



# PRAIRIE MINUTEMAN

THE NATIONAL  
GUARD ASSOCIATION  
OF ILLINOIS

Vol. 40 No. 4

WINTER 2009

# Farerwell & Godspeed

**CMSGT (RET.)**  
**Charles Sparacino**  
Executive Vice President  
NGAI 2000-2009

# A Job Well Done



# NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF ILLINOIS

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Deadline for  
Next Issue:  
15 November  
2009

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**41ST ANNUAL  
NGAI CONFERENCE**  
23-25 September, 2010  
Peoria, Illinois

**39TH ANNUAL  
EANGUS CONFERENCE**  
8-11 August, 2010  
St. Louis, Missouri

**132ND ANNUAL  
NGAUS CONFERENCE**  
21-23 August, 2010  
Austin, Texas

## SCHEDULED EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

DEC ..... 15 ... Phone Conference  
JAN ..... 22 ..... Chicago  
FEB ..... 16 ... Phone Conference  
MAR ..... 19 ..... Peoria  
APR ..... 22 ..... Peoria  
APR ..... 25 ..... Peoria

Members are welcome to attend these meetings and share in the management of this association.

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# WELL DONE AND GOD SPEED TO CMSGT (RET) CHARLES SPARACINO!

by Brig Gen (Ret) Hal Keistler

For nearly ten years now CMSgt (Ret) Charles Sparacino has been the backbone, the one constant in our National Guard Association of Illinois. Chuck, as he is known by all, has served as Executive Vice President of NGAI since the turn of the century and has been responsible for the day-to-day operation.

Chief Sparacino, please allow me to use that title, has had a long and very involved history with NGAI. He first began serving on the board of directors in the late 1980's, and served in various capacities for over the years. The Chief was president of NGAI from April 1992 to April 1993. Having retired from the Air National Guard in 2000, it was a natural fit, then, for Chief Sparacino to assume the duties of Executive Vice President of NGAI upon the retirement of Brig Gen Ron Nelson.

I can tell you that few, other than Chuck, have a very comprehensive idea of all the things that he accomplished during his tenure. With the bi-annual change of our board of directors, the Exec VP maintains the continuity and corporate knowledge to sustain what is for all practical purposes an organization of thousands of members managed by volunteers save the one lone full time executive. Most of us really cannot imagine the compelling and often competing demands made of our Exec VP. Perhaps the one and only other person significantly involved with NGAI over that entire period of time was our insurance representative, Brig Gen Bill Goddard. And Bill can certainly tell you of Chuck's accomplishments. As one who has been an understudy to the Chief for the past several weeks, I can tell you that the administrative duties alone are far greater and far more time consuming than most of us have a clue. As I constantly remind Chuck: "You have more in you head about NGAI than all the rest of us combined." Chuck has executed those day-to-day requirements so smoothly that few noticed. But let me tell you, we would all notice if he had not been there, quietly and competently

paying the bills, collecting the dues, depositing the insurance checks, advising the boards of our various insurance trusts, solving myriad problems, referring hundreds of folks, both retired and families to proper agencies, coordinating convention activities, preparing plaques, certificates, awards, monitoring our investments, and on and on I could go.

We, none of us, will adequately appreciate the contribution CMSgt Charles Sparacino has made to the National Guard Association of Illinois during his years as our Executive Vice President. All we can do is say thank you. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts that you, Chuck, had our best interests in mind as you worked for NGAI; that you Chuck had and still have a passion for the soldiers and airman of the Illinois National Guard; that you, Chief Sparacino, performed duty above and beyond the call every single day that you served as Executive Vice President of NGAI, and in so doing YOU have brought great credit upon yourself and the National Guard Association of Illinois.

Please join your Board of Directors in expressing your appreciation for the outstanding service CMSgt Sparacino has given to NGAI and in wishing him a fond farewell.

## NGAI DIRECTOR ASSUMES COMMAND

Congratulations to Col Michael Zerberonia upon your selection to command the 108th Sustainment Brigade. The change of command took place 5 December 2009. Col Zerberonia began his military career in 1983 in the 2175th Military Police Company. In April 1991 the colonel joined the ILARNG after serving in Operation Desert Shield. Michael is employed by the Ill State Police and lives in Chatham. He is a long time member of NGAI and currently serves as Director for the 108th Sustainment Brigade.

## 2014 NGAUS CONFERENCE COMES TO CHICAGO

After almost a year of JOINT effort by the JFHQ and NGAI, NGAUS has selected Chicago as the site for the 2014 NGAUS Conference. In total support of this effort, TAG, MG Enyart, was engaged with NGAUS and NGAI throughout the selection process. This is a major success for Illinois. But with this success comes a huge level of responsibility for our state. Membership in NGAI and NGAUS must be a high priority in the immediate future as we set the strategic plan to execute the conference as professionally as we possibly can. Look for more on the conference next issue.



## HELP FOR SERVICE MEMBERS FIGHTING TO KEEP THEIR JOBS RETURNING FROM DEPLOYMENT



Gary Hannig of Litchfield, Illinois Secretary of Transportation, signs a Statement of Support with the Illinois Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve committee in Springfield at Illinois Department of Transportation on Oct. 21. This signing protects Illinois National Guard and Reservists who deploy. It means that when Soldiers return from deployments, they can be confident their old job is waiting for them. It may be tough for some employers to cover absent employees, but the military is teaching the employers the importance of the citizen-Soldier.



## GREATER KANKAKEE AIRPORT

### HOME OF NEW ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD FACILITY

**KANKAKEE** – The Illinois Army National Guard announced plans on Nov. 30 to build a \$48.35 million Readiness Center and Army Aviation Support Facility at the Greater Kankakee Airport.

The Illinois Army National Guard has worked to secure a new facility for units based at the Midway Army Aviation Support Facility since 2002. The current facility does not meet the space requirements and training needs of the Illinois Army National Guard aviation units.

After more than two years of negotiations, the Illinois Army National Guard signed a 50-year lease with the city of Kankakee and Greater Kankakee Airport to lease the 30 acres of property. The military installation will consist of a 64,827-square-foot Readiness Center and 104,695-square-foot Army Aviation Support Facility.

The federal government is expected to release \$3.8 million for the design funds next fall. The federal share of the total \$48.35 million cost is \$42.1 million and the state share will be approximately \$6.25 million. The Illinois National Guard hopes to have construction completed by 2015 or 2016.

“This is a great day for the Illinois Army National Guard,” said Maj. Gen. William Enyart, Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard. “The Illinois Army National Guard has moved forward and secured a location for the Midway Army Aviation Support Facility that will adequately meet the needs of our Soldiers and missions at the Greater Kankakee Airport. We are excited about this new opportunity and expanding our relationship with the city of Kankakee. The city has always been a great supporter of the Illinois National Guard and we look to continue that relationship.”

Once construction on the facility is complete, the Illinois Army National Guard will move units and equipment from its current site at Midway Aviation Facility. The Midway Aviation Facility is home to Company B, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation, and Company B, 935th Aviation Support Battalion, which combined have approximately 200 Soldiers. There are also about 75 full-time employees who work out of the facility and ten UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters stationed at the airport.

## NGAI HELPS HOST SOLDIER TRIBUTE FOR 33<sup>RD</sup> BRIGADE COMBAT TEAM

On 14 Nov 2009 a Soldier Tribute to the 33rd BCT and their families was held at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place in downtown Chicago. Hundreds of recently returned 33rd BCT soldiers and their families were honored in a spectacular event featuring celebrities from the entertainment and sports world as well as our own ILNG senior leaders. Tom Dreesen was Master of Ceremonies. He was joined by Tom Degovan WGN TV newscaster, who presented the Purple Heart Tribute. Medal Of Honor Recipient Allen Lynch, presented the Valor Tribute. Sheldon Keel, son of one of our soldiers, presented the Family Poem. The Honorable Tammy Duckworth presented the Gold Star Families Tribute. Stacey Baca, channel 7 TV newscaster, presented the Veterans Affairs and Soldier Achievement Tribute. Also featured was a fabulous Musical Tribute by the Gaddis Sisters. Other celebrities were present and signed autographs and greeted soldiers and their families. MG Celleti opened the formal portion of the event and it was closed by the BCT commander, BG Huber.

Prior to the formal portion of the evening, NGAI hosted a mixer for all those in attendance. NGAI president, Maj Mike Hough, made introductions and recognized our contributors. Partnering with NGAI to solicit contributions in order to make the entire event possible was the Illinois State Chamber of Commerce president Mr. Doug Whitley and executive vice-president Dr. Michael Ayers. Without the assistance of the Chamber, this event would not have been possible.

Contributors to the events include a very long list of corporations and individuals. We sincerely hope that the following list captures all who made this event possible.

Special recognition goes to the two major contributors: AT&T of Illinois, and State Farm Insurance Co.

Other contributors to whom we are deeply grateful are: Mesirow Financial, Raynor, Enterprise Leasing Company, Diamond Bancorp, Boeing, and Consolidated Communications. Also contributing were Performance Partners, Victorian Manor, J.D. Brown and Company, and Will-Joliet Bicentennial Park, Inc.

Special thanks for the overall production of the Soldier Salute goes to two ILNG soldiers and NGAI members, Col Chris Lawson, JFHQ, and Maj Mike Hough, 65 TCB and our NGAI president.



# 183<sup>RD</sup> FIGHTER WING TACKLES NEW MISSIONS

Getting their arms around (i.e. tackling) the new missions that have been “issued” to the 183rd FW is no easy task. Although not an entirely new “missions,” what the 183rd is embarking upon is certainly new to the ANG. Thanks to Colonel Ricky Yoder, the below is a synopsis of the new Operations mission. Next issue we will feature the maintenance missions. For a more in depth discussion, see the last few editions of the 183rd newsletter, Falcon View.

What we have at the 183rd is an augmentation unit to a component Numbered Air Force (cNAF) staff consisting of an Air Operations Center (AOC) and an Air Force Forces headquarters staff (AFFOR) that is, for air operations, the critical link that allows the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) to orchestrate air, space, and information operations against an adversary or bring humanitarian aid to the scene of a natural disaster, anywhere in the world. Without the AOC and AFFOR, the U.S. Air Force would be unable to provide global vigilance, reach and power, and protect America’s skies.

The AFFOR consists of the Commander’s personal staff and the A-Staff (A1 thru A-9). While the AOC commands and con-

trols the warfighting side of the theater, the AFFOR deals more with the support. The AFFOR is defined as the Air Force service support mechanism that establishes the bases and sustains the warfighters.

**Strategy Division:** The teams that decide how and where the air forces support the joint fight.

**Combat Plans Division:** Selects the best arrow (a bomb, a computer virus, a public affairs release, or a phone call to the enemy commander) from the JFACC’s quiver to achieve the desired effects on the targets.

**Combat Ops Division:** Execute the current day’s Air Tasking Order (ATO).

**Intelligence-Surveillance-Reconnaissance Division (ISR/D):** They have access to raw intelligence data and are tasked to analyze it and correlate it for customers throughout the theater.

**Air Mobility Division (AMD):** Plans, coordinates, tasks and executes the theater air mobility mission.

**Break – Break!** The Air Force cNAF is what was explained in the above paragraphs. What follows are the actual organizations and units at the 183rd AOG that augment the Air Force cNAF.

**183rd Air and Space Operations Group**

(AOG) commanded by Col Ricky Yoder.

**183rd Air Operations Squadron (AOS)** commanded by Col. Jonathan Payne.

**183rd Air Intelligence Squadron (AIS)** commanded by Lt. Col. Vicki Davis.

**183rd Air Communications Squadron (ACOMS)** commanded by Lt. Col. Jon Bachtold.

**183rd Air Mobility Operations Squadron (AMOS)** commanded by Lt. Col. Chuck Osum.

**183rd Air Support Squadron (ASUS)** commanded by Col. Steve Baggerly.

The 183rd AOG is Air Combat Command (ACC) gained and AOR aligned. This means that ACC can mobilize us to support any of the COCOMs in the world, but are specifically aligned to support 12th AF. 12AF/AFSOUTH is the component NAF of the US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) which is headquartered at Miami, Florida. The SOUTHCOM Area of Responsibility (AOR) includes South and Central America and the surrounding waters. That makes the 183rd AOC first responders to this command’s wartime requirements.

## VA IS STUDYING OF VIETNAM-ERA WOMEN VETERANS

**WASHINGTON** – Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki said the Department of Veterans Affairs is launching a comprehensive study of women veterans who served in the military during the Vietnam War. The study will explore the effects of their military service upon their mental and physical health.

“One of my top priorities is to meet the needs of women veterans,” said Secretary Shinseki. “Our veterans have earned the very best care. VA realizes that women veterans require specialized programs, and this study will help VA provide high-quality care for women veterans of the Vietnam era.”

The study, which begins in November and lasts more than four years, will contact approximately 10,000 women in a mailed survey, telephone interview and a review of their medical records.

As women Vietnam veterans approach their mid-60s, it is important to understand the impact of wartime deployment on health and mental outcomes nearly 40 years later, said officials. The study will assess the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental and physical health conditions for women Vietnam

veterans, and explore the relationship between PTSD and other conditions.

VA will study women Vietnam veterans who may have had direct exposure to traumatic events, and for the first time, study those who served in facilities near Vietnam. These women may have had similar, but less direct exposures. Both women veterans who receive their health care from VA and those who receive health care from other providers will be contacted to determine the prevalence of a variety of health conditions.

About 250,000 women veterans served in the military during the Vietnam War and about 7,000 were in or near Vietnam. Those who were in Vietnam, those who served elsewhere in Southeast Asia and those who served in the United States are potential study participants.

The study represents to date the most comprehensive examination of a group of women Vietnam veterans, and will be used to shape future research on women veterans in future wars. Such an understanding will lay the groundwork for planning and providing appropriate services for women veterans, as well as for the aging veteran

population today.

Women veterans are one of the fastest growing segments of the veteran population. There are approximately 1.8 million women veterans among the nation’s total of 23 million living veterans. Women comprise 7.8 percent of the total veteran population and nearly 5.5 percent of all veterans who use VA health care services. VA estimates women veterans will constitute 10.5 percent of the veteran population by 2020 and 9.5 percent of all VA patients.

In recent years, VA has undertaken a number of initiatives to create or enhance services for women veterans. Initiatives include implementing comprehensive primary care nationwide, staffing every VA medical center with a women veterans program manager, supporting a multifaceted research program on women’s health, and improving communication and outreach to women veterans. VA organizations like the Center for Women Veterans and the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health-care Group will continue operating.

The study, to be managed by VA’s Cooperative Studies Program, is projected to cost \$5.6 million. (Courtesy of VA).

# TOTAL FORCE TAKES SHAPE

Maj. Jennifer Howsare, 126th ARW PAO

The 126th Air Refueling Wing and the 375th Air Mobility Wing, both located at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois, are partners in one of the U.S. Air Force's newest Total Force Integration initiatives.

As part of the Air Force's ongoing TFI efforts, a KC-135 Stratotanker Active Association between the 126th ARW, an Illinois Air National Guard unit, and the 906th Air Refueling Squadron marks the beginning of another chapter in the total force endeavors at Scott AFB.

The 906th ARS, formerly located at Grand Forks AFB, ND, underwent a "Flag Move," without personnel and equipment, to its new home at Scott AFB. The move, as part of a TFI and the Active Association, happened Oct. 1 and allowed recently assigned personnel to complete a Permanent Change of Station or PCS move directly into the newly established 906th ARS at Scott AFB.

With the stand up of this Active Association, the 375th AMW will now be administratively responsible for personnel providing airlift and aerial refueling capabilities. Because of this additional mission, the 375th Airlift Wing redesignated on Oct. 1 to the 375th Air Mobility Wing or 375 AMW.

In July 2009, Active Duty Airmen, comprised of aircrew, maintenance and support personnel, were assigned to the Illinois Air National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing, which now serves as the host organization for associated personnel. The assigned Active Duty Airmen work side-by-side 126th Airmen flying and maintaining the Air Guard's fleet of aircraft to accomplish the Wing's missions, to include contingency deployments. The 375th AMW is the Parent Wing for the 906th ARS with the 375th Operations Group handling administrative and logistical issues.

"The Illinois Air National Guard's 126th Air Refueling Wing is an outstanding unit with a great history," said Maj. Gen. William Enyart, Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard. "Our Illinois Airmen have an incredible wealth of knowledge and experience that makes the 126th Air Refueling Wing ideal to be an associate unit with the Air Force."

Associated units provide many benefits to the Air Force including a greater day-to-day mission capability. The active association at Scott AFB will specifically allow the Total Air Force to more efficiently utilize its KC-135 force. Associations also generate efficiencies by sharing resources and reducing duplication of effort, increasing overall air refueling and airlift capabilities, while at the same time pre-

paring a corporate body of knowledge. They also help to improve aircrew and maintenance expertise and experience levels, capitalizing on the long-term experience resident in Air National Guard units.

"The legacy of the 126th Air Refueling Wing is proven with its nearly 60 years of service to the nation and over 80 years of flying for the 108th Air Refueling Squadron," said Col. Peter Nezamis, 126th Air Refueling Wing Commander. "During the nation's most troubled times, the 126th has always answered the call. The Wing's decorated accomplishments reflect the dedication of its officers and Airmen. This association will provide increased efficiencies through a combination of factors coupled with greater aircraft availability, utilization and trained airmen all increasing the command's capability to support world-wide aerial refueling requirements."

Lt. Col. Joe Santos assumed command of the 906th ARS on 1 Oct. "It is truly an honor to have been selected to command the 906th Air Refueling Squadron," said Santos. "Scott Air Force Base leads the way in Total Force Integration and the 906th ARS Active Association is another example of partnering with the Reserve Component, specifically the 126th Air Refueling Wing to produce the finest Airmen defending our country."

The active association between the 126th ARW and the 906th ARS is one of 10 current or near future Active Associations unfolding across the Air Force.

Scott AFB is home to another Active Association involving the C-40C aircraft assigned to the Air Force Reserve Command's 932nd Airlift Wing, which is also located at Scott AFB.

The 932nd welcomed their C-40C aircraft in Feb 2007, which allowed the unit to upgrade their transcontinental DV transport mission from C-9C aircraft and begin a new association with the 375 AMW at the same time.

The 126th Air Refueling Wing is scheduled to receive approximately 135 regular Air Force authorizations by their full operational capability date, which is on or about Sept 2011.

The 126th ARW is the oldest Air National Guard unit in Illinois and the first Air Refueling Unit in the Air National Guard. The 126 ARW has participated in nearly every major contingency of the 20th Century, and continues to support today's Global War on Terror.

The unit traces its roots back to Midway Airport then Orchard Place Airport, now Chicago O'Hare Airport, until a Base Realignment and Closure directed move brought the unit to Scott AFB in 1999.

## FREEDOM SALUTE CEREMONY FOR SOLDIERS RETURNED FROM AFGHANISTAN

CEREMONY PLANNED FOR DEC. 5 IN CHICAGO

**CHICAGO** – Approximately 70 Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers were recognized Dec. 5 by the National Guard Bureau Freedom Salute Campaign for their sacrifice and service in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. A ceremony was held at 10 a.m. at the General Jones Armory, 5200 S. Cottage Grove in Chicago.

Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 122nd Field Artillery was mobilized in September 2008. After deploying to Afghanistan, the unit was dispersed to different locations. Half of the Soldiers formed the Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC) Mentor Group. Their mission was to mentor various commands and staffs at the KMTC as the premier trainers of the Afghan National Army. Soldiers ensured the people of Afghanistan felt safe by protecting them from outside enemies. During the nine months the unit was in Afghanistan, the KMTC trained more than 60,000 Soldiers. The mentor group also participated in several humanitarian assistance missions, including the dedication and opening of the boys and girls schools at Seh Qaleh this summer.

The other half of the Soldiers were reassigned upon arrival in Afghanistan to assist the rest 33rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) complete mission requirements. The 33rd IBCT was a group of nearly 3,000 Illinois National Guard Soldiers that deployed to Afghanistan as part of the largest overseas deployment in state history since World War II.

The Freedom Salute Campaign program is a small way to show these patriotic citizen-Soldiers, their families and employers how much their sacrifice is appreciated. On behalf of the National Guard Bureau, the Illinois Army National Guard will present each eligible Soldier with an encased American Flag, as well as a sequentially-numbered commemorative coin, certificate of appreciation and lapel pin. Families will also receive items recognizing their support and sacrifice.





Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, Director Dan Grant, tosses a wreath in the lake in honor of all Pearl Harbor survivors and Americans who lost their lives at the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day ceremony at the Disabled American Veterans Hall in Springfield.

## PEARL HARBOR REMEMBRANCE DAY

DECEMBER 7, 2009

**SPRINGFIELD** – Maj. Gen. William Enyart of Belleville, Adjutant General for the Illinois National Guard was the featured speaker at the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA) hosted Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day ceremony at the Disabled American Veterans Hall in Springfield. The ceremony honored all Pearl Harbor survivors and paid tribute to the more than 2,400 Americans who lost their lives. IDVA Director Dan Grant led the tribute, which included a special wreath-laying ceremony by Illinois Pearl Harbor survivors and their families.

"For 60 years, the lessons learned from the attack on Pearl Harbor have our nation safe and secure. But we learned on September 11, 2001, that we must never assume that because we enjoy an abundance of freedom, that we are exempt from danger," said Enyart.



Maj. Gen. William Enyart of Belleville, Adjutant General for the Illinois National Guard was the featured speaker for the Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day ceremony at the Disabled American Veterans Hall in Springfield. The ceremony honored all Pearl Harbor survivors and paid tribute to the more than 2,400 Americans who lost their lives.

## NEW PROGRAM TO REDUCE REDEPLOYMENT PROBLEMS

### ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD PARTNERS WITH PREVENTION FIRST TO HELP SOLDIERS

**SPRINGFIELD** – Approximately 3,000 Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers returned from Afghanistan in the last three months and more Illinois Soldiers will return from Iraq and Afghanistan this winter. While they were eager to return to their families, many may struggle with what they have gone through and could be at high risk for problems such as drug abuse or anger management.

In an effort to reduce the number of returning Soldiers who have serious problems readjusting to civilian life, the Illinois National Guard partnered with Prevention First, a nonprofit organization specializing in drug abuse prevention, to produce a DVD that encourages returning Soldiers and their families to seek help for a variety of issues unique to their lives. In addition, a new Web site, [www.benefits4armedforces.info](http://www.benefits4armedforces.info), is being developed to make it easy for veterans to locate available services.

According to the Millennium Cohort Study by the U.S. Department of Defense, National Guardsmen who deploy to Iraq and Afghanistan have reported high rates of alcohol problems when they return home. More than 25 percent began binge drinking after experiencing combat exposure, with almost 9 percent reporting they started drinking heavily. Research also indicates that National Guardsmen are more vulnerable overall than active duty personnel (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines) after exposure to combat because they have less access to military support systems and fewer connections to other military families.

"Reintegration is the process of taking Soldiers who have been mobilized and sent overseas and bringing them back and making sure their lives are whole again," said Maj. Gen. William Enyart, Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard. "There is no stigma attached to seeking help."

Enyart also encourages family members to use the many services provided by the military, state agencies and social service organizations that are presented in the video.

"There is a 30 day period from when Soldiers return and when they go through the reintegration process," said Karel Ares, executive director of Prevention First in explaining the need for the video. "Those first months are the most critical for them to get connected to support services that can help them through that transition back to family and community life."

Included in the video, which will be available online at both [www.benefits4armedforces.info](http://www.benefits4armedforces.info) and [www.operationhomefront.org](http://www.operationhomefront.org), are messages from Maj. Gen. William Enyart and Dan Grant, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Illinois has been one of the most proactive states, getting service members the help they need when they come home from overseas," said 2nd Lt. Justin Anweiler, Illinois National Guard Reintegration Coordinator. "This is just another tool and quick resource they can use if they are having issues adjusting or just need questions answered."

Copies of the DVD will be provided to all returning National Guard troops this fall during reintegration training.

"This program is designed to not only provide easy access to the wide variety of help that is available to military personnel and their families, it encourages Soldiers to seek the help that they need, whether it's on a temporary basis or for long term needs," Ares explained.



Members of the Illinois National Guard care for a patient during their Advanced Trauma Training at Rush University Medical Center.

## ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS TRAIN AT RUSH UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

by Staff Sgt. Stephanie McCurry, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office

**CHICAGO** – Smoke. Gun shots. Hovering helicopters. Screams. Flashing lights. This does not set the scene from the front lines of a battlefield. This was the scene of a real-life chaotic mass casualty exercise during the Illinois National Guard training at Rush University Medical Center’s (RUMC) Advance Trauma Training Program.

“It’s an experience you don’t get anywhere else,” said Maj. Teresa Morrell, from Dunlap, Illinois Air National Guard’s 183rd Fighter Wing in Springfield. “You can’t learn this in a text book. This program is critical for perfecting your battlefield skills.”

Approximately 45 Illinois National Guard Soldiers and Airmen per class attend the Advanced Trauma Training course. The course is a 40-hour curriculum with an overall objective of providing Illinois Soldiers and Airmen the advanced knowledge and hands-on skills to take better care of trauma patients in the field. The goal of this training is to continue to provide enhanced medical training for service member medics being deployed in order to limit casualties. It is also a way to advance the partnership between RUMC and the Illinois National Guard to better prepare for any civilian based mass casualty incident.

The program is conducted by members of the emergency department at RUMC through a series of six modules. After each class the course is modified to adapt to the

Soldiers and Airmen’s needs. The current curriculum is a five day course that incorporates a classroom educational session resulting in a International Trauma Life Support certification, basic paramedical procedure modules, a simulation laboratory experience for mass casualty incidents, a live tissue procedure lab for advanced medical interventions, a Level I trauma center observation module, a paramedic ambulance ride along experience and a newly developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder course.

The RUMC has a variety of different training aids that help make the course as close to reality. They use unique mannequins which the staff can control by a computer. By using these, the Soldiers and Airmen will see first hand how a person would respond if it was a real patient. The students are able to practice different injuries

on these mannequins and experience the affect they would have on a live patient. Students practice airway management, needle chest decompression, fluid resuscitation, spinal motion restriction and extremity immobilization patients. The service members also gain experience in the cadaver lab where they can practice their acquired skills on a human.

“The uniqueness of the program lies in its use of a multitude of teaching aids as well as direct observation in level one trauma units and most impressively the integration of a live tissue procedure laboratory experi-

ence,” said Dr. Dino Rumoro, Department of Emergency Medicine.

The Soldiers and Airmen experience traumatic situations during this course to prepare them for deployment. It also builds their confidence level. For example, during the mass casualty exercise, Rush personnel simulate a disaster in the city requiring the service members to work as a team and bring all of their skills together. For realistic experience, Rush also uses life-like mannequins that talk, blink, bleed, vomit, urinate and almost anything else a human can do. According to Rumoro, Rush sets up the various simulations to “desensitize the medics to what they could see in the field.”

This is the first class that had service members from out-of-state. There were two Soldiers from the Minnesota Army National Guard and one from Indiana Army National Guard.

“I have been in the Army for 21 years and this is the best training I have ever had,” said Sgt. 1st Class Kerry Buckle, Minnesota Army National Guard, when asked what he thought of the training. “I wish I could have gone through this (program) before I deployed. I highly recommend it.”

The next class is scheduled for January 2010. For more information regarding the Advanced Trauma Training Program or high resolution photos, contact the Illinois National Guard’s Public Affairs office at [ngilstaffpao@ng.army.mil](mailto:ngilstaffpao@ng.army.mil).



An Illinois Air National Guard Airman works on a patient with a partner during the mass casualty exercise at Rush University Medical Center. The patient they are caring for during their mass casualty exercise is a life-like mannequin that talks, breathes and has bodily functions to simulate a live person.

# SPECIALIZED ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD UNIT MOBILIZED FOR AFGHANISTAN

## NEARLY 20 SOLDIERS MOBILIZE AS PART OF AN EMBEDDED TRAINING TEAM

**SPRINGFIELD** – A deployment ceremony is scheduled for approximately 20 Soldiers who will deploy to Afghanistan as part of an embedded training team. The ceremony for BEST (Bilateral Embedded Staff Team) A4 will be on Nov. 5 at 2 p.m. at the Illinois Military Academy on Camp Lincoln in Springfield.

The Soldiers will train for a brief time at Fort Benning, Ga. before deploying to Afghanistan for approximately six months as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. They will join the Polish Land Forces before arriving in theater and work as a joint unit during the course of the mobilization. The Soldiers are from various parts of Illinois and were selected for the mission based on their training skills.

The mission is similar to previous missions the Illinois National Guard has done as part of their International Security Assistance Force mission. They will assist the Afghan government to extend its authority across the country, perform security operations and help stabilize the war torn nation. The Soldiers will also mentor and support the Afghan National Army and support Afghan government programs to disarm illegally armed groups.

“This mobilization illustrates the diverse skill sets and training of our Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers and the variety of missions we support in today’s challenging international environment, as well as in our state and community,” said Maj. Gen. William Enyart, Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard. “These troops are instrumental in helping train foreign Soldiers to defend their country all the while polishing our Guardsmen’s skills.”

While the Illinois Guard has been a significant force contributor in support of operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom, the Guard remains ready to provide support to conduct homeland defense operations in Illinois and the United States.

Media and public attending the event should arrive at least 30 minutes prior to the ceremony start time. For more information call the Public Affairs Office at the number above.

# ILLINOIS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS VISIT LOCAL GRADE SCHOOL

## TWO SOLDIERS VISIT REYNOLDS GRADE SCHOOL FOR VETERANS DAY



Staff Sgt. Brad Williams (left) of Aledo, places an advanced combat helmet on a Reynolds Grade School student head while Staff Sgt. Ryan Hummel (right) of Galesburg, prepares other gear. The fifth grader is also wearing the interceptor body armor. The two Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers went to Reynolds Grade School, in Reynolds, to speak with fourth through six graders on Nov. 10 for Veterans Day. Hummel and Williams showed the children some of their equipment and spoke with them about the importance of a good education.



Staff Sgt. Ryan Hummel (left) from Galesburg watches as Staff Sgt. Brad Williams (right), from Aledo, assist a fifth grader with putting on a ruck sack. Hummel and Williams visited Reynolds Grade School in Reynolds on Nov. 10 for Veteran’s Day. The two Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers explained to the children each piece of equipment the student is wearing and the significance of the item. Hummel and Williams also talked to the class about the importance of a well rounded education, especially in the military.



Sgt. Steve Sunzeri, 26, of Naperville, stands outside of a Black Hawk helicopter at Combat Operating Base Adder prior to taking off. Sunzeri is a door gunner and crew chief in Company A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, which is deployed as part of Task Force Keystone.

deployment. He first deployed in 2004 with Company A for 15 months in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

In the right pilot seat was Chief Warrant Officer Nathan McKean, 31, of Decatur. McKean has served 12 years, beginning with four years in the Navy, during which he built bombs on the aircraft carrier USS Stennis and served in a combat search and rescue unit based in San Diego.

McKean returned home in 2001, enrolled in college and joined the Army National Guard. He trained as a crew chief with Company B, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation in Chicago.

After leaving active duty, he decided he needed a good job that would allow him time off for military duty, a lot of time off. In 2002, McKean took a job as an engineer on the Norfolk Southern Railroad.

Within a year, he was training to go to Iraq, then left for a 15-month deployment to Iraq with Company B in 2004.

Soon after he returned, McKean went to flight school for a year, then had additional training before his current tour in Iraq, which began in January. He has worked on the railroad for two and a half years, he said.

Behind McKean, on the right side of the Black Hawk, was Sgt. Steve Sunzeri, 26, of Naperville. Sunzeri has six years in the Illinois Army National Guard. From 2003 to 2007 he served as a scout and infantryman with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 106th Cavalry Regiment in Aurora. In 2006 he completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree in history. Then in 2007 he reclassified to become a flight crew chief, deploying

## WHO FLIES THAT BLACK HAWK?

DECATUR UNIT'S EXPERIENCE AIDS IN MISSION SUCCESS

By U.S. Army Sgt. Neil Gussman  
28th Combat Aviation Brigade

**CONTINGENCY OPERATING BASE ADDER, IRAQ**— National Guard Soldiers bring a variety of life and work experiences with them on deployment, and even the smallest unit can include a surprising array of skills and experience.

In October, Task Force Keystone's Alaska-based Company C, 1st Battalion, 52nd Aviation Regiment, Medical Evacuation, needed a crew for a routine flight to two of their remote sites. Illinois' Company A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment based in Decatur, supplied that crew, which ended up flying a Pennsylvania Black Hawk helicopter. The helicopters and crews that came together to accomplish a single mission is echoed in the stories behind the four

Illinois Soldiers and these together reflect the diversity the National Guard embodies.

In the left pilot seat was Chief Warrant Officer Patrick Schroeder, 38, an instructor pilot with 21 years of service. The Sherman native joined the Army in 1988 and served as a UH-1 Huey mechanic for four years before attending flight school.

In 2003 he took a job flying the governor of Illinois. Prior to deployment in January 2009, he flew for Gov. Rod Blagojevich before his removal from office.

He said he enjoyed the times he was able to fly then Lt. Gov. Pat Quinn and Schroeder said and he looks forward to flying for the new governor when he returns from deployment.

Married just a month before he was called back to active duty, this is his second



Chief Warrant Officer Patrick Schroeder, 38, of Sherman, runs through a pre-flight safety check prior to departing Combat Operating Base Adder as part of his duties as a Black Hawk pilot. Schroeder is an instructor pilot in Company A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, which is deployed as part of Task Force Keystone.



Chief Warrant Officer Nathan McKean, 31, Decatur, runs through a pre-flight safety check prior to departing Combat Operating Base Adder as part of his duties as a Black Hawk pilot in Company A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, which is deployed as part of Task Force Keystone.

## 182ND AIRLIFT WING RECEIVES THE AIR FORCE OUTSTANDING UNIT AWARD

**PEORIA** – The 182nd Airlift Wing has been awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit award for exceptional meritorious services from Oct. 1, 2006 to Sept. 30, 2008. During this period, the Peoria Air National Guard Wing accomplished all assigned missions with a maximum degree of combat readiness. During this critical time in American history, the 182nd deployed more than 380 personnel and supporting equipment to various hostile areas in the defense of our country. Additionally, the wing excelled during an unprecedented five major inspections within 17 months resulting in multiple excellent or higher ratings.

The 182nd Airlift Wing held an awards ceremony Nov. 7 at 8:30 a.m. During the ceremony, Col. William P. Robertson, 182nd Airlift Wing Commander, recognized various members of the unit and symbolically attached the Air Force Outstanding Unit award streamer to the unit's flag. Present for the event was Brig. Gen. John P. Hughes, Illinois National Guard Assistant Adjutant General-Air.

The Air Force Outstanding Unit award was authorized by the Department of the Air Force on Jan. 6, 1954. It is awarded by the Secretary of the Air Force to numbered units that have distinguished themselves by exceptionally meritorious service or outstanding achievement that clearly sets the unit above or apart from similar units.

This is the fourth time the 182nd Airlift Wing has been awarded the Air Force Outstanding Unit award. The last time was in 2005. The 182nd has more than 1,230 personnel assigned and flies the C-130 aircraft. Since Sept. 11, 2001, the 182nd Airlift Wing has deployed to support more than 1,500 individual deployment taskings in support of operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. The wing has been and continues to be an active player overseas, as well as supporting missions here at home.

in 2009 with Company A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation.

After nearly two years of service in helicopters, Sunzeri said he plans to return to college to earn a degree in aviation management at the University of Illinois, Chicago, and at the same time train to be a commercial pilot.

"My goal is to fly fixed-wing aircraft for a major airline," Sunzeri said.

In the meantime he expects to earn the ratings necessary to become a fixed-wing pilot while earning his degree. He plans to continue to serve as a crew chief in the Illinois Army National Guard while he attends college and completes flight training.

In the left seat, behind the pilot, was the door gunner, the youngest member of the crew and the one with the most combat deployments.

Cpl. Michael Randazzo, 24, of Queens, N.Y., is on his third deployment in six years with the Army National Guard.

He enlisted shortly after graduating high school and served as an infantryman with the New York-based 1st Battalion, 69th Infantry Regiment. In May 2004, he deployed

with the 69th to Baghdad and Taji and spent the time patrolling and conducting raids. He also worked route clearance on Route Irish.

When he returned from Iraq, Randazzo worked for an executive protection company until June 2008, when he volunteered to return to Iraq as a door gunner with 3rd Battalion, 142nd Aviation Regiment.

Near the end of that tour, he volunteered for a second consecutive tour as a door gunner with Company A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation. When this tour is complete, Randazzo plans to return to New York City and "squeeze in a semester of college" before going to flight school in fall 2010.

After flight school, he will continue his college education until 2012, when he plans to deploy to Afghanistan as an Army helicopter pilot.

Yet, despite their diverse backgrounds, different lifestyles and varied aspirations, like units throughout the National Guard, these four crew members came together to form a single unit and accomplish a single mission. Company A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation is due to return in early 2010.

# DUCKWORTH MAKES APPEARANCES AT ILLINOIS VETERANS DAY EVENTS

MAJ. TAMMY DUCKWORTH TO SPEAK IN CHICAGO, WESTCHESTER AND UTICA

**SPRINGFIELD** – Three Northern Illinois communities will have a chance to hear an influential speaker that made an impact in Illinois and is now trying to make a difference in Washington D.C.

On Veterans Day weekend, Illinois National Guard Maj. Tammy Duckworth, the new Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Department of Veterans Affairs, will be talking about the significance of Veterans Day.

“I am thrilled to come back to Illinois, especially during such a special time like Veterans Day weekend,” Duckworth said. “After just bringing home nearly 3,000 Soldiers from Afghanistan, it’s important to remember our veterans. It is also imperative that we don’t forget America’s brave sons and daughters who gave their lives in defense of our nation. We who carry on must honor their sacrifice by caring for our veterans and military families.”

Duckworth, of Hoffman Estates, served in Iraq as an assistant operations officer and also flew combat missions as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot. During a mission north of Baghdad in 2004, her aircraft was ambushed and a rocket-propelled grenade struck the helicopter she was co-piloting. She continued to attempt to pilot the aircraft until passing out from blood loss. As a result of the attack, Duckworth lost both of her legs and partial use of one arm. She received many decorations for her actions, including the Purple Heart, the Air Medal, and the Combat Action Badge.

On Nov. 7 at 9 a.m. Duckworth will speak at a conference entitled “Checkpoints and Roadblocks: The Intersection of Veterans and the Law” at The John Marshall Law School Veterans Legal Support Center and Clinic; 315 S. Plymouth Court in Chicago. The John Marshall Law School is home to one of the first law school clinics dedicated assisting veterans obtain benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

From 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Nov. 7 Duckworth will participate in “Jeremy Deller’s It is What It is: Conversations About Iraq.” The event will be at the Museum of

Contemporary Art, 220 East Chicago Ave. in Chicago. This is an open forum dedicated to facilitating dialogue about Iraq. Duckworth will talk to the public about her experience when she was deployed to Iraq. This open-ended dialogue is not meant to influence perception of the war, but to discuss lack of understanding of the social, political and historical context of the war.



Maj. Tammy Duckworth- Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Department of Veterans Affairs and Major with the ILNG

Following the event, Duckworth will speak in Westchester at approximately 2 p.m. as part of the moving Vietnam Veterans Wall memorial at Mayfair Park, located at 10835 Wakefield St. During the event Duckworth will talk about the sacrifice American veterans make while serving their country. The half-scale replica of the Vietnam Wall

Memorial will be in Westchester from Nov. 5 to Nov. 9.

Duckworth will finish the weekend on Nov. 8, at the Utica Veterans Day parade at 1 p.m. Following the parade, she will speak at the Danny Carey Memorial, which was dedicated to Pfc. Danny Carey, a Utica Soldier killed in 1969.

Over the last year, 18 Illinois Army National Guard Soldiers were killed in Afghanistan. Since 9-11 Illinois has had 201 service members from all branches killed.

As Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Duckworth directs VA public affairs, internal communications and intergovernmental relations. She also oversees programs for homeless veterans, consumer affairs and special rehabilitative events.

Although Duckworth was appointed to the position in Washington D.C. this spring, she remains a member of the Illinois Army National Guard, an organization she has been part of for nearly 18 years.

Duckworth was appointed Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans’ Affairs in 2006. Under her leadership, Illinois has implemented several new programs that help veterans when they return from deployment.

## MEMORIAL FOR ILLINOIS NATIONAL GUARD FALLEN SOLDIER

MIDLOTHIAN TO HOLD CEREMONY NOV. 3

**MIDLOTHIAN** – In honor of Sgt. Christopher Abeyta, a recognition event was held on Nov. 3 at 9 a.m. at Bremen High School. Abeyta and two other Soldiers were killed in action March 15 when their vehicle encountered an improvised explosive device in Kot, Afghanistan.

Abeyta, 23, was a resident of Midlothian, Ill. He enlisted in the Army National Guard in May 2002 and graduated from Bremen High School in Midlothian in 2003. He deployed with Company D, 1st Battalion, 178th Infantry based in Woodstock, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. He was on his second deployment. His first deployment was in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from October 2003 to February 2005.

At the event, Abeyta’s family donated his uniforms to the Midlothian Historical Society.

In addition to the events to honor Abeyta, the Village of Midlothian was awarded the Patriot Award by Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a Department of Defense organization which recognizes companies that cooperate with and support National Guard and Reserve Soldiers. The village was nominated by Cpl. Russel Zohfeld of Company G, 634th Brigade Support Battalion based in Crestwood and Mayor of Midlothian Terry Stephens accepted the award on behalf of the Village.

Also taking place during the event, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion presented awards to Midlothian resident Frank Bock for his service in World War II, including the Pacific Campaign Medal and the American Campaign Medal. They will also presented him with awards for his son, Jerry Bock, who was killed in action during his service in the Vietnam War. The awards for Jerry Bock include a Purple Heart, Combat Infantry Badge and a Bronze Star. Governor Pat Quinn was present to accept a book, A Tribute to Men and Women of Midlothian in World War II, from the Midlothian Historical Society.

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Staff Sgt. Michael Maass of Hillsboro, prepares a Black Hawk helicopter for an early morning flight as part of his duty as a member of the "push crew."



## IRAQ 'PUSH CREWS' ENSURE ON-TIME MISSIONS

DECATUR-BASED UNIT HELPS KEEP TROOPS FLYING

By U.S. Army Sgt. Neil Gussman  
28th Combat Aviation Brigade

**IRAQ** – For door gunners and crew chiefs in Company A, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation Regiment, the longest days are the ones when they don't fly.

The Decatur-based Illinois Army National Guard unit uses a "push crew" to make sure every mission takes off on time and each aircraft gets back to mission-ready status as soon as possible.

If a mission is set to fly at 6 a.m., for example, the flight crew arrives for a pre-flight briefing at 3 a.m. The push crew begins its work at 2 a.m.

"The first thing to do at 0200 is start the coffee," said Cpl. Ricki Jenkins of Glasford, "Before going to the airfield, the push crew writes down the crew roster, the tail numbers of the birds, time out and time back."

The push crew normally consists of a crew chief or gunner for each pair of Black Hawk helicopters, but sometimes the crew is just one Soldier. The crew drives a half-mile from the orderly room to the maintenance hangars, where they switch to a specially equipped Gator vehicle. Before going to the flightline, the push crew gathers aviation life-support equipment,

weapons, water, ice and the egress kits for ground-mounting the M-240 door guns. The push crew also gathers the flight crew's flight bags, helmets, vests and communications gear. Soon, the push crew is on the flightline loading equipment and getting the Black Hawks ready for the mission.

"We remove the doors and windows and stack them in the trailer, then pull the [tie-down ropes on the rotor blades], pull the engine plugs and [auxiliary power unit] plugs and engine covers," Jenkins said. "We mount the M-240s on the birds, then head back to the maintenance [container complex] to load the doors and windows in storage racks."

By 4:30 a.m., the flight crew will be at the aircraft with night-vision goggles, rescue radios and other equipment. After this equipment is installed or stowed, the flight crew and the push crew go to breakfast together. When they return, the flight crew goes through the pre-flight checks. If everything goes normally, the mission takes off on time, and the push crew remains at the airfield for 40 minutes just in case a maintenance issue arises early in the flight.

If the aircraft has a problem before takeoff, the push crew is ready to move the

crew and equipment to another aircraft.

"Our priority is to make sure the mission goes on time," said Army Capt. Jason Henderson, Company A commander and a Normal, resident. "If there is a mechanical problem, the push crew can bump [the flight crew] to a spare aircraft."

Henderson said the push crew's role in post-flight operations is just as important as getting the mission ready to go.

"They make sure aircraft are ready for the next mission," he said. "When the mission is over, the push crew identifies and fixes faults right away."

A half hour before the mission is scheduled to land; the push crew is back at the airfield, loading the doors and windows in the Gator's trailer. As soon as the first Black Hawk lands, the push crew and the flight crew work together to get aircraft ready to fly for the next mission. The M-240 door guns are dismounted and set in the Gator. The crew members take off their helmets, vests and other flight gear and load their bags. The push crew re-hangs the doors, installs the windows and ties down the rotor blades.

While the equipment is loaded, post-flight maintenance begins. The Gator has a rack above its dashboard with every kind of lubricant a Black Hawk helicopter needs, as well as tools for on-the-spot repairs.

"By the time we get the gear stowed and the weapons turned in to the arms room, it's a long day," said Staff Sgt. Michael Maass of Hillsboro, Maass, a door gunner who was with Company A on its previous deployment to Iraq in 2004 and 2005, is a full-time Army National Guard technician and a wheeled-vehicle mechanic who volunteered to be a door gunner for this deployment.

"Door gunner is a job that only exists in a war zone," he said. "We [door gunners] all volunteered to deploy."

For a mission that takes off at 6 a.m. and returns at 1 p.m., the push crew starts work at 2 a.m. and may still be finishing routine maintenance hours after the flight lands; their days average 12 to 14 hours. The standard rotation for a Company A door gunner or crew chief is four days of flight, two days of push duty and one day off.

Chief Warrant Officer Herbert Stevens of Normal, a Company A pilot, said the push procedures reflect lessons learned during the unit's last tour.

"There's no room for error in aviation," he said. "We developed procedures that reduce risk and make sure the flight crew can focus on the mission."



Lt. Col. James McCabe of New Lenox (left), the Illinois National Guard Command Historian and Colonel Robert Dooley (right), U.S. Air Attache, U.S. Embassy Paris, pose next to a World War I era bi-plane.

## TWO WORLD WAR I PILOTS AWARDED MEDAL OF HONOR

NEW LENOX MAN REPRESENTS NATIONAL GUARD WHILE IN FRANCE

**REMICOURT, FRANCE** – The Illinois National Guard’s Command Historian, Lt. Col. Jim McCabe of New Lenox, was asked by the League of World War I Aviation Historians and the Kansas National Guard to represent Illinois in ceremonies conducted on Oct. 7 in Binarville, Givry and Remicourt, France, commemorating the actions of 1Lt. Harold Goettler, of Chicago, and 2Lt. Edwin Bleckley of Wichita, Kansas. The two lieutenants were posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for their actions on Oct 7, 1918.

On their first mission of Oct. 7, Goettler, a pilot, and his observer, Bleckley failed to locate the “Lost Battalion”, an American unit of the 77th Division surrounded by German forces in the Argonne Forest. While flying low through a valley they sustained intense fire from German position and possibly from the French as well. The DH-4 aircraft was new and its square nosed profile was similar to a German Fokker and easily mistaken for an “enemy” plane. Returning to their base, Goettler borrowed another squadron plane and the pair launched on a second patrol. During this mission, Goettler and Bleckley’s aircraft took withering fire. It is believed Goettler received a fatal head wound and lost control of the plane. Bleckley, though wounded, tried to take control of the ship from the rear gunner’s position. The plane crashed outside Bina-

rville near the French lines. Bleckley was pulled from the wreckage unconscious and died before he could be transported to an aid station. The French discovered Bleckley’s notes which helped narrow the search area for the missing American infantry battalion.

The sites associated with the Medal of Honor actions were visited, including the location of the “Lost Battalion”, the 50th Aero Squadron’s airfield, the crash site of Goettler and Bleckley’s plane as well as Bleckley’s grave in the American Meuse-Argonne National Cemetery. Nancy Erwin, Bleckley’s niece, placed a wreath at his marker. Goettler’s niece, Joan Starr, also attended the ceremonies. The ladies placed wreaths for both flyers at the actual crash site near Binarville.

The mayors of Givry and Remicourt hosted receptions and a plaque was dedicated commemorating the location of the aerodrome and the actions of the Illinois and Kansas aviators. The highlight of the commemoration ceremonies was an aerobatic demonstration by a French pilot in a World War I era S.E.5 biplane. A plaque was unveiled on the exterior wall of the Remicourt “marie” or mayor’s meeting hall. The bronze tablet commemorated the 50th Aero Squadron and Goettler and Bleckley’s action on Oct. 7, 1918.

“It was moving to see the French honor our Airmen in such a way,” said McCabe.

## DEDICATION TO HONOR FALLEN ILLINOIS SERVICE MEMBERS DEDICATED IN MARSEILLES ON NOV. 10

By Mike Chrisman - ILNG PAO

**MARSEILLES** – Trees can live for centuries, outliving most humans. A LaSalle County man has embraced that idea as he strived to recognize Illinois service members that have died since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. A dedication is planned for Nov. 10 in Marseilles to recognize that achievement.

Over several months Steve Massey, Acting Sustainable Practices Manager for the Illinois Department of Transportation, gathered donations to purchase 250 oak trees, one representing each Illinois service member who has died serving their country. With the help of nearly 60 volunteers, Massey planted the trees on 2.5 acres of meadowland at Illini State Park in Marseilles during a cold, rainy day in October.

“I chose oak trees because the white oak is the state tree and it represents strength,” Massey said.

The trees are 4 to 6 feet tall and were planted near the lock and dam area at Illini State Park. There is also a five-car concrete parking area with handicap accessibility and a concrete memorial area with a 6-ton natural granite stone in the center with a plaque mounted on it.

“This will be a lasting natural memorial that is in a quiet and serene setting for families, friends and others to remember those that gave the ultimate sacrifice,” Massey said. “These Soldiers were great friends to this nation and therefore a friend to me.”

Since 9/11, 206 Illinois service members have made the ultimate sacrifice. That includes 34 Illinois National Guardsmen, 18 who died in Afghanistan over the last year.

“These troops stood tall and strong for us and now the trees will stand tall and strong for them,” Massey said.

The life-long Streator resident was inspired to find ways to improve his community by his grandfather, an Italian immigrant who came to America poor and found ways to succeed.

“My mother’s parents came here from Italy with little education and money. When I was very young, my grandfather would tell me this is the greatest country in the world. I came here with nothing and I have nice house, family and everything we need. If I was still in the old country I would have nothing. You’re a smart boy and people will listen to you. Give something back to this country,” his grandfather told him.

In honor of Veterans Day, there was a dedication ceremony Nov. 10 at 1:30 p.m. The dedication was at the memorial site at Illini State Park. The dedication ceremony was open to the public and everyone is encouraged to enjoy the memorial, which is in Illini State Park in Marseilles and just across the Illinois River from the current Middle East Conflicts Memorial Wall.

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