

Alabama Guardsman

Vol. V 2011

A publication for the Citizen-Soldiers & Airmen of Alabama



Medical Detachment is on the pulse of medical readiness

by Spc. Tiffany Harkins
131st MPAD

The medical detachment of the Alabama National Guard, in Birmingham, is making great strides toward higher efficiency of the medical care for Guardmembers.

Medical teams are working hard to stay in touch with units throughout the state. The medical command is moving toward using social networking to keep Guard soldiers informed of their medical readiness.

Currently, Soldiers have to check their AKO dashboard to know the level of their medical readiness. In the future, the medical detachment hopes to bring this information to Guardmembers on websites like Facebook and Twitter.

“People used to think that the National Guard was a one weekend a month organization, and to a certain extent we are,” said Col. John McGuinness,



Tiffany Harkins/photo

A member of the Medical Detachment Alabama in Birmingham checks a Soldier's blood pressure during a Physical Health Assessment (PHA).

commander of the Joint Force Alabama Medical Detachment and State Surgeon. “But now technology is going to allow us to be an everyday kind of organization where we can reach out and disseminate important information that impacts the readiness of our soldiers.”

In addition to medical readiness, Guardmembers can receive tips and access tools that will assist them with weight control,

dental health and overall health and wellness.

The state is broken down into five regions and each region is assigned a medical readiness team. Each medical readiness team consists of a case manager, administrative assistant, care coordinator and a medical readiness NCO.

“These Medical readiness NCO’s are the face of medical

(Please see *Med Det*, page 6)

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-paoal@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 on the Alabama National Guard website.

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On the Cover

Spc. Mack Ward, a Soldier enrolled in the Officer Candidate School at the Alabama Military Academy, participates in physical training. Ward has been with the National Guard for 19 years (photo by Spc. Jennifer Montagna).

Adjutant General

Veterans Day is about recognizing and helping veterans



**Maj. Gen.
Perry Smith**

Veterans' Day has now come and gone. Many took the opportunity to take a day off, barbeque with family, relax. And those things aren't bad, but there is something else we need to consider. Veteran's

Day should be about recognizing the men and women who have sacrificed their time and so much more – some even their lives – to fight for this country and its values.

I went to France for Veterans' Day to attend a ceremony that recognized the 167th Infantry and their support of the Battle of Croix Rouge Farm in World War I. Shortly after America entered that war, Alabama's 167th, along with the rest of the 42nd Rainbow Division, fought the advancing Germans in a host of major battles. There were thousands lost in one day on many occasions. Unfortunately, due to the number of casualties and logistics, those brave men were buried there, thousands of miles from home. Yet, even today, almost 100 years later, our allies, the French, still remember their sacrifice and their gallantry in battle that helped turn the tide of that war, the Great War. Also, today the 167th Infantry still deploys around the world to

fight America's enemies as they will do next year in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

There is a story of those who did not leave their bodies on that battlefield, though. There are many who came home and then suffered. They suffered unemployment and "shell shock," what we now call Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The fact is that those Soldiers faced the same difficulties after their service as the warriors of today. Many who come back from fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan face the unemployment line and the difficulty of the inherent psychological stress that comes from heated combat.

We, as leaders, must do all we can to
(Please see *veterans*, page 4)

State Command Sergeant Major

The National Guard: 375 years young and still going strong



**Command Sgt.
Maj.
Eddie Pike**

On November 8, the Senior Leadership from the Alabama National Guard attended the 375th Birthday Ball while at the Joint Senior Leadership Conference in National Harbor, Maryland. The

National Guard turns 375 years young December 13.

What is a few years younger than the Mayflower Compact (1620); a lot older than the Declaration of Indepen-

dence (1776) and the U.S. Constitution (1787); is older than the U.S. Army, Navy, and Marine Corps by 143 years; and is 315 years older than the Air Force?

The answer is the National Guard, formerly known as the militia.

The militia started in 1636 when the General Court of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which functioned as the colony's legislature, ordered existing militia companies from all the towns surrounding Boston to form into three regiments: North, South, and East.

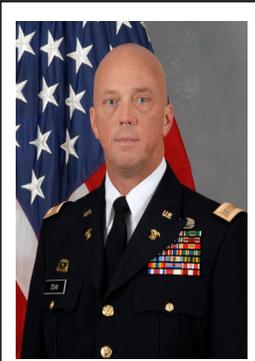
English colonies like Virginia and Spanish colonies like Florida and Puerto Rico had individual towns with militia companies before 1636, but

Massachusetts was the first place in the New World where the population was large enough to justify organizing companies into regiments for command and control. These regiments became a military family for members. These three regiments still exist in the Massachusetts National Guard, although their names have been changed and individual companies have come and gone.

The American colonies adopted the English militia system. This obligated all males to possess arms and participate in the defense of the community. This early militia enforced local laws and battled Britain's enemies in Amer-
(Please see *Guard*, page 6)

State Command Chief Warrant Officer

Warrant Officer vacancies provide numerous opportunities



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Max Dean

As Warrant Officers and leaders we continually face challenges, both personally and professionally. How we view those challenges defines our character. Do we choose to see the challenges as opportunities

or as obstacles? If we choose to see them as obstacles, then the challenges we face will be viewed as problems, problems that that need to be overcome along with all the negative connotations associated therewith. A great deal of wasted energy can be spent focusing on a negative mindset -- mindsets punctuated by phrases like "I can't", "I

won't", "I don't want to" or "I shouldn't have to".

So what do we do? We have to be committed to defining our vision. We need to create a vision whereby our name becomes synonymous with excellence, innovation, honor, integrity and outstanding service to state and nation.

Opportunities are everywhere. Currently, we have 120 opportunities throughout the state. These opportunities are called warrant officer vacancies. To fill these vacancies, we turn to you, the NCO. In order to fill enlisted vacancies, we scour high school students and recent graduates to find those who are qualified. To fill officer vacancies, we go to the college campuses. To fill these warrant officer vacancies, we look into the NCO ranks of our units. I ask that you look at these challenges as an opportunity to further your military career at a higher level.

This is not an easy challenge to overcome. There are several prerequisites that you must meet. But most importantly, you have to prove yourself to your commander to be a worthy and capable candidate to become a warrant officer.

If you're not sure of the benefits of becoming a warrant officer, then ask a warrant officer. Ask the warrant officer for an interview and find out more from that subject matter expert. One key factor in achieving success in our warrant officer strength is the internal networking of our warrant officers, full time personnel and Warrant Officer Strength Managers to identify qualified NCOs to fill these "opportunities". If you feel you are up to the "opportunity", then contact a Warrant Officer, your unit personnel, Warrant Officer Strength Managers or myself.

(Veterans continued from page 3)

help those veterans. That's what Veterans' Day is all about, recognizing the struggles veterans endure and doing all we can to aid those warriors upon their return home. That's why the Alabama National Guard is getting more heavily involved in the Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) program, trying to match unemployed Alabama National Guard veterans with would-be employers who understand the value of a Soldier or Airman with leadership experience, who know how to handle difficult situations and can make decisions

under pressure.

We have also just wrapped up a conference on PTSD that looks at a new way to conquer this problem through Post Traumatic Stress Growth (PTSG), a strategy that will make a more resilient warrior and family. This conference was a great success and it proved that this is not just a military problem, but an American problem. The conference was put on by Auburn University and had partners and participants from various civilian agencies and entities.

This is what Veterans' Day is about – recognizing and

helping veterans. I encourage you to thank a veteran and do what you can to aid him or her in the difficulties ahead. I especially encourage those of you who have combat experience to support those younger troops who are just returning and help them keep their heads up and drive on. Let's all remember the veterans who bravely fought to ensure we have the freedom we enjoy today and remember that a veteran isn't just an older gentleman or a name on a wall, but sometimes a young man or woman in line next to us at the grocery store. Lead from the front!

Snap Shots

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



Contributed/photo

Maj. Gen. Perry Smith, the Adjutant General of Alabama, participates in The War on Terrorism Monument dedication in Stockton on Sept. 11.



Contributed/photo

Members of the 31st Chem Brigade visit Fort Tombeche in Sumter County. The unit headquarters, based in Tuscaloosa, recently visited the historical site as part of its' annual training. Members of the unit learned how the Fort French military from the 18th Century stationed at the fort used parallel techniques to today's military. Lt. Col. David Ward, a Livingston native familiar with Fort Tombeche, suggested the visit as a learning opportunity for the unit.



Contributed/photo

Alabama National Guard leaders and retirees gathered at an E-9 retirement ceremony at the Pelham Civic Complex October 1. Pictured from Left to Right: State Command Sergeant Major Eddie Pike, Sgt. Maj.(Ret) Stanley Anderson, Command Sgt. Maj.(Ret) Jerrold Denson, Command Sgt. Maj.(Ret) Jearl Brooks, Command Sgt. Maj.(Ret) Hank McKinley, Sgt. Maj.(Ret) Ronnie Seay, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force(Ret) Claude Pierce, Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force(Ret) Rick Packer, Command Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (Ret) Terry Wells, State Command Chief Master Sergeant Larry Adams.

6 Alabama Guardsman

(Med Det continued from page 2)

readiness to the units that they support,” said Maj. Brad Benton, Deputy State Surgeon.

They work directly with unit commanders to ensure the health and well being of each individual Soldier. These NCO’s are also responsible for updating Soldiers medical information, briefing the unit commanders quarterly and giving immunizations, HIV blood draws and the Periodic Health Assessments (PHA). According to Benton, “We (Alabama) have the lowest number of Guard members who are medical readiness category fours in the nation at three percent, because

of the medical readiness NCO’s efforts to track individual soldiers.”

Due to the efforts of the Medical Detachment, and medical personnel throughout the state, the medical readiness of the Alabama National Guard has risen from 37 percent to 85 percent. McGuinness stated, “Right now we (the Alabama Army National Guard) are ranked number one in the nation for medical readiness.”



Tiffany Harkins/photo

A member of the Med Det Alabama in Birmingham gives a soldier a vision test during a Physical Health Assessment (PHA).

“We couldn’t have accomplished this goal without the support of senior leadership,” Benton said.

(Guard continued from page 3)

America. Today in the National Guard, men and women serve voluntarily and can be deployed anywhere in the world.

The United States has been a militia-Guard nation from its very beginnings. The existence of and need for the colonial militia was ratified by the Founding Fathers in the Constitution. Congress specifically defined those missions the militia would be used for: “to execute the Laws of the Union, suppress Insurrections, and repel invasions.”

Congress has enacted several militia and defense acts to strengthen the National Guard. The Militia Act of 1903 created the modern National Guard and affirmed the National guard as the nation’s primary

combat reserve force. The National Defense Act of 1947 established the Air National Guard as a separate reserve component at the same time it established a separate Air Force.

In 375 years, the weapons and technology have changed drastically, but the Guard’s contribution to the nation’s defense has remained paramount. The militia rallied to battle the British at Lexington and Concord. Brother against brother faced off in the Civil War. The militia “Remembered the Maine” during the Spanish-American War and the Guard was on duty when Pearl Harbor was attacked. The modern National Guard will never forget and is still responding to 9/11.

Our colonial forefathers could not have imagined much of what

their descendants can use in combat today; jet fighters, helicopters, tanks, satellite radios, laser-guided munitions, global positioning systems, rocket artillery, and countless other high-tech devices.

Now after 375 years, what does the future hold for this always ready and reliable force? Future National Guard generations will continue to employ all of the modern technology at its disposal at home and abroad. However, today’s National Guard members and yesterday’s Minuteman remain the same person; citizens with the conviction that their military service is required to make their nation and communities a safer and better place to live.

Alabama Military Academy offers challenges for future leaders

by Spc. Eric Roberts
131st MPAD

Candidates file into formation, as their Platoon Trainers watch from a distance. Each of them have a different story of how they got here, but each of them has the same goal. Candidates from all walks of the National Guard come to the Alabama Military Academy for the Officer Candidate Course at Fort McClellan.

“There are many routes to becoming an officer, but OCS here is the most stressful school that you can attend besides Ranger School,” said Major Anthony Cloud, Senior TAC officer.

Many options are available for OCS at Fort McClellan, including a 57 day accelerated course and a three phase course with a traditional drill weekend school.

Officer Candidate Mack Ward, a 40-year-old state trooper pilot, decided after 19 years in the National Guard to become an officer. Ward said that his attraction to the program came from the benefits and leadership.

“I am not going to tell you it’s fun,” said Ward. “It is challenging coming up here (to OCS) on Friday. Yes, It is challenging, but you know what to expect.”

Cloud said that OCS offers different challenges from Basic Combat Training.

“This is tougher than basic training,” said Cloud.

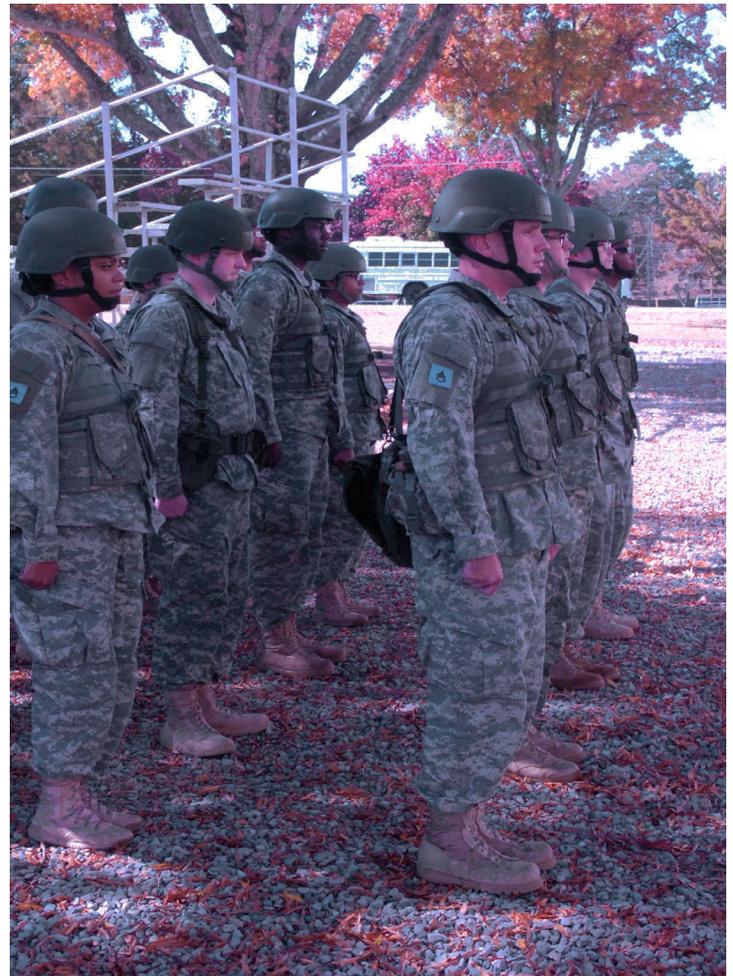
“Here you do not have Drill Sergeants leading you around and telling you what exactly to do. At OCS you have people stand back and watch you lead.”

The physical challenges in OCS include three foot marches, combat water survival training along with the daily challenges of the program.

Cloud said it is not the physical training that “gets most candidates, it is the fear of the unknown.”

“There is nothing wrong with the NCO core, but many soldiers have deployed and have not been satisfied with their platoon leadership,” said Lt. Col. Leah Compton, AMA Commander. “Candidates have to want it and some realize becoming an officer is not for them, and that is ok.”

Cloud a graduate of the program said that attending AMA to get his commis-



Jennifer Montagna/photo

Soldiers enrolled in the Officer Candidate School conduct dining facility procedures during their monthly training at the Alabama Military Academy.

sion as an officer is one of the best decision he has ever made.

“I am a graduate of this program, and there is not one day I have regretted the decision,” said Cloud. “If there is something you do not like about your unit, shut your mouth whining, and come to AMA and become an officer. In Iraq I saw 84 of our graduates, it makes those hours worth it.”