-694-4484.