

# Alabama Guardsman

Vol. VI 2010

A publication for the citizen-Soldiers & Airmen of Alabama



## ***In this issue:***

*135th ESC returns from deployment Pg.2*

*Guardmembers walk to help prevent suicide Pg. 6*

*The Adjutant General and State Command Sgt. Maj. Pg.3*

*Father, daughter reunite in Iraq Pg. 7*

*Snap Shots: Highlights in the Alabama National Guard Pg. 4-5*

*Special Forces program helps Soldiers Prepare, Train and Perform Pg. 8*

# 135th ESC returns from Afghanistan deployment

by Spc. Brenda Thomas  
Staff Writer

After a yearlong tour in Afghanistan, the 135th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) returned home October 27, 2010. Heavy rain poured down on the eager friends and family as they awaited their loved ones' arrival at Fort John C. Persons Armory in Birmingham, Ala. Just as the soldiers of the 135th arrived, the rain stopped. Some said they brought the sunshine with them both in the sky and in the hearts of their friends and families.

Members of the 135th ESC left in November 2009, for Kandahar, Afghanistan. Their primary mission, to act as the Joint Sustainment Command led by Brig. Gen. Reynold N. Hoover, was to ensure troops and supplies got to the right place at the right time. This campaign is "perhaps the toughest logistic fight ever undertaken by the U.S. military," Hoover said. While in theater, the 135th commanded over 10,000 Soldiers, Marines, Airmen, Sailors and civilian contractors. "Because we were surging 30,000 troops while simultaneously supporting over 65,000 troops already in Afghanistan, the size of our logistics footprint helped to ensure that our troopers in



Brenda Thomas/photo

The 135th Expeditionary Sustainment Command (ESC) returns home from Afghanistan on Oct. 27, 2010

the field never went without a full canteen, a hot meal, fuel for the vehicles, ammunition for their weapons and mail for their morale," said Hoover.

Sgt. 1st Class Monica Davenport was one of the approximately 250 soldiers deployed with the 135th. "It was wonderful to know that we made history. To be a part of something like that was awesome," she said. "I will never forget it." This was Davenport's second deployment, but only her first to Afghanistan. "You just have to be there to experience it. No one can prepare you totally for that kind of environment. The experience made me a stronger person. It made me appreciate the little things in life that we so much take for granted."

The brief redeployment ceremony included a few words from the Alabama National Guard Director of the Joint Staff, Brig. Gen. Allen M. Harrell; Maj. Gen. Joe E. Harkey, 135th's higher headquarters' commanding general; and, finally, Brig. Gen. Hoover. Expressing pride and gratitude, Hoover said to his unit, "Thank you for a job well done, for your service and sacrifice, for your dedication to the mission and support of the Afghan people, and for your loyalty to the command. Through your efforts, we have made a difference."

To conclude the ceremony, the 135th's flag was uncased and unfurled, symbolizing the unit's official return to its home post and a symbol of a successful mission.

## Alabama Guardsman

The Alabama Guardsman is published by the 131st Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, Alabama Army National Guard. Submissions are encouraged and should be e-mailed to the 131st MPAD, int-paoad@ng.army.mil, (334) 213-7572. The views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Department of the Army, the National Guard Bureau or the Alabama National Guard. This publication is electronically published monthly on the Alabama National Guard website.

Adjutant General.....Maj. Gen. Abner Blalock  
Public Affairs Officer.....Lt. Col. Cynthia Bachus  
131st MPAD Commander.....Maj. Anthony Laier  
Senior Editor.....Sgt. 1st Class. Jamie Brown  
Senior Editor.....Staff Sgt. Martin Dyson  
Staff Writer.....Spc. Bethany Brown  
Staff Writer.....Pfc. Eric Roberts

## On the Cover

Members of the Alabama National Guard show support for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's 5th Annual "Out of the Darkness Community Walk" at Heardmont park in Oak Mountain, Nov. 7. Please see story on page 6 (photo by Eric Roberts).

## Adjutant General

# Holiday season a good time for appreciation



**Maj. Gen.  
Abner C. Blalock**

As we celebrate the Christmas Holiday Season, it is a time to reflect on our blessings, appreciate our families and friends, and refocus for the future. It is truly a time to appreciate those around us, especially those

in uniformed military service who enable us to celebrate Christmas, each in our own way. Our Freedom to celebrate in our own way is secured in part by the service of each member of the Alabama Air and Army National Guard.

Our organization has much to appreciate. It starts with the Airmen and Soldiers who make this a great organization. Your hard work and sacrifice have resulted in an organization that can be counted on when needed by our Citizens, our Governor, our President, and most importantly our fellow service members. Your success is indicated by many achievements. These achievements include a rare “outstanding” rating by the 187th Fighter Wing on a recent Operational Readiness Inspection; a successful Total Force Integration of active duty Airmen into the 117th Air Refueling Wing; and unprecedented levels of strength, MOS qualification and medical readiness by all units of the Alabama Army National Guard. These achievements are built upon others that many consider “just

doing my duty”: success in Iraq and Afghanistan from training security forces to protecting each other from attack; success in preparing for deployment; the daily grind of unmanned aerial vehicle imagery analysis from the AOR by the mobilized Airmen of the 117th ANG Intelligence Squadron. Each of you succeeding in your duty, every day, delivers the results and credit to your organization!

As we prepare to celebrate the holidays with our families, I am proud to serve with you and for you. I am blessed to be surrounded by great Soldiers and Airmen committed to succeeding every day and in every way. My prayers are with our deployed Airmen and Soldiers, their families, each of you and your families for all they endure. May God bless each of you! Proud to Serve!

## State Command Sergeant Major

# Giving thanks and staying safe during the holiday season



**Command Sgt.  
Maj.  
William H. Jones**

My family and I wish everyone in the Alabama National Guard a very merry and safe Christmas this holiday season. As I think about this holiday season, I thank all of our nation’s veterans for making it possible

for you and me to enjoy the freedoms that we have. I am reminded that service to others and a kind word or action during the holidays help us to express and reaffirm our faith.

I was fortunate to be able to

visit our Soldiers in Iraq during October and I came away impressed at the awesome responsibility given to our Alabama warriors and the missions that they are executing on a daily basis. I would like for everyone at home this Christmas to think of our deployed Soldiers and their families and keep them in your prayers for a safe and happy return. I also spent some time in November with our transitioning warriors at Fort Gordon and Fort Benning; they are recovering from illness, disease and injuries received in the line of duty. They must overcome pain and the loneliness of being away from home while undergoing treatment, so keep them in your hearts and pray for their speedy recovery and return home to their loved ones as well.

My last holiday message is about safety. Take care of yourself and your fam-

ily this holiday, maintain your situational awareness with the increased traffic on our roads and watch out for erratic, distracted drivers. Please have a designated driver when needed and allow more time to get to your destination. Check your tires for correct pressure and wear, tires lose pressure as the weather cools (about one psi for every ten degrees drop in temperature). Cold weather also increases the use of space heaters which is a leading cause of fire fatalities, so please check the user manual for safe placement and operation of any space heater. Watch out for children playing outside during their Christmas school break.

Merry Christmas and remember those less fortunate as you enjoy family and friends this holiday season.

Bayonet 7 out.

# Snap Shots

A look at some of the recent highlights in the Alabama National Guard



Contributed/photo

Medics from team "Ramrod" from Alabama compete in a "Best Medic" competition in Birmingham in October. Teams of five ran through a training lane full of different combat medic scenarios designed to test their medical and troop leading skills. The event featured teams from the National Guard, Army Reserve and active duty Army. Team "Ramrod" finished in second place.



Brenda Thomas/photo

A group of Alabama National Guardmembers gather for a photo at the Fallen Heroes Golf Tournament. The Greystone Foundation held the Fallen Heroes Golf Tournament and Fundraiser Oct. 22, 2010. This year the foundation collaborated with the Wounded Warriors and several other organizations. Three Wounded Warriors got the opportunity to play with a professional golfer for the entire day, taking a few free lessons along the way. There was also a raffle and an auction held that evening. All proceeds went to the Alabama National Guard Foundation



Contributed/photo

Alabama's service members who have died during the War on Terror are remembered and honored during a ceremony on the front steps of the State Capitol in Montgomery on Oct. 27, 2010. Governor Bob Riley, members of the military and family members of many of the 122 Alabamians who have died since the War on Terror began on Sept. 11, 2001 attended the service. The names of all 122 were read and a flag designed by the father of a soldier who was killed in Iraq was presented to the state. The names and photographs of seven more Alabamians who died in the war since last November were added to the state's Memorial to Fallen Heroes inside the Capitol.



Contributed/photo

*Sgt. India Gray claps as “Reddy Ribbon” leads cheers at a kickoff rally for the annual Red Ribbon Campaign at the Garrett Coliseum in Montgomery. The Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) team from the Alabama National Guard Counterdrug Program helped plan and conduct the event that hosted more than 400 students from the Montgomery Public School System. DDR and Recruiters partnered to distribute nearly 800,000 ribbon stickers to students all over the state in support of this drug prevention awareness campaign. In follow-up to the event, DDR members and Recruiters visited several schools with educational presentations and activities encouraging our Alabama youth to make the commitment to be drug free.*



Jamie Brown/photo

*Maj. Gen. Abner Blalock, The Adjutant General of Alabama, presents Governor Bob Riley with the Charles Dick Medal of Merit at a ceremony at the Alabama Air National Guard’s 187th Fighter Wing, in Montgomery on Oct. 7. The award is presented by the National Guard Association of the United States to recognize an elected official for “exceptionally strong support” of the National Guard.*



Contributed/photo

*Members of the 135th Sustainment Command are honored at an Auburn University football game in November. These Auburn University alumni with 135th put together a video featuring the Auburn creed, while they were stationed in Afghanistan. The video was shown at Auburn football games this season. After returning from the deployment, they were invited to be honored at an Auburn game.*

# Guardmembers walk to help prevent suicide

by Pfc. Eric Roberts  
131st MPAD

Alabama National Guard soldiers removed their berets, and bowed their heads. The soldiers quietly observed a moment of silence for their fallen fellow soldiers. Soldiers not killed in combat, but soldiers who have lost their lives to suicide. As the moment concluded, the soldiers once again placed their berets on their heads and proudly walked. Each step in attempt to shine a light for soldiers and others to show that one death by suicide is too many.

Members from Alabama National Guard units from across the state joined the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention for the 5th Annual “Out of the Darkness Community Walk” at Heardmont park in Oak Mountain, Nov. 7.

Suicide is climbing at record pace in the United States, and has often left its harsh marks on the Alabama National Guard.

“The numbers of suicide victims are increasing across the nation,” said Dr. Mary Bartlett, Board Member of AFSP’s Alabama Chapter, “and especially on the Army National Guard side.”

The reasons for suicide are unique to each individual soldier. The National Guard has made a commitment to endure and stand beside its soldiers.

“It is important to get a handle on what bothers soldiers, and what makes them feel like they have nowhere to turn,” said State Command Sgt. Maj. Bill Jones. “This walk is to raise awareness, and to let soldiers know there is another way.”

The walk is more than just an

event it is a visible sign of resolve and support to its troops.

“This walk shows our resolve to preventing suicide in our ranks,” said Maj. Jim McCool, a member of the Alabama National Guard’s Suicide Prevention Task Force and the State Health Services Officer.

“We are not immune to the problem that we have suicide in our ranks. This is our first time involved the walk and it shows soldiers and their families we are here to support them,” said McCool.

The purpose was not just making the public aware, said 1st Lt. Mike Chitwood, the Suicide Prevention Program Manager. The purpose is letting soldiers know that the Guard cares and understands the pressure of deployment, hard economic times and unemployment.

The efforts of the leadership of the Alabama National Guard to provide hope and education to those affected by suicide have inspired civilians and soldiers alike.

“Leadership is key to helping educating Guard members and their families that suicide is preventable,”



Eric Roberts/photo

*Members of the Alabama National Guard walk in support of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention’s 5th Annual “Out of the Darkness Community Walk” at Heardmont park in Oak Mountain, Nov. 7.*

said Bartlett. “And seeking support to build resiliency is crucial.

With each soldier’s step during the “Out of the Darkness Community Walk,” the Alabama National Guard took one more step towards hope.

“The Guard is family,” said Jones, “and anytime any one soldier hurts, we all do.”

# Father, daughter continue special bond in Iraq

by Staff Sgt. Edward Daileg  
United States Forces-Iraq PAO

CAMP VICTORY, Iraq - She sat next to her father as tears rolled down her face, then looked over at him and said "I love you, and thank you."

Pfc. Brooke A. Jackson, a combat medic with Company C, 703rd Brigade Support Battalion, was filled with emotion as she let her dad know how much love and support she has received from him since childhood.

Brooke, from Cleveland, Tenn., and her father, Master Sgt. Lawrence E. Jackson, a native of Oneida, Tenn., have had a particularly close emotional bond for as long as she can remember.

This year Brooke, an active duty Soldier based out of Fort Stewart, Ga., and Lawrence, with the Alabama National Guard, both deployed to Iraq, but haven't seen each other since January.

Recently Brooke had a mission that brought her to Camp Victory, where her dad works as the communication and information systems noncommissioned officer-in-charge for Task Force Troy.

When Lawrence found out about her mission, he requested to meet his daughter here. The leadership of TF Troy and the 703rd worked together to make the reunion happen.

On Oct. 1, Lawrence went to work and found Brooke waiting in his office. They greeted each other with hugs and smiles, and the special bond between them showed as Law-



Contributed/photo

*Lawrence Jackson is reunited with his daughter, Brooke, in Iraq, where they are both serving in the Army.*

rence introduced her to the Soldiers he works with.

Lawrence, a combat veteran and a Soldier for more than 24 years, said that leaving his family for long periods of time has been the hardest part of his military career.

Brooke, however, has always supported her dad in his career. Whether it was listening to his stories or watching his videos, she was absolutely amazed by his accomplishments as she grew up.

"I would always watch videos of my dad jumping out of planes and fast-roping down towers," said Brooke. "How cool is that? When you see your dad doing all these things like a super hero?"

After Brooke graduated from Lee University in Cleveland, Tenn., with a degree in biology, she decided to join the Army for experience in the

medical field and to serve her country.

Her decision was a complete surprise to Lawrence, who never spoke to Brooke about joining the military until the day she asked him for guidance and information on the benefits of joining the Army.

"Because of her Bachelor's degree, I wanted her to have a different career path than me. I would like her to become a medical officer one day," said Lawrence.

Lawrence responded with tears of his own when he thanked Brooke for all the support she has given him and all she has achieved in life. He slowly looked at Brooke and said, "Thank you, I'm proud of you, and I love you."

Brooke will remain in Iraq until the summer of 2011, while Lawrence is scheduled to redeploy before the end of the year.

## Special Forces program helps Soldiers Prepare, Train and Perform

by Spc. Bethany Brown  
131st MPAD

FORT MCCLELLAN, Ala.

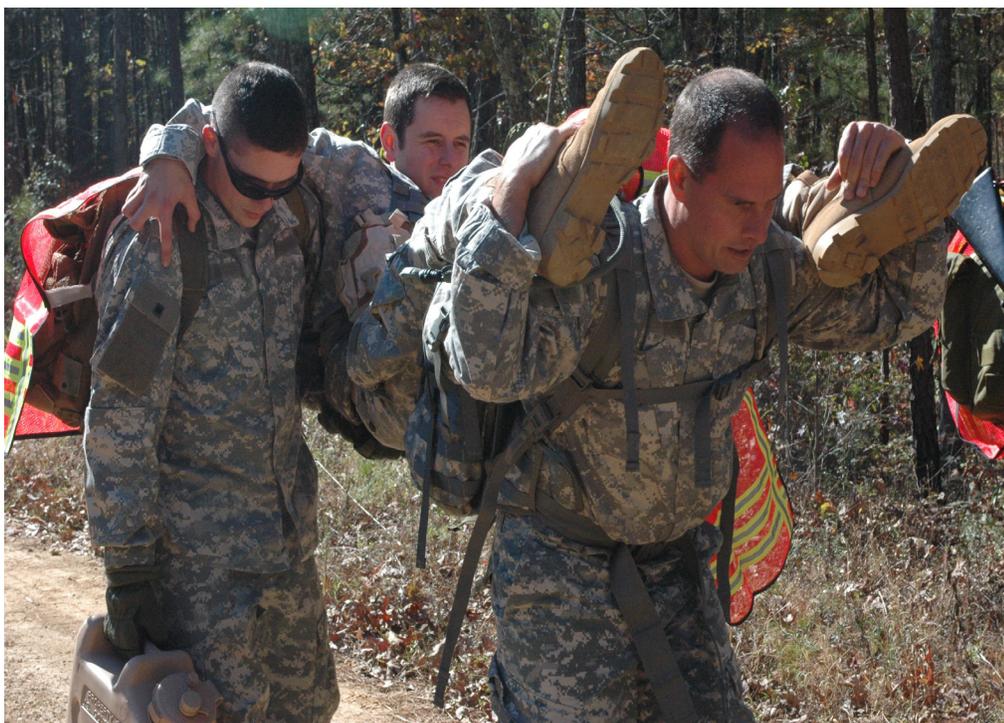
— Preparation is needed for Soldiers when embarking on a new mission. Training is needed for Soldiers to maintain their level of readiness to be prepared for whatever events might arise. With this preparation and training, Soldiers should be competent to complete missions and troubleshoot problems that are put before them. This is the impetus behind a program preparing soldiers who want to become Special Forces qualified.

Guardmembers of the 20th Special Forces Group of Birmingham, Ala. who have yet to complete Special Forces courses, attend monthly drill weekends that help to prepare them to succeed in the selection process and pass the Special Forces qualification course.

The Guardsmembers who attend these drill weekends go through extensive physical training that is non-stop from the moment they arrive.

“We help to assess Guardsmen so they know where they are from the preparation stand-point before they head off to the selection process,” said Sgt. Maj. Jeremy Eason, Operations Sgt. Maj. for Headquarters 20th Special Forces Group. “We assess them in the Army Physical Fitness Test, pull-ups, rope climbing, and road march times to help them with their goal to complete Special Forces Selection which is in Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and then to attend Special Forces Qualification Courses.”

Selection is a 21-day course for soldiers who want to become Special Forces qualified. Based on that course, once selected, the soldier will go through extensive training that can last anywhere from 15 to 24 months, said Maj. Brendan Ellis, Mobile Recruiting Team Officer in



Bethany Brown/photo

*Guardmembers of the 20th Special Forces Group attend a monthly drill weekend where they are prepared for what they will encounter at the Special Forces selection course. These Guardsmen work on physical preparedness which included a ruck march carrying items such as water containers, 50 pound ruck sacks, and mock casualties.*

Charge of 20th SFG.

“This is a good opportunity for these Guardsmen to get their feet wet, but in the end it’s just 36-hours as opposed to 21-days for selection,” said Ellis. “The days throughout the month are for training which the Guardsmen must do on their own. These weekends are to help assess and give feedback to them to help them know where they’re at and what they need to do to get to that level of readiness needed.”

Several tasks to help assess physical preparedness occur throughout the day such as six mile ruck marches where they carry full ruck sacks, water containers, and even mock-casualties; an Army Physical Fitness Test, completion of a Confidence Course; and long runs sometimes at the end of the day when they are tired, both physically and mentally.

Along with the physical portion

of the weekend, the instructors for these guardsmen talk to them about foot care, land navigation, load bearing, and other various topics which are critical to their success in the selection process.

“Being here on the weekends are strictly voluntary and these Guardsmen are here because they want to be here,” said Eason. “The morale and attitudes of these Guardsmen are great because of that want. Of course there is initial anxiety because they do not know what to expect but these weekends help to prepare guardsmen who are willing and wanting to be here.”

“At the end of the weekend, we sit down with these guardsmen and tell them where they need to be to get to selection or tell them they are ready and to sustain that readiness until they go to selection,” said Ellis.