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**153rd AW welcomes Puerto Rico maintainers**

**1041st, Wyo’s most decorated unit since Korea**

**Wyoming Guard supports 58th Inauguration**

**153rd CACS: Driving technological warfare**

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**On the cover**

Sgt. Colten Simcheck, a High Mobility Artillery Rocket System crew chief assigned to A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery, rolls out during a convoy movement at Camp Guernsey. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire.
Soldiers of B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery were officially welcomed home from a deployment to Afghanistan and honored at the Lander armory, May 7, with a Freedom Salute. Gov. Matt Mead, U.S. Rep. Liz Cheney and Brig. Gen. Tammy Maas, commander of the Wyoming Army National Guard, along with other military and civic leaders honored the artillerymen and their families.

Story and photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire
State Public Affairs Office

Soldiers of B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery were officially honored and welcomed home at the Lander armory, May 7, with a Freedom Salute after recently completing a deployment to Afghanistan.

Master of ceremonies for the event, 1st Lt. Timothy Tierney, said the event was an opportunity for elected and military leaders and the community to publicly acknowledge the soldiers, as well as their families, friends, employers and others that supported them during the deployment.


During their deployment, the soldiers were assigned to Joint Special Operations Command and part of a Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System task force that took part in 87 missions, deploying precision-guided munitions with high explosive warheads on enemy positions with no civilian casualties.

“We celebrate you who volunteer to go into harm’s way for the rest of us, and who volunteer to provide security for the rest of us,” said Mead to the troops. “I am so proud to be your commander in chief.”

Cheney also thanked the soldiers and their families for their service to state and nation.

“I have heard the National Anthem at many, many events and have never been as moved as I am here today with you Wyoming soldiers. We all owe you a debt of gratitude,” she said.

Maas expressed her gratitude, but focused on the unit’s accomplishments while in theater.

“Task Force HIMARS did split-operations twice with limited personnel including 34 C-130 lifts, over 30 rotary-wing movements and the establishment of a new firing position in a forward operating base. Each time they occupied a [forward operating base] they were in position, ready to fire the same night they arrived on ground. They truly set the standard for excellence in combat. Job well done Bravo Battery!”

As part of the Yellow Ribbon Freedom Salute, soldiers and their families were presented information about veteran’s health, education, employment resources and other benefits.

An individual award was presented to Sgt. 1st Class Samuel Beecham, the forward unit’s noncommissioned officer-in-charge, who was recognized by the American Legion as “Citizen Soldier of the Year.”
Even though their hangar, and much of their island, was flattened in Hurricane Maria, 22 members of the Puerto Rico Air National Guard stayed on task and volunteered to complete their mission—inspecting, maintaining and repairing one of its C-130E cargo planes.

While the scheduled maintenance was intended to be performed in Puerto Rico at the 156th Airlift Wing, plans changed and arrangements were made to bring the unit to Wyoming while many of the 153rd Airlift Wing’s planes and crews were deployed overseas. Another Puerto Rican team and plane is slated to be here in January.

“Unfortunately, our hangar got destroyed, but we still have a job to do, so we asked the Wyoming National Guard if they could give us the space we needed,” Staff Sgt. Ashley Barreto, a jet engine mechanic, said of the mandatory isochronal inspection, conducted every 540 days. “It’s a month-long inspection where we look at every single detail of the aircraft from top to bottom, so we can keep flying.”

Two weeks before Maria hit the U.S. territory, the island was threatened by Hurricane Irma. Barreto said that was stressful enough, but the Category 5 storm that eventually submerged 80 percent of her hometown underwater brought stress to a whole new level.

“We prepared to the best of our abilities, but with a Category 5 hurricane, anything can happen. Fortunately, we’re safe and healthy, we’re breathing and our families are OK. What’s important is we stick together and work,” she said.

Right after Maria hit, guardsmen were alerted over radio to report for duty, after ensuring their families and colleagues were safe. That meant all hands on deck helping in the communities and on the base with road clearing, traffic control and other emergency response duties.

Airman 1st Class Juneilly Mercado, a crew chief, said, “It was horrible. I felt like the door from the front of the house wanted to pop away. Afterwards, it was hard getting out of where I live because the streets were covered with debris. It was a day or two to finally get to the base which is two hours away from my house. When I got to the base, everyone was settled in and we were starting to receive airplanes. When I got some time off, I went home and tried to fix what I can and to bring water to my family.”
Shortly after the emergency response had subsided, and the base was somewhat back in order, came the call for volunteers to perform the required C-130 inspection.

“They said we need help, we need to do our job. Whomever is willing to come, we definitely appreciate it,” Barreto said of the call for volunteers to perform the duty in Wyoming.

“It’s hard to leave our families back home, especially with the struggle that’s happening, but this is what we signed up for.”

Fifty seven days after Maria swept across Puerto Rico, and a couple of weeks into his mission in Cheyenne, Senior Airman Alexis Castro, a crew chief, said his home was still without lights, but his family had a couple of barrels of water.

He said he didn’t hear any communications after the initial storm, but reported to the wing for accountability.

After helping get the base cleaned up, he said his duty moved to the country and the mountains.

“We put together a unit to help out with clearing trees and light posts, and do everything we can, giving out food ... family readiness was giving out food, and diapers and we gave out generators to people that lost everything,” he said.

Mercado joined the Guard two years ago, and despite the hardships at home, was eager to travel with the unit.

“I love my job,” she said. “I volunteer for everything. I really, really wanted a TDY or deployment, and since it’s to help the mission, it’s like ‘let’s go.’ ”

Maj. Carl Johansen, commander of the 153rd Maintenance Squadron, said the Wyoming wing has opened its facilities to other states before, and has sent personnel to other wings to help out when called upon. He said the request came from a PRANG airman who the unit worked with on another recent mission.

Johansen said the coordination and logistics for the effort is “pretty substantial,” but a request his wing was pleased to fulfill.

“We’re just happy to help and the experience has been pretty cool,” Johansen said.

“In addition to providing space, we’ve been able to conduct training to some of the Puerto Rico members and conduct knowledge transfer, and I know they have appreciated all the support from all of the wing units.”

He added that Wyoming’s deployed airmen are “doing well, and supporting their mission very well” and glad their facility is being utilized.

“In the Air National Guard, cross-organization support is very common. It’s what makes our world go around and the support we provide to other units builds necessary relationships and yields dividends downstream,” Johansen explained.

“We would support any unit due to any circumstance given hangar, personnel and resource availability.”

The effort in Wyoming has not gone unnoticed by the Puerto Rican airmen.

“I love it here. It’s a little hard to breathe but the people are so friendly and so willing to help,” Barreto said.

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WyoGuard breaks ground on new training and readiness centers

Groundbreaking events were held in May for a 101,000 square-foot Wyoming Army National Guard readiness center in Laramie and in September for the Lt. Gen. R.L. Esmay Training Center on Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center.

The new readiness center, near the Laramie Airport and adjacent to the Field Maintenance Shop #2 on Highway 130, replaces the 1959-constructed building currently housing Laramie-based units. It will consist of an assembly hall, commercial kitchen, classrooms, family welfare areas, recruiting and retention offices, a vehicle storage building and administrative offices for the Wyoming National Guard’s 94th Troop Command and other units.

The federal government is paying the majority of the $26 million construction bill; Wyoming’s tab is $6 million. The current armory and the land where it resides will be transferred to the University of Wyoming upon completion of the new readiness center.

Construction is anticipated to take up to 24 months. The Esmay training center, north of Custer Avenue on Camp Guernsey, will consist of a large auditorium, a 72,166 square-foot general instruction building, a 12,065 square-foot dining facility that will seat 400 people, and a new 26,524 square-foot barracks with room for 110 beds.

Federal funds are paying the complete construction bill of $34,762,861. The new center will replace the current 23,800 square-foot regional training institute.

Construction on the Lt. Gen. R.L. Esmay Center is scheduled for completion in October 2018.
It hadn’t been done before May 24th’s live fire training in Casper, Wyoming, but plans are already in the works for the Camp Guernsey Fire Department and the Wyoming Air Guard’s Fire Department to train together again. Military airfield firefighters have to certify their skills every year and one of the tasks they have to show proficiency in is handling a live fire burn.

The training is costly, and in these times of budget constraints someone had the good idea to travel to Casper and extinguish simulated crash fires together.

Camp Guernsey’s Fire Chief Alan Baldy and five of his firefighters drove up from Guernsey while the Air Guard contingent flew over on a C-130, loaded with one of their brush trucks. They all met at Casper’s Wyoming Airport Rescue Firefighting Training Facility, one of the few such places in the country where firefighters can hone their skills on live fuel burns.

“These worked out really well as we really can’t afford to send our people up here,” Baldy said. “This is a great use of sharing resources.”

In addition to the cost savings, the Air Guard was able to check the capabilities of its new brush truck while giving the loadmasters an opportunity to hone their skills by securing it in the Herc and delivering it to Casper.

“It took a little more coordination than normal, but we wanted to fly the truck and test its capabilities up there. We got Guernsey to share the cost and we got our certification done. It all went well,” said Air Guard Fire Department Assistant Chief Darby Whitesell.

CGFD Station Captain Chad Brush, who ran the training facility from 1998 to 2006, said it’s a unique place to refine the skills involved in fighting an airfield fire, one of three disciplines he and his firefighters at Guernsey must be qualified for.

“It’s designed so you can put the engine fire out and then we’ll try to create an egress and make a path to enter the fuselage and get passengers off the aircraft.”
“One Guard” keeps Guernsey airfields safe for training

The second opportunity for Air and Army firefighters to partner came in August, with the Wyoming Air National Guard’s plan to practice combat missions during annual training at Camp Guernsey, bringing additional emergency response requirements and an opportunity for Air and Army firefighters to partner as “one guard.”

The Air Guard staged four C-130H Herces and their crews at the Guernsey Airfield throughout the week.

Not a problem for the camp’s fire department.

However, some of the WyANG’s training missions included landings and takeoffs from the tactical airstrip at Guernsey’s North Training Area, and that’s where things got a little more complicated.

“We’ve got the four aircraft dropping loads at Drop Zone Moss and then landing at the tac strip,” Baldy said. “Each plane is required to have a certain amount of water and firefighting personnel on hand at each airfield.”

Adding another piece to the partnership puzzle was the Army National Guard’s aviators, who flew a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter filled with a team of Air Guard emergency response personnel from Cheyenne to Guernsey to evaluate the efforts of the teams on the ground.

Senior Master Sgt. Mike Kellebrew, WyANG fire chief, was on that flight. He said he appreciates the Army effort to ensure his service’s training went well.

“It’s a huge coordination effort to get our C-130 crews ready for deployment,” he said. “We’re lucky enough to have the Army side ensure we had the proper response and to have them bring us up for a pulse check, to get eyes on the crews on the ground.”

“It’s good for us to work together,” said Maj. Matt Sturtevant, the Air Guard’s base fire marshal and civil engineer. “It’s a win-win when we’re not blue or green, but one guard.”

Camp Guernsey Fire Chief Alan Baldy and Wyoming Air National Guard Firefighter Dennis Connor, above, discuss their mission at the tactical air strip at Camp Guernsey’s North Training Area. The WyANG’s training mission planned for the location was eventually rained out, but the rare joint effort between fire departments solidified their relationship.

Wyoming Air National Guard loadmasters from the 187th Airlift Squadron, left, load and secure a Wyoming Air Guard Fire Department brush truck on a C-130H prior to delivering it and a team of firefighters to the Wyoming Airport Rescue Firefighting Training Facility in Casper, Wyoming, May 24. The firefighters tested the new truck, while completing annual certification with Camp Guernsey firefighters, above, extinguishing a fuel fire on an aircraft mock-up.
Wyoming Army National Guard soldiers responded to a Feb. 11 request from the governor and Wyoming Homeland Security to mitigate flooding in Worland and surrounding areas.

Two 20-soldier rapid action teams spent the first day fortifying concrete barriers with plastic sheeting and sandbags on a berm along the Big Horn River near two overpasses and critical infrastructure near downtown where huge blocks of ice jammed the river.

With the addition of another RAT, that objective was nearly complete the following day, and the focus turned to areas north of town where Director of Wyoming Homeland Security Guy Cameron and Maj. Gen. Luke Reiner, Wyoming adjutant general, assessed areas where the ice was likely to move and subsequently jam up the river.

Capt. Kevin Messamer, a member of the Guard’s 84th Civil Support Team and a liaison between the Wyoming Military Department and homeland security said “the problem here is the river will freeze, then thaw, then freeze and thaw again, and each time it does, sections of ice will break off and flow until they get caught up somewhere else.

“Mitigation is really your best bet, as some of those chunks weigh up to 20 or 30,000 pounds. As soon as you break one up, there are a hundred more right behind it. As it keeps freezing and thawing, it will continue until it finds an outlet.”

Wyoguard teams tame Worland flooding

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire
State Public Affairs Office

WyoGuard UH-60s assist Keystone Fire

In July, Gov. Matt Mead authorized two Wyoming Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crews to begin aerial firefighting measures on the Keystone Fire, located in the Medicine Bow National Forest south of Rob Roy Reservoir.

“The Wyoming National Guard is committed to helping our local officials and assist in fire mitigation to preserve our communities and resources,” said Col. Greg Phipps, Wyoming National Guard director of joint operations.

The last time Wyoming Army National Guard Black Hawk crews were activated by the governor to provide water bucket operations in the state was in 2012 on fires in Weston, Platte and Natrona Counties. The fire had spread to 1300 acres at the time of the call up.
Despite the fierce terrain, high altitude and wind gusts of more than 50 mph, approximately 75 Guard members from nine western states skied and shot their way through the National Guard’s Western Regional Biathlon at the Casper Mountain Biathlon Center in Casper, Jan 10-14.

It was the first time Wyoming hosted the annual event, which offers Guard biathletes the opportunity to advance and be selected for the All-Guard Biathlon Team and the development team, bringing potential to qualify for international races including the Biathlon World Cup and the Winter Olympics.

In a nutshell, biathlon is a winter sport, with a military history, that combines cross-country skiing and precision rifle marksmanship. Participants alternate between skiing loops intended to get their heart rate up, and then transition to shooting small targets at 50 meters while attempting to control their breathing. Penalty laps are added for missed targets.

Tech Sgt. Travis Voyer, a National Guard Biathlon Team trainer said the Casper Mountain course “is by far the hardest in the United States. Not only is the terrain very difficult but we are also at 7,500 feet.

“It’s a very complex sport of moving and shooting with a high, high heart rate,” Voyer continued. “Most of the soldier athletes will be shooting at approximately 180 beats when they hit the mat.”

The top four males and the top four females from each state advanced to the National Guard Biathlon Championship in Jericho, Vermont.

The Alaska National Guard’s Pfc. Travis Cooper topped the field at the 2017 Western Regional National Guard Biathlon Competition and is likely to be on the U.S. 2018 Winter Olympics team. He joined the Guard with the specific intent of competing on the Guard’s cross country ski team, but has found a great community in biathlon.

“National Guard Biathlon is a tight knit family,” Cooper said. “We really care for each other, and really look after each other. Having the support group is really encouraging.”

The Wyoming Air National Guard responded to the nation’s call twice at the end of the summer with C-130s.

The first call asked for two of Wyoming’s yellow-tailed transport planes to stage in Texas to assist first responders and other military personnel in the wake of Hurricane Harvey’s devastating turn through the state.

While working response efforts in Texas, the Wyoming Air Guard also responded to assist recovery from Hurricane Irma in the United States territories of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Two C-130s were used to transport recovery teams and temporary shelters to the Caribbean islands.

“This is exactly what we train to do,” said Maj. Gen. Luke Reiner, Wyoming’s adjutant general. “This is why America has a National Guard - to save lives at home, to fight our wars and to build partnerships.”

Right, Wyoming Air National Guard loadmasters secure vehicles from the 821st Contingency Response Squadron into a C-130 to transport them to St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands, on Sept. 22. Courtesy photo
History retrospective: Wyoming’s most combat decorated unit since Korea returned home a decade ago

By Sgt. 1st Class Frank Marquez
197th Public Affairs Detachment

September marked a decade since the return of the 1041st Engineer Company Assault Float Bridge of the Wyoming Army National Guard, which deployed to Combat Operations Base Speicher in Tikrit, Iraq, in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The unit returned the most decorated unit in the state since the 300th Armored Field Artillery fought in the Battle of Soyang in May 1951 during the Korean War.

The 155 soldiers left to provide security forces to commercial convoys throughout Iraq during the surge of American troops. Insurgents were pushed northwest into the Sunni Triangle and where the Cowboy soldiers encountered frequent insurgency strikes in the form of powerful roadside improvised explosive devices along well-traveled Main Supply Route Tampa.

According to then Sgt. Shane Whitworth it seemed the convoys hit on IEDs almost every day in December 2006. 

“That’s when things got pretty Western out there … It just seemed like we were getting hit every night,” he said. “And we’re thinking, man, when is this going to stop?” His armored security vehicle was virtually destroyed by a large roadside IED, yet he managed to drive it on all flats, while suffering a concussion. He made it the last 6 miles of the route to Q-West, Qayyarah Airfield, roughly 110 miles north of Speicher. This was the kind of danger the unit faced more often than not.

Directed by company commander Capt. Nona Nissen, who the troops called ‘Mom,” and executive officer Capt. William Patton, all the troops took turns on convoys. Nissen, now retired wanted everyone to know about the hardships the line troops faced during these dangerous missions.

The convoys carried valuable fuel and supplies to several forward operating and combat operating bases near or amid population centers including Mosul, Kirkuk, Logistical Support Activity Anaconda, LSA Diamondback, Q-West, Al Basrah and Baghdad (the Green Zone).

The unit received a Meritorious Unit Citation for its service from Oct. 23, 2006 – Aug. 3, 2007. Soldiers earned 37 Bronze Stars, one with ‘V’ device and 12 Army Commendations Medals with ‘V’ device. The unit also was bestowed 36 Purple Hearts, and 103 Combat Action Badges.

According to reports, the 1041st had 175 enemy contacts, and 120 of those were IEDs amid an estimated 189 total missions.

“Things could have been much worse, but the unit was blessed,” said Sgt. Maj. Jason Spaulding, a platoon sergeant in the 1041st deployment. “There is no such thing as luck in war.”

Wyoming officially deactivated the unit and cased its guidon at the state’s Army National Guard Day ceremony at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center July 16, 2016.

The unit had soldiers from Rock Springs, Afton and Evanston and other towns from across the state as well as soldiers from Idaho, North Dakota, Washington, Colorado, Utah, Texas and California. 

Sgt. 1st Class James Rotherham, the 1041st Engineer Company’s 1st Platoon platoon sergeant, stands with his uparmored 5 ton truck prior to a mission in Iraq. The company was the most combat decorated unit in the Wyoming Guard since the Korean War. Courtesy photo

Sgt. Maj. Jason Spaulding, the 1041st Engineer Company’s first platoon sergeant, stands with his uparmored 5 ton truck prior to a mission in Iraq. The company was the most combat decorated unit in the Wyoming Guard since the Korean War. Courtesy photo
An A-7 Corsair II aircraft streaks across the cloudy landscape. The pilot transmits a distress call to the tower to relay that his aircraft is heavily damaged. He manages a hard landing but his aircraft has lost all system power and veered off the taxiway into heavy mud. A scenario similar to this is what activates the 153rd Maintenance Group Crash Damage or Disabled Aircraft Recovery team.

Flying units, like the 153rd Airlift Wing, Wyoming Air National Guard, are required by the Air Force to maintain CDDAR capability. This is broken down into two phases - initial response and recovery.

The maintenance group CDDAR team is responsible for the latter - recovery - which includes coordinating efforts to move the damaged or disabled aircraft to a parking or storage area.

The specialized team of maintainers is comprised of: fuel systems, avionics, hydraulic, structural, propulsion and electro-environmental specialists; aerospace ground equipment mechanics; and aircraft crew chiefs. Every year, the CDDAR team practices responding to damaged or disabled aircraft that have blown tires upon landing, veered off the runway, or crashed.

“As a team, we really enjoy coming out here,” said Tech. Sgt. Stephen Palso, 153rd CDDAR chief. “We have some new equipment and some additional equipment coming, so this year, we set up a scenario which we haven’t been able to do in the past - a scenario that will let us use the new equipment.”

Palso gathered the full CCDAR team for the exercise and briefed them of the situation. In order for the aircraft to be towed, the maintainers had to stabilize the aircraft with a tether and make sure the structure and gears would allow air bag jacking. Several air bags were used for stability and to jack the front landing gear. Air manifolds were set up for the front and rear of the aircraft and connected to individual air bags. After jacking the aircraft, team members installed steel planking to support the forward gears and towed the aircraft out of the mud.

“This was the first time for me doing recovery training. My job was to help set up air bags and operate the manifold,” said Senior Airman Dakota Difrancesco, 153rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron crew chief. “My normal job always has some sort of data and you are going to follow the book. When a plane crashes or runs of the runway into mud, you don’t always respond in the same way.”

“The whole concept of CDDAR is based on teamwork,” said Maj. Carl Johansen, 153rd Maintenance Squadron commander. “I am proud of the team for their many months of planning and hard work. It took sourcing necessary equipment, completing formal CDDAR training, establishing a [memorandum of understanding] with other units within the region, and coordinating with multiple entities to execute an aircraft recovery scenario like this.”

All members of the CDDAR team are volunteers who have taken on the program responsibilities and challenges beyond their normal maintenance duties and responsibilities. They hone their specialized skills daily so they can respond to an emergency like the one presented in the scenario.
2017 MAFFS activation featured enhanced C-130

In July a Wyoming Air National Guard C-130 equipped with the U.S. Forest Service’s Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System launched to fight wild fires in the Western United States. It was Wyoming’s first, and only, 2017 firefighting activation and the first time the 153rd Airlift Wing sent a C-130 with enhanced capabilities to perform a MAFFS mission.

It did not disappoint. The series 3.5 engine enhancements provided additional capabilities to the C-130H3 aircraft Wyoming’s aviators operate.

“Approximately 20 percent more thrust was available when needed, which greatly increased our safety margin while operating in the demanding, very low level environment, near aircraft maximum gross weight,” said Lt. Col. Todd Davis, 187th Airlift Squadron commander, and MAFFS pilot. Davis is also Wyoming’s lead project officer for the upgrades.

“We were definitely pleased with the performance the modifications allowed us,” said Col. Justin Walrath, 153rd Airlift Wing commander, and a seasoned MAFFS pilot, adding using the modified C-130 for aerial firefighting is a game changer. “It feels 20,000 lbs. lighter which provided greater climb performance and safety margins,” he said.

Since 2007 Wyoming has worked with the National Guard Bureau to provide C-130 legacy engine and propeller systems with modern technological upgrades to significantly improve aircraft performance.

Davis said the aircraft often responded to the same fires with C-130s that didn’t have the 3.5 modifications. “The decrease in fuel burn and increase in engine efficiency was notable,” he said. “On at least three occasions, we were able to skip refueling cycles and gain an additional sortie over the other aircraft. As expected, the fuel savings generated by the 3.5 modification also significantly increased our range and loiter time for the firefighting mission.”

Wyoming’s crews were stationed in Fresno, California, during the 2017 MAFFS season. Wyoming’s 3.5 modifications-equipped C-130 flew 37 sorties and dropped more than 100,000 gallons of retardant on wildfires. In total, Wyoming deployed 44 people and two C-130s for MAFFS missions in 2017.

MAFFS is a joint Department of Defense and U.S. Forest Service program designed to provide additional aerial firefighting resources when commercial and private air tankers are no longer able to meet the needs of the forest service.

MAFFS is a self-contained aerial firefighting system owned by the U.S. Forest Service that can discharge 3,000 gallons of retardant in less than 5 seconds, covering an area one-quarter of a mile long by 100 feet wide. Once the load is discharged, it can be refilled in less than 12 minutes.

Our contribution to Wyoming

Economic figures reflect 2016 amounts as calculated by the Wyoming Department of A&I Economic Analysis Division using payroll and population figures provided by the Wyoming Military Department.
Every day is Earth Day for Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center’s Integrated Training Area Management. ITAM is responsible for repairing and rehabilitating large acreages of land damaged by hundreds of heavy military vehicles maneuvering in more than 70,000 acres.

Much like the groundskeepers at a PGA golf course or major league baseball stadium are expected to keep the playing surfaces in pristine condition, ITAM plays a similar role in the training center’s mission, “to provide relevant and ready maneuver space, ranges, support facilities and services in order to enable training.”

The team has done well over the years to keep that promise, providing well-groomed surfaces to military units preparing for combat at Camp Guernsey. Nonetheless, they wanted to improve their performance and efficiency, even within the constraints of budget, equipment and personnel.

With Guernsey’s rolling hills and rock formations, finding the damaged areas from ground level with the naked eye is a challenge to the team. On top of that, determining what implements, seed or other variables are needed to fix damage adds to the difficulty of the task.

“Right now, the tractor drivers will drive around for a week or two looking for the damaged areas and circle them on a map,” said Wyoming Army National Guard ITAM Coordinator Dustin Kafka. “We have a rough idea of where the units train, especially the main element, but we can’t know everywhere they go.”

A few years ago, the Camp Guernsey team, along with Brett Wood, ITAM Program Coordinator at National Guard Bureau, who also is a range safety specialist with the WyARNG’s Training Center Command, pondered using unmanned aerial vehicles to look at training areas, and to apply practices of precision agriculture, a modern farming technique using GPS and other digital technologies.

To take it a step further, Kafka and Kole Dufore, Camp Guernsey’s Geographic Information System Coordinator, thought they could feed global positioning data and detailed images from high resolution RGB and near-infrared cameras directly to the tractor drivers making the repairs.

They were granted funding for their idea. “Camp Guernsey seemed like an ideal test case for ITAM use of UAS,” Wood said. “Camp Guernsey is large, has restricted airspace, a military airfield with a tower, and is sparsely vegetated. Mr. Kafka’s and Dufore’s proposed use of the UAS has exceeded my original intent. Camp Guernsey’s uses for the unmanned system reduces the amount of time and manpower required to monitor maneuver land. Because of this, WyARNG’s monitoring protocols will likely be a template for many other ITAM programs throughout the Army.”

It’s been three years since Kafka and Dufore first determined the correct UAS platform compatible for Guernsey’s area and got trained and a FAA operator license approval. They also learned the computer programs necessary to create the usable data they were aiming to produce.

“I don’t think we had any idea how long it would take,” Dufore said, “Once the FAA set guidance and rules for UAV, we were set to go.”

In April the team made its first test flight over one of the training site’s drop zones - a large, open field most often used for dropping troops and cargo from aircraft, but one that has sustained damage from maneuvering vehicles. It was an ideal location.

Dufore said the first flight went very well and the resulting data is what they wanted.

“We covered 132 acres in less than 10 minutes,” he explained. “We had 180 individual images. Those are not so useful of themselves, but once stitched together in reconstructing geometry software, we then get surface models that we can use for our repair plan.”
It was a busy few weeks this June at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center and for most of the Wyoming Army National Guard’s soldiers as they bivouacked, maneuvered and communicated throughout the almost 80,000-acre facility polishing their warfighting skills.

Implementing traditional and new communications technology was at the top of the to-do list for the 115th Field Artillery Brigade, which fielded the Command Post of the Future on the camp’s South Training Area to successfully complete the Mission Command Systems Integration Exercise. Sharing the Gray Rocks training area was the 148th Signal Company and the 960th Brigade Support Battalion, both of which added communications and logistics support. Their mission was to integrate all the communications systems across a brigade size unit, a task that had never been completed before.

Up north, the headquarters and alpha and bravo batteries of 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery maneuvered High Mobility Artillery Rocket System launchers and support vehicles throughout the training area with mechanical and logistical support from the 920th Forward Support Company. The 920th was augmented with mechanics from units throughout the state.

Lt. Col. Fred Nasredine spent 75 percent of AT as the brigade’s deputy commander, and finished as the new commander of the 2-300th, following a change of command ceremony. He said planning for the exercise has been the brigade’s focus for two years.

“It validated our ability to provide mission command through the brigade’s Army Battle Command Systems. We used a tactical simulation in the background as a vehicle to exercise our systems, and it came together very nice. For some of our young soldiers, this was the first time they were able to experience and be a part of what the field artillery brigade actually does. In the end, it was a great training event, and it will set us up for success as we progress on this readiness continuum.”

On another area of the North Training Area, infantrymen from C Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment conducted the unit’s first annual training period.

Most of the enlisted soldiers were finishing reclassification school this time last year, after joining from other units, but a few had some infantry experience prior to the unit standing up. Unit leaders spent most of this first year planning for the two-week event.

“We really dug into the books and relied heavily on the guys who have experience,” said 2nd Lt. Eric Rush, a platoon leader, who, like several of the young of-
ficers in the unit, is in line to attend infantry officer school at Fort Benning soon.

Rush said the unit, stationed at Evanston and Afton, has drilled together at one or the other locations through the year, but was pleased to put the wide-ranging facilities of Guernsey to the test.

“It was a different look for the guys,” he said. “We have training areas, but the CONEX villages for urban operations and the training lanes we planned were really excellent up here.”

UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crews assigned to G Company, 2nd Battalion, 211th Aviation Regiment supported missions for both Recruiting and Retention Battalion and the infantry regiment.

The scenario of an urban operations training exercise, at a North Training Area CONEX village where soldiers can simulate clearing dwellings in a city, included two infantrymen getting shot, and subsequently needing medical evacuation—which G Company promptly provided.

They also transported dozens of educators from several areas of Wyoming, to spend a day with the Guard, an event designed to teach the teachers some of the benefits enlistment can provide to their students.

Much of the 213th Regional Training Institute staff spent AT ensuring it was meeting and exceeding the standards set by the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, whose quality assurance team was onsite inspecting the facility and staff.

Many of the Training Center Command troops at Camp Guernsey completed AT in support of the visiting units.

Aircraft and vehicles got fueled, grass got mowed, targets got repaired, food got issued to name but a few of the services the training site’s soldiers provided to ensure everyone looks forward to doing it all again next summer.
In February, the Wyoming Military Department dedicated a memorial in honor of the four Army National Guard soldiers who have died in the Global War on Terror since 2001.

Family members of each fallen soldier, known as Gold Star Families, attended the plaque dedications in the Joint Forces Readiness Center.

“We hope to never lose one of our soldiers,” said Maj. Gen. Luke Reiner, Wyoming’s adjutant general, at the event. “But if it happens, we are committed to taking care of our Gold Star Families and to remember their loved ones.”

The memorial consists of four plaques, with each one detailing the soldier’s service record, career progression and when they died while deployed. During the ceremony, each plaque was dedicated individually, with a final roll call at the end.

The four soldiers who are memorialized on the wall are Capt. Robert Lucero, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Parrott, Capt. Bruce Hays and Chief Warrant Officer 3 Andrew McAdams.

Lucero was the first overseas combat loss for the Wyoming Army National Guard in Operation Iraqi Freedom. He deployed in 2003 with the 4th Infantry Division Rear Operations Center, a Casper, Wyoming, unit, and died Sept. 25 that year from wounds sustained in an explosion near Tikrit.

Parrott volunteered to go on a deployment in 2005 with the Pennsylvania National Guard. He died Nov. 10 that year in Balad, Iraq, from injuries sustained from enemy small arms fire.

Hays was the first loss Wyoming suffered in Operation Enduring Freedom, in Afghanistan. He deployed with an embedded training team in 2008, a team that advised and supported Afghanistan’s military or police units. On Sept. 17 of that year his vehicle struck an improvised explosive device and he succumbed to wounds sustained in the explosion.

McAdams was assigned to an aviation unit and deployed to Afghanistan in 2013. While on a flight mission on Jan. 10, 2014, his plane crashed on approach to Bagram Air Base, killing him.

“Soldiers and families are the most important things we have, without them we wouldn’t have an Army,” Army Guard Command Sgt. Major Harold Pafford said. “We must never forget the sacrifices they make for this great country we live in and the freedom we have.”

The memorial is located in the west hall of the JFRC building and is viewable during normal work hours.
Wyoming Air National Guard force support squadron airmen from the 153rd Airlift Wing teamed up with their 90th Missile Wing active duty counterparts to complete a week of training Aug. 7 – 11.

A few of the classes taught during the week included building shelters, setting up field kitchens and search and rescue. The goal was to get the active duty FSS personnel ready for an upcoming deployment by learning from Wyoming ANG airmen who recently returned from deployment. The Wyoming Guard is required to conduct this type of training every year, but this is the first time they have included their active duty counterparts from F.E. Warren.

“This one was unique” said Senior Master Sgt. Anthony Ramirez, 153rd sustainment services superintendent. “The underlying goal really was the joint training with the 90th, to create that relationship with the 90th. We are a mile apart from each other. We wear the same uniform. We are doing the same jobs. So we should be training together.”

The goal of the annual training is to prepare airmen to be ready to build support services from the ground up once they are deployed. FSS ensures airmen will have a place to eat and sleep if they find themselves in a location without any infrastructure. “This training is important because FSS plays a vital role downrange when it comes to building a bare base,” said Master Sgt. Jeffrey White, 90th FSS readiness noncommissioned officer in charge. “As soon as it’s ‘boots to ground’ at a deployed location, FSS duties range from building and managing lodging, personnel accountability, field feeding operations, and contingency mortuary, just to name a few.
Why do they do it?

Excerpts from this year’s personality features and a glimpse into the balancing act between civilian careers and the duty our National Guard members perform monthly. See the full stories on https://wyomilitary.wyo.gov/news/stories/

Wyoming Air National Guard Senior Master Sgt. Thomas Turner, Cheyenne, Wyo., is a firefighter with Cheyenne Fire Rescue and on drill weekend, he responds to the needs of the airmen and families of the 153rd Airlift Wing as a first sergeant.

“When I was growing up, I always wanted to become a firefighter,” Turner says. “I like helping people so becoming a first sergeant was a natural fit.”

After witnessing the selfless acts of first responders during the collapse of the Twin Towers, Turner affirmed his decision to pursue his dream job as a firefighter.

Wyoming Air National Guard Lt. Col. Ryan Scofield, Greeley, Colo., is an instructor pilot for the 187th Airlift Squadron.

With 19 years as a military pilot, he’s seen much of the world through the windshield of a C-130. On the civilian side, he is a first officer with a commercial airline. He also performs aerobatic feats in his RV8 with Rocky Mountain Formation Flyers when not on military orders.

His aerobatic experience gives him a unique perspective on flying Modular Airborne Fire Fighting System missions. “Flying (MAFFS) in really tight formation requires a very active and constant appreciation for precise flying,” he explains. “You’re flying 3 feet away from another airplane, so you’re really focused and constantly making control inputs to maintain formation position.”

Wyoming Air National Guard Staff Sgt. Rebekah Miller, Torrington, Wyo., is a command post specialist with the Guard and a police officer in Torrington.

“I picked jobs that were challenging because, in the military, there is such a solid base, so much structure and I felt like I wanted that with my civilian job, too,” Miller explains. “Both jobs taught me so much about leadership and teamwork and things that are important to me. In both jobs you can be very stressed at times. Both jobs teach you how to handle things that are hard to handle. I’ve never felt more confident. It’s like being in the military prepared me for this. The reward is so much bigger because you go through the tough things like the academy or basic training. When you finally get to the point where you graduate and you feel the pride in it — it makes it all worth it.”
Wyoming Army National Guard Commander, Brig. Gen. Tammy Maas, Cheyenne, Wyo., is also the executive director of human resources at Laramie County Community College.

She credits her parents for her 37-year military career.

“They were great role models in encouraging me to pursue my dreams and work hard,” says Maas, whose father served 40 years in the Army as a chief warrant officer. “Work hard. Take jobs no one else wants and see them as opportunities. I’ve taken jobs that weren’t desirable or sexy. I worked hard because I had a strong desire to make a difference and I would think ‘Wow, here’s a job where I can really make a difference and contribute.’”

Wyoming Army National Guard Maj. Jason Miller, Guernsey, Wyo., has been the airfield manager at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center since transferring from the Washington Army National Guard in October 2013.

Now, the Army helicopter pilot and commander, and his family are Guernsey residents and he sits on the boards of two community organizations—Guernsey Economic Development Board, as the camp representative, and the Guernsey Airport Board.

“Aviation is my passion, and it’s important to offer your talents, and have a voice within your community,” Miller says. “The biggest benefit is that (the National Guard members) get to develop relationships and trust with other people in the community, making it much easier for everyone to become more successful, and develop a better understanding of how we can work together to create synergy for Platte County.”

Wyoming Army National Guard Lt. Col. Liann Brenneman, Laramie, Wyo., is an intelligence and operations officer in the Joint Operations Center, and supports civil authorities in emergency operations. She is also an elementary school principal and a mother of three.

“In the Army we have sections and platoons within the unit, and in school I have the individual classroom, the grade levels and the entire school. It all comes down to empowering individual soldiers and students to make good decisions in the moment. “I can’t necessarily be with a soldier on the sand bag line, or with a student when he graduates high school, but I hope we can set up the individual soldier or student for success,” she explains. “Hopefully, by taking slow steps and gaining confidence at low levels, it leads to huge later successes.”

Wyoming Air National Guard Lt. Col. Michael Carden, Chugwater, Wyo., is the commander of the 153rd Communications Flight. On the civilian side, he’s an entrepreneurial rocket scientist, whose X-L Space Systems, makes specialty chemicals used for the aerospace industry, and an emergency management resource provider.

“I couldn’t be happier with where I’m at,” says Carden. “Working with the Army and Air personnel in the Wyoming National Guard to improve military communications, while also working on technology and communications in the civilian sector.”
Every 30 minutes, another handful of Wyoming Cowboy ChalleNGe Academy candidates, along with their family, filed into the Wyoming Army National Guard’s 213th Regional Training Institute in Guernsey. Their demeanor, much like the weather, was cool and quiet on Report Day, Jan. 8.

Not knowing what to expect, the 44 male and eight female candidates of class 32 in the drill hall that Sunday came from vastly different backgrounds and circumstances, but all of the 16-to-18-year-old volunteers had the same end-goal: graduation from the 5 1/2 month residential phase of the program at Camp Guernsey Joint Training Center and a positive change in their lives that would carry on into their future.

Once the candidates and their families were greeted, they went through medical checks, academic reviews, recording height and weight, getting haircuts, and finally an emotional goodbye between candidates and their family.

Just six days earlier, Tyger Rodriguez, 17, of Torrington, was adorned in handcuffs, shackles and an orange jumpsuit, seated in the backseat of a patrol car, and escorted to various appointments by local deputies in hopes of being accepted into the class.

For Rodriguez, his goal was to get into a solid routine in life and make good decisions for his family. He had to leave his 4-month-old son, Kyson, and his girlfriend Sami, in order to better himself.

“I need a change. A better mindset and attitude towards my life. I see myself changing greatly in this program. Last week I was in jail. In a month, I hope to be doing good things in the program so I can make a better life for my family and my son who I love very much,” said Rodriguez, who was referred to the program by his friend, Dawson Reifschneider, also from Torrington, who graduated from Class 31 last December.

Rodriguez was on home pass for five days at the end of March and able to see friends and family for the first time since reporting to the program 11 weeks earlier.

“It’s been nice being home and just relaxing. Wearing my own clothes,” said Tyger.

“I didn’t know what to expect when I first showed up to the program. It was a lot of structure, but it was better...
than the alternative,” he said, referring to the transition of going from six days of isolation in the county jail to reporting to the WCCA program.

On June 10, Rodriguez, Burson and Renquist were among the 41 cadets who walked across the stage for their graduation at Wheatland High School, substantially changed. They looked up confidently, made eye contact, smiled every once in a while and carried themselves with poise.

Rodriguez recovered his credits via Apex, an accredited credit recovery system, and the program was working with his high school to get his diploma.

Renquist came away with a better understanding of the physical training regimen, used to help cadets take control of behavior issues and to foster team building.

“I thought the program would be more like basic training. I thought we would just get yelled at and work out the entire time, but it wasn’t like that at all. The cadre here actually care about us,” said Renquist.

“The best part about the program is the opportunities we’ve had. We get college credits for a lot of stuff we’ve done. I was in a culinary class so I’ve been able to learn how to make a bunch of homemade food,” Burson said. All of the cadets said they hoped other Wyoming at-risk youth would give Wyoming Cowboy Challenge Academy a chance.

“I’d tell potential cadets that when you first get there, it’s really, really tough. But if you can push through it and do the best you can, it gets easier. If you just do what you’re supposed to do, and get it done, it can change your life,” said Burson.

Opportunities aside, the cadets have also formed close bonds with one another. “The best part of the program is the friends I’ve made. I’ve gotten really close to some of the guys here. The program has taught me a lot about the importance of self-respect. If I don’t respect myself, I can’t respect others. I know that now,” said Renquist.

College credits, jobs, self-esteem, academic opportunity and friends are just scratching the surface of all the great things the cadets relayed about the program.

The four graduating cadets are also excited about their future prospects.

Renquist has already applied for several jobs in Casper so he can pay his own way through college. He is enrolled at Casper College to become a paramedic.

Burson is enrolled in college courses at Central Wyoming College, in Riverton, going into welding and business.

Rodriguez intends to enroll in Eastern Wyoming College or Laramie County Community College and pursue a degree in business management.

“I’m glad I did it because I was on the wrong path and this straightened me up and made me focus on what’s important in life,” said Rodriguez.

I’ll go home with the right mindset and be on track to be a better version of myself.”

Wyoming company receives Freedom Award

Mesa Natural Gas Solutions, a Casper-based company ran by retired Wyoming Army National Guard soldiers, received the 2017 Freedom Award, in a ceremony at the Pentagon in August.

Secretary of Defense James Mattis announced Mesa was among the 15 exceptional employers awarded the Freedom Award. The award is the highest honor given to employers for support of National Guard and Reserve employees.

Mesa was selected from 3,064 nominations from reserve component troops across the country. Recipients of the award have gone above and beyond federal requirements in support of their military employees.

The last time a Wyoming-based employer won this prestigious award was in 2002 when the State of Wyoming was recognized for its exemplary support.
The Wyoming National Guard sent 15 soldiers and airmen to Washington, D.C., in January to support the 58th Presidential Inauguration of Donald J. Trump. The Wyoming Air National Guard’s 153rd Security Forces Squadron had 13 people in the nation’s capital assisting with security efforts, and two photojournalists from the Wyoming Army National Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters helped lead public affairs teams covering the various activities and events supported by National Guard forces.

“Having Wyoming National Guard personnel supporting one of the most important events in our nation is a great honor,” said Maj. Gen. Luke Reiner, Wyoming’s adjutant general. “Our Wyoming National Guard personnel are carrying on the proud tradition of National Guard support to this event.”

The Wyoming contingent was part of a 7,500-strong force of citizen-soldiers and airmen from 43 states, three territories and the District of Columbia brought to D.C. to support local civilian authorities as well as federal government agency partners for the inauguration.

While the contingent from the 153rd Security Forces Squadron was one of, if not the smallest, of the security force groups from any state, they fit in well with the overall mission according to Master Sgt. William Clark, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the Wyoming unit.

“I’m sure the D.C. police, and Secret Service and capital police and all those agencies know how to do this every four years, but for such a large operation and for so many agencies to come together and plug us into it and make us a part of it all is quite a feat,” Clark said.

He said his unit was initially assigned to be a small response force, and while the mission went through some changes over the course of the two days prior to the Inauguration, it was determined that they would man several traffic control points with 200 members from the Puerto Rico Army National Guard.

“They plugged us in with them and it went really well,” Clark said. “We got along great.”

The day before the inauguration, the airmen were housed at FedEx Field, home of the Washington Redskins, in Landover, Maryland, along with about 3,500 other airmen and soldiers. While most of the time was spent on cots lining the entire club section of the stadium resting up for the next day’s long shifts, they also received training taught by local law enforcement officials.

The training led up to a swearing-in ceremony for all the troops, who were deputized as “District of Columbia Special Police.”

“This was a great opportunity for us,” said Staff Sgt. William Dettman. “How many people can say they attended a presidential Inauguration, much less provided security.”

Following the ceremony, Tech. Sgt. Adam Coulon, who like all of his Wyoming wingmen, was here for his first inaugural duty, said he wasn’t nervous at all.

“I’m really relaxed,” he said. “Security is what we do every day. We’re well trained for whatever we might do.”

Public affairs personnel were stationed at the D.C. Guard’s armory for most of the four-day detail. From there, they dispatched to many locations around the metropolitan area to produce written and broadcast stories or to escort civilian media to places Guardsmen were working in their many roles, including cooking, logistics, communications, and many other civil support operations.

Military involvement in the presidential inauguration dates back to April 30, 1789, when members of the U.S. Army, local militias – the modern-day National Guard – and revolutionary war veterans formed an honor detail to escort Gen. George Washington to the then-seat of government, New York City for his inauguration ceremony.
Eric Brooks’ stature and demeanor tend to command respect without much having to be said. As the new director for the Wyoming Cowboy ChalleNGe Academy, a 5 1/2 month residential program for at-risk youth, the 6-foot-2, 250-pound, former bowl-winning defensive lineman for the University of Wyoming portrays the calm, self-assured, courageous strength that the WCCA staff aims to instill in cadets enrolled in the program.

Brooks never envisioned his California roots would eventually lead him to Wyoming. He was a standout football player at Monrovia High School; a north-eastern suburb of Los Angeles, earning a scholarship offer from Arizona State University. However, the scholarship offer was removed after he suffered an injury during his senior year of high school in 2007. He subsequently accepted an athletic scholarship from Arizona Western in Yuma, Arizona, and after earning his associate’s degree, he transferred to play football at the University of Wyoming, where he was part of the team that won the New Mexico Bowl against Fresno State. He graduated from UW in 2011 with his bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice.

Soon after, Brooks was offered a position at the Cathedral Home for Children, in Laramie, Wyoming. Cathedral Home is a program that offers a wide range of prevention, residential and transition services for at-risk youth with the overall mission of restoring hope, strengthening relationships and building futures.

“I’ve always enjoyed working with youth. A majority of kids in crisis centers or group homes are really great kids, they just need a motivational push in the right direction,” said Brooks.

Brooks spent several years earning seniority and respect for the work he did with the youth in the Cathedral Home, and was eventually offered the director’s position for Crisis Services in Laramie and Rawlins, Wyoming – a position he would hold for the next several years.

In late 2016, the director position for the Wyoming Cowboy ChalleNGe Academy became available and Brooks’ interest was immediately piqued.

“The last two years I’ve been living in Rawlins and working for the crisis center, so making the jump to Guernsey was a fairly easy decision. I’ve worked with WCCA recruiters through the years and saw the opening and thought it would be a great fit for my family and I,” said Brooks. Then, as a slight smile came across his face as he added, “Plus, if you can live in Rawlins, you can live just about anywhere.”

“Director Brooks is a tremendous fit for the program. His previous experience working with youth as well as his contacts throughout the state will greatly benefit the program,” said Doug Hensala, the program’s interim director.

“After six years working with youth in various capacities and environments, there isn’t a whole lot I haven’t seen,” Brooks said.

Brooks, who’s biggest challenge will be recruiting and networking the services of WCCA throughout the state, has already hit the ground running.

“We have a lot of kids that would be a great fit for the program, so our task is finding those kids and getting the pieces to fit together to allow them to enroll,” he said.

“The energy he brings is just what the program needs to take us to the next level,” said Hensala.

“We offer a great service to kids who might need a little extra motivation or push in their lives to steer them in the correct direction, and that’s our job – our task, if you will – to get them the information on what services we provide and then give them that positive push to pursue them. The view that these are ‘at-risk’ youth isn’t necessarily the case,” Brooks said. “These are good kids. The cadets that graduate are the ones who are willing to put in the hard work to make their dream future a reality.”

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Mine removal training tops this year’s priorities with Tunisia partners

By Capt. Megan Hoffmann
State Public Affairs Office

In the early 90s the Department of Defense stood up the National Guard-managed State Partnership Program whose goal was to connect National Guard units from each state with a partner nation in hopes of mutually beneficial civil-military affairs.

The 2004 Wyoming-Tunisia pairing wasn’t accidental. The SPP looks at each state’s Guard to include its size, location and mission, and then analyzes that information in order to determine which partner nation might be the best match for that particular state’s unit(s). Tunisia and Wyoming have many commonalities: climate, economy and military equipment - with both having C-130s, UH-60s and field artillery.

Wyoming Guardsmen traveled to Tunisia to implement the Humanitarian Mining Action mission, a Department of Defense and SPP-leveraged program that provides education and training in finding, clearing and securing land mines and other explosive remnants of war.

Capt. Michael McGee, Wyoming’s SPP director, said WyNG soldiers and airmen don’t conduct the actual finding and removal of explosives, nor do they build facilities or carry out engineering projects for the Tunisians.

“If our engineers construct buildings or complete projects for them, not much learning occurs. However, if we show up and advise them on how to develop specific training areas, such as digging training lanes and filling them with different kinds of material so that they can bury fake landmines and learn how to safely and effectively find and neutralize them, then they learn a great deal more. It’s all about enabling and empowering them to learn these tasks on their own so they become better at what they do,” said McGee.

“Last year when we were there developing lanes with them, it actually came up that the Tunisians were interested in training their people to clear culverts from explosive hazards. So, based on that development, this last project centered around building a culvert to use as a training lane to clear hazards,” said McGee.

The culvert work started at the end of March and ran through the beginning of April.

The Tunisians, along with engineers 2nd Lt. Eric Jacobs, Sgt. 1st Class Cindy Johnson and Sgt. 1st Class Steven Hiser, all from the the 133rd Engineer Company, based out of Laramie and Rock Springs, constructed culverts 10 feet wide, 3 feet deep and 25 meters long, training areas filled with various material such as gravel, sand and top soil.

“It’s definitely an experience. It was my first time out of the country. I knew what to expect because many of our 133rd soldiers have been to Tunisia helping with various projects,” said Jacobs, engineer platoon leader with the 133rd.

Building classrooms, constructing culverts and instructing the Tunisians on various projects isn’t the only mission of the WyNG personnel while in Tunisia.

“The work was good, but getting to know those soldiers over lunch and talking to them about their outside jobs and families - they love talking about their families and hearing about ours - that’s the best part by far. I could put them in a culvert in Wyoming with our guys and it’d be the same work as we do in Tunisia, but it’s just better being over there and building those relationships with the Tunisians,” said Jacobs.

“I really like sending people who haven’t been overseas or deployed. Once they get over there, they tell me how great it was to work with the Tunisians. I think there is some goodness to meeting another culture and realizing how they function. By the end of the two weeks, the Wyoming soldiers and Tunisian soldiers are making jokes and talking about their families and teaching each other sayings from each other’s culture. It’s just really fun to be a part of that,” McGee added.

“Although the Tunisians are enormously grateful for the training we provide, more than anything, they value the relationship aspect of us being over there. Over 13 years, we have built that trust with them. It’s cool to have built relationships like that,” said McGee.
Two Wyoming Army aviators earn rescue award

By Maj. Tom Blackburn
State Public Affairs Office

Two Wyoming Army National Guardsmen were awarded the Dustoff Association’s Rescue of the Year award during a May ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Cheyenne. The award was given for a medical evacuation mission in Afghanistan almost two years ago.

On Dec. 4, 2015, Chief Warrant Officer 2 Bryan Herget and Staff Sgt. Derrick Perkins loaded a Charlie Company, 5-159th Aviation Regiment, UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter to respond to friendly forces in southern Afghanistan.

They were part of a four-man crew that would join a second Black Hawk in responding. Herget was a pilot and Perkins a medic.

Both of the men had been deployed for less than a month and about to fly their first medevac mission on this tour. While monitoring a satellite radio, their team leader heard chatter about enemy contact with ground forces about 10 minutes away.

“We heard the chatter on the radio and anticipated we needed to go,” Perkins said.

Experience kicked in quickly for both Wyoming men. “They said ‘hey we’re calling in a nine-line’ (medevac request), so we said ‘let’s go,’” Herget added.

The medevac team operated under a ‘golden hour’ philosophy, meaning that after the initial injuries are sustained, the next hour is the most critical to the survival of the patient.

Lifting ten minutes later, the two helicopter crews relayed the number of casualties on the ground; eight casualties and a wounded dog from a handler team. During the flight, as Herget flew the helicopter, Perkins started walking himself through possible scenarios for the wounded. Unsure yet what caused the injuries he prepared for the worst.

“I was going through traumatic scenarios, going through numbers and steps ahead of landing, thinking which casualties would go where,” Perkins said.

Later it was learned the casualties had been from the detonation of an improvised explosive device and that the injuries would vary. However, three were urgent care patients, meaning their injuries were severe enough they needed to be evacuated immediately.

While inbound, the medical helicopters had trouble contacting the ground forces. Eventually information was relayed to them that the landing zone was going to be hot, meaning enemy combatants were engaged in the area by friendly troops.

“As soon as we landed, I saw a bunch of enemy combatants on the right side,” Herget said. “You could tell they were shooting.”

On the ground, Perkins immediately got off onto the ground to link with the friendlies and evaluate the casualties.

“We sent the walking wounded to our aircraft to take,” Perkins said. “There were a lot of head injuries.” The most serious wounded friendlies went onto the lead aircraft. “We took on five, a dog, and an escort from the ground forces.”

The troops on the ground continued their firefight with the enemy while the evacuation was under way. After six minutes on the landing zone, the two aircraft took off, racing for Kandahar Airfield and to a military combat hospital.

“We went directly over bad spots,” Perkins said, referring to the 35-minute flight to Kandahar. “We went over areas we get briefed by (intelligence) not to fly over.”

“The lead aircraft pulled all the power it had,” Herget said.

Touching down at the airfield, the crews helped unload the wounded soldiers and transfer them to medical personnel.

Still with a job to do, Herget and Perkins went to work resupplying their aircraft and preparing for follow-on missions. Even in the moment of the rescue, there was little time to think about what was just accomplished.

“It was the last thing you think of when you’re doing your job,” Perkins said. Later, according to medical personnel, had the aircraft arrived later, some of the soldiers could have succumbed to their injuries.

Now both men have been recognized for their commitment to their duties and courage under fire.
Lee Alley retires from Vets Commission

By Maj. Tom Blackburn
State Public Affairs Office

Lee Alley, a decorated veteran from the Vietnam War, had read and watched news reports about the Wyoming Veterans Commission and kept wondering if there could be more done to help the veterans in the state.

Rather than be a spectator, the Wheatland resident decided to be a participant. “I wanted to get on the commission with a mission in mind,” Alley said recently, after retiring as vice-chairman.

“Twelve years ago the vet community was fractured and everybody seemed to be fighting each other. The commission looked like they had trouble getting anything done.”

Having a team-oriented mindset, Alley jumped in and began talking to community and state leaders to get on the commission. Luckily for him, there was an opening in his district, but he was a bit surprised by his first meeting.

“It was very contentious, there was time spent in the hall talking to people,” he said. “I knew there was in-fighting and issues. I was very shocked at how intense it actually was.”

After that first session, Alley put focus on getting a position in which he could affect more change and put emphasis on a unified team moving forward. Within a year he earned that position and was selected as the chairman for the commission. He set upon a new mission, to ensure the commission was working for the veterans.

“We got a new director, a new direction,” he said. The new director was a retired Wyoming Army National Guard colonel, Larry Barttelbort. “We couldn’t pick a better guy for the job.”

With that new leadership team, the commission went to work providing veteran focused support.

“Very first thing I said when I took over chairman, if you don’t have something to say that is going to help a veteran, then you are out of order,” he said. “We have a stable commission, with common goals and a common direction.”

Two significant events that have occurred under Alley’s watch were the 2015 Wyoming Vietnam Veteran Reunion event, held in Casper, and the continued efforts to get a long-term healthcare facility for veterans in the state.

“Still working on that one, and the governor’s office is completely behind that,” he said, referencing the facility and the commission’s efforts. “Not sure where that is going in the future. But that is one thing I have worked on and still have not brought into reality.”

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Wyoming Veterans Commission Chairman Lee Alley addresses the crowd at the 2015 Wyoming Vietnam Veteran Reunion event, held in Casper. Alley has had a profound impact on veterans’ services in the state. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jimmy McGuire

“I’m very proud of my time on the commission,” he said. “I never would have given up my seat if I didn’t feel comfortable. The guys on the commission have done a wonderful job getting the commission where it is today.”

He may not have the official title in the vets commission anymore, but Alley still plans to work tirelessly to help veterans.

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153rd CACS: Driving technological warfare

By Capt. Megan Hoffmann
State Public Affairs Office

Throughout history, defeating a military adversary was primarily accomplished on a battlefield. We picture military members adorned with muskets and rifles, sweat pouring down their forehead, uniform garnished in blood spatters and mud streaks as they hide in a foxhole or forge toward enemy lines, evading fire.

Cyber capabilities have presumably replaced a majority of the mud and blood seen in decades past. Seemingly, the new way of warfare gives the advantage to those who can predict, control and outsmart the opponent with information technology. Virtual reality has replaced battlefield reality to some degree.

The Wyoming Air National Guard’s 153rd Command and Control Squadron eats, drinks, and sleeps the cyber challenge. Their mission is to provide mobile, survivable and endurable command, control, communication and computer capabilities and intelligence in any environment, on any given day. The unit has the capability to provide everything from resources to local and state first responders such as fuel, MREs and potable water, to supporting national-level events that would require providing highly sensitive, secure communication capabilities.

They host more than $500 million in assets and 200 personnel that comprise 29 Air Force Specialty Codes. Those assets and personnel answer to a multitude of commanders and organizations to include U.S. Northern Command, who conduct homeland defense efforts to include security support and security cooperation; and Air Force Global Strike Command, who have oversight of the 90th Missile Wing with a mission to provide combat-ready forces to conduct strategic nuclear deterrence and global strike operations.

As complex as their chain of command is, so too is the cyber environment and the skills and time it takes to train personnel in the career field.

“From the time we get a new airman in, it takes at least 24 months to get them fully trained and for them to understand what we do here,” said Chief Master Sgt. Joshua Moore, chief of cyber systems. “Not only is the initial training intense, but then you add in trying to keep pace with the technology sector because it’s always changing. It makes the day-to-day job very challenging,” said Moore.

Staff Sgt. Jake Duda, a cyber transport systems admin who has been in the cyber world since enlisting in the Air Force in 2010, has been with CACS since 2012.

Duda works in the cyber domain, which involves five areas: cyber transport, cyber surety, radio frequency transmissions, cyber systems and client systems, all of which are synergistic in providing communication and cyber capabilities.

The personnel who work this mission do everything from setting up and troubleshooting email, to communicating with satellites in order to provide support to local, state and national customers.

Duda said that the many facets of being in the command and control realm are what make the job so enjoyable, yet so challenging.

“Oddly enough, I look forward to coming into work knowing there will be problems that I will assist in troubleshooting. I enjoy the challenge,” he said.

The squadron, which stood up in 2000 as the 4th Command and Control Squadron, was initially an active duty unit. Two years later, it transitioned the mission to the guard and the unit became part of the Wyoming Air National Guard. Its personnel fully belong to the Wyoming Air National Guard, but the unit resides on F.E. Warren Air Force base, both located in Cheyenne.

“We have a great relationship with F.E. Warren. They help us out in the area of comm assets and security forces, and we do our part to be good neighbors and end-users,” said Moore, who has been a member with the unit since its inception.

CACS also owns and operates an entire fleet of military vehicles that their personnel are required to be trained and certified to operate.

“What makes this job tough is not only that we expect our comm personnel to come in and be able to keep our computers, phones and satellites up and running and troubleshoot and fix any issues, but then we also tell them they have to hold military certifications for a number of different vehicles, as well.

“They have to be able to do it all, which can become difficult to juggle,” said Moore.
Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austria-Hungarian throne, would die from gunshot wounds from Gavrilo Princep, which plunged Europe into the Great War, or, as it became known decades later, World War I.

100 years ago the United States would be pulled into the mainly European conflict. A telegram would be the impetus for our country’s entry into the war. Germany promised land to Mexico if the country allied with them if the U.S. declared war once the German submarines resumed sinking American shipping in the spring of 1917. The telegram was intercepted by the British and shared with U.S. political and military members.

President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress for a declaration of war against Germany. That was granted April 6, 1917.

Wyoming’s National Guard played a significant role when the American Expeditionary Force was organized in France in the spring and early summer that year. The state mustered a whole infantry regiment, almost 1,700 guardsmen, for service in the combat command overseeing the U.S.’s European commitment. Using Fort D.A. Russell (now F.E. Warren Air Force Base) outside Cheyenne as the assembly area, the companies of troops rode in on the vast train network in the state to the Army post.

The Third Infantry Regiment, as the Wyoming unit was named, shipped from Cheyenne to Camp Greene, North Carolina, to integrate with other Guard troops from across the country. As is common today with smaller guard units supplementing larger units’ force structure, the Wyoming troops were broken up and battalions within the regiment assigned to fill holes in other guard regiments.

Battalion A (later 1st Battalion) and the regimental headquarters, including the Wyoming commander Col. Joseph Cavender, was assigned to the 148th Field Artillery Regiment. The rest of the Wyoming regiment, two battalions, became the 116th Ammunition Train and trained to transport artillery rounds to cannons at the front, in France.

The 148th was the most combat-engaged unit with Wyoming Guard troops in World War I. After multiple relocations stateside to train in artillery tactics, the regiment, with its battalion of Wyoming men, sailed for France in January 1918. Today soldiers are flown overseas, but in the early 20th century, it was seaborne transport that got the troops to France and it was dangerous. The convoy the 148th was in lost one transport ship to an enemy submarine during the crossing, but it had no Wyoming soldiers on it.

Arriving in France in February, the 148th moved to an artillery training base to sharpen their skills on the big barrel, 155 mm howitzers they would use on German front lines. Families back home only knew where their loved ones were in France from mail soldiers sent home, as newspaper coverage was very limited. It was unlikely that Wyoming residents knew that their fellow community members went to the front lines near Chateau Thierry by the Marne River in July.

During World War I, the most common strategy was for opposing sides to fire massive amounts of artillery shells at the enemy, sometimes over multiple days, before ordering soldiers to advance. The 148th quickly was put to use to employ that strategy during Germany’s last major offensive, the Second Battle of the Marne. Wyoming’s first artillery shells fired against a European foe was on July 14, and would continue for two months.

Field Marshall Erich Ludendorff, general in charge of the German army, gave up on the offensive, and the artillery fire from units like the 148th ensured victory for the Allied cause. Germany retreated, and the Wyoming Guardsmen followed closely, heading eastward.

The unit’s final combat action was the Argonne-Meuse offensive, which involved most of the Allied front and forced Germany to seek an armistice, which was signed on Nov. 11, 1918.

The 148th spent 134 days on the front lines and had approximately 75 casualties. Through three major campaigns, the 148th fired more than 67,000 artillery rounds.

Sadly, Cavender did not survive to see his regiment return home. He died from wounds sustained in France on Sept. 5, 1918. With a new regimental commander, and the war over, the 148th moved into Germany as part of an occupation force. Political requests for the guardsmen to return stateside were successfully answered in the summer of 1919, when the Wyoming soldiers boarded a transport ship and sailed for the U.S. to receive a summer of celebration for their duty to the state and nation.
Wyoming Guard members recognized as outstanding

The following individuals were recognized for their leadership, military bearing, knowledge of military customs, community service and personal achievements during 2016 at the Outstanding Soldier and Airman of the Year banquet, Jan. 7.

Spc. Karri Davis, 67th Army Band, was named Soldier of the Year, and Staff Sgt. Cody David, 84th Civil Support Team, was selected as the Army Guard’s Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

Chief Warrant Officer 2, Brandon Adsit, A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery Brigade, was named Chief Warrant Officer of the Year, and Capt. Marcus Neiman, B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery Brigade, Army Officer of the Year.

Senior Airman Lucas Necessary, 243rd Air Traffic Control Squadron, was named Airman of the Year, and Staff Sgt. Mario Valerio, 153rd Command and Control Squadron, Air Noncommissioned Officer of the Year.

Master Sgt. Heather Schaffer, 153rd CACS, was chosen as the First Sergeant of the Year, Senior NCO of the Year was awarded to Master Sgt. Michael Caldwell, 153rd Security Forces Squadron.

1st Lt. Jeffery Castaneda, 153rd SFS, was named Air Company Grade Officer of the Year, and Staff Sgt. Aide Robles, 153rd Logistics Readyiness Squadron, was the Rising Six Performer of the Year.


Staff Sgt. Brady Sheridan, was named Recruiter of the Year for the WyANG, and Tech. Sgt. John Galvin, 153rd Airlift Wing, was named as the Unit Career Advisor of the Year.

Master Sgt. Eric Farmer, 153rd Communications Flight, was named as the Flag Heritage Team Member of the Year.

Wyoming National Guard leaders

Joint Force Headquarters


**Army Guard Headquarters** – Brig. Gen. Tammy Maas, Assistant Adjutant General – Army; Command Sgt. Maj. Harold Pafford

**Air Guard Headquarters** – Col. Paul Lyman, Assistant Adjutant General – Air; Command Chief Master Sgt. William Whipple

**Joint Staff** - Brig. Gen. Greg Porter; Master Sgt. Diane Smith

Wyoming Army National Guard

**Headquarters, HQ Detachment** – Maj. Jonathan Seelye; 1st Sgt. William Spaulding

197th Public Affairs Detachment – Capt. Terrance Bell, Command Sgt. Maj. Harold Pafford; 1st Class Frank Marquez

Medical Detachment – Col. James Massengill; Command Sgt. Maj. Harold Pafford

**Training Center** – Col. Joe Huss; Command Sgt. Maj. John Woolery; 1st Sgt. Devin Worman

**Wyoming Recruiting and Retention Battalion** – Lt. Col. Bruce Delaporte; Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Butz


213th Regiment Regional Training Institute – Col. Mike Jones; Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Laird; 1st Sgt. Timothy Smith


94th Troop Command – Lt. Col. Loren Thomson; Command Sgt. Maj. Lindsay Schmidt

HHC 94th Troop Command - Capt. Melissa Smith; Command Sgt. Maj. Lindsay Schmidt; Master Sgt. Juston Jenkins


133rd Engineer Company – Capt. Benjamin Nemeec; Command Sgt. Maj. Lindsay Schmidt; 1st Sgt. Euguene Gosselin

67th Army Band – Chief Warrant Officer 3 Rob Phillips; Command Sgt. Maj. Lindsay Schmidt; 1st Sgt. Katherine Zwiefel


Det. 53, Operational Support Airlift Cmd. – Chief Warrant Officer 5 Randy Sindelir, Command Sgt. Maj. Maj. Lindsay Schmidt


**Headquarters, HQ Battery, 115th FAB** – Capt. Cory Castle; Command Sgt. Maj. Maj. Thad Ehde; 1st Sgt. Vern Jones

148th Signal Company – Capt. Frank Derksen; 1st Sgt. Adam Ross


HHB, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery – Capt. Josh Talcott; 1st Sgt. Michael Clancy

A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery – 1st Lt. Zachary Jerry; 1st Sgt. Scott Dillon

B Battery, 2nd Battalion, 300th Field Artillery – Capt. Marcus Neiman; 1st Sgt. Spencer Jolley

920th Forward Support Company – Capt. Christopher Wilson; 1st Sgt. Robert Hanoln


**Headquarters and Service Company, 960th BSB** – Capt. Jeremy Wagner; 1st Sgt. Chris Hickman

153rd Airlift Wing

**153rd Airlift Wing** – Col. Justin Walrath; Chief Master Sgt. Darren Nogle

**153rd Comptroller Flight** – Lt. Col. Robert Baab

**153rd Maintenance Group** – Col. Pete Linde; Chief Master Sgt. Douglas Franklin

**153rd Aircraft Maintenance Squadron** – Maj. Elizabeth Evans; Chief Master Sgt. Paul Parsons; Master Sgt. Katie Baker

**153rd Maintenance Squadron** – Maj. Carl Johansen; Chief Master Sgt. John Moritz; Chief Master Sgt. Scott Wagner; Master Sgt. David Banner

**153rd Maintenance Operations Flight** – vacant

**153rd Medical Group** – Col. Daniel Perala; Chief Master Sgt. Jeremy Nash

**153rd Mission Support Group** – Lt. Col. Michelle Mulberry; Chief Master Sgt. Alan Stoinski; Master Sgt. Thor Rasmussen

**153rd Communications Flight** – Lt. Col. Michael Carden

**153rd Security Forces Squadron** – Maj. Wendy Allison; Chief Master Sgt. Doug Rhodes; Master Sgt. David Sutter

**153rd Logistics Readiness Squadron** – Lt. Col. Bret Trippel; Chief Master Sgt. Exie Brown; Master Sgt. Jerry Mears

**153rd Force Support Squadron** – Maj. Conrad Evans; Chief Master Sgt. Charles Tarter

**153rd Command and Control Squadron** – Lt. Col. Christopher Howard; Senior Master Sgt. Joshua Moore; Chief Master Sgt. Travis Opsal; Master Sgt. Richard Halverson

**153rd Civil Engineer Squadron** – Maj. Gabriel Herrera; Chief Master Sgt. Lee Horstman; Chief Master Sgt. Erik Smith

**153rd Operations Group** – Lt. Col. Jeremy Schaaf (interim); Chief Master Sgt. Raymond Arnold

**187th Airlift Squadron** – Lt. Col. Todd Davis

**153rd Operations Support Squadron** – Lt. Col. Toshio Sameshima; Chief Master Sgt. Jack Goeken

**187th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron** – Lt. Col. Rickard Cummings; Chief Master Sgt. Theresa Sheehen; Master Sgt. Tiffany Sinner

**243rd Air Traffic Control Squadron** – Lt. Col. Michael Coyle; Chief Master Sgt. Jon Perkins
Wyoming Military Department State Agency Leaders

**Wyoming Veterans Commission** - Director Steve Kravitsky

**Starbase Academy** - Director Germaletta Brown

**Wyoming Cowboy Challenge Academy** - Director Eric Brooks

**Wyoming Civil Air Patrol** - Col. Jeff Johnson