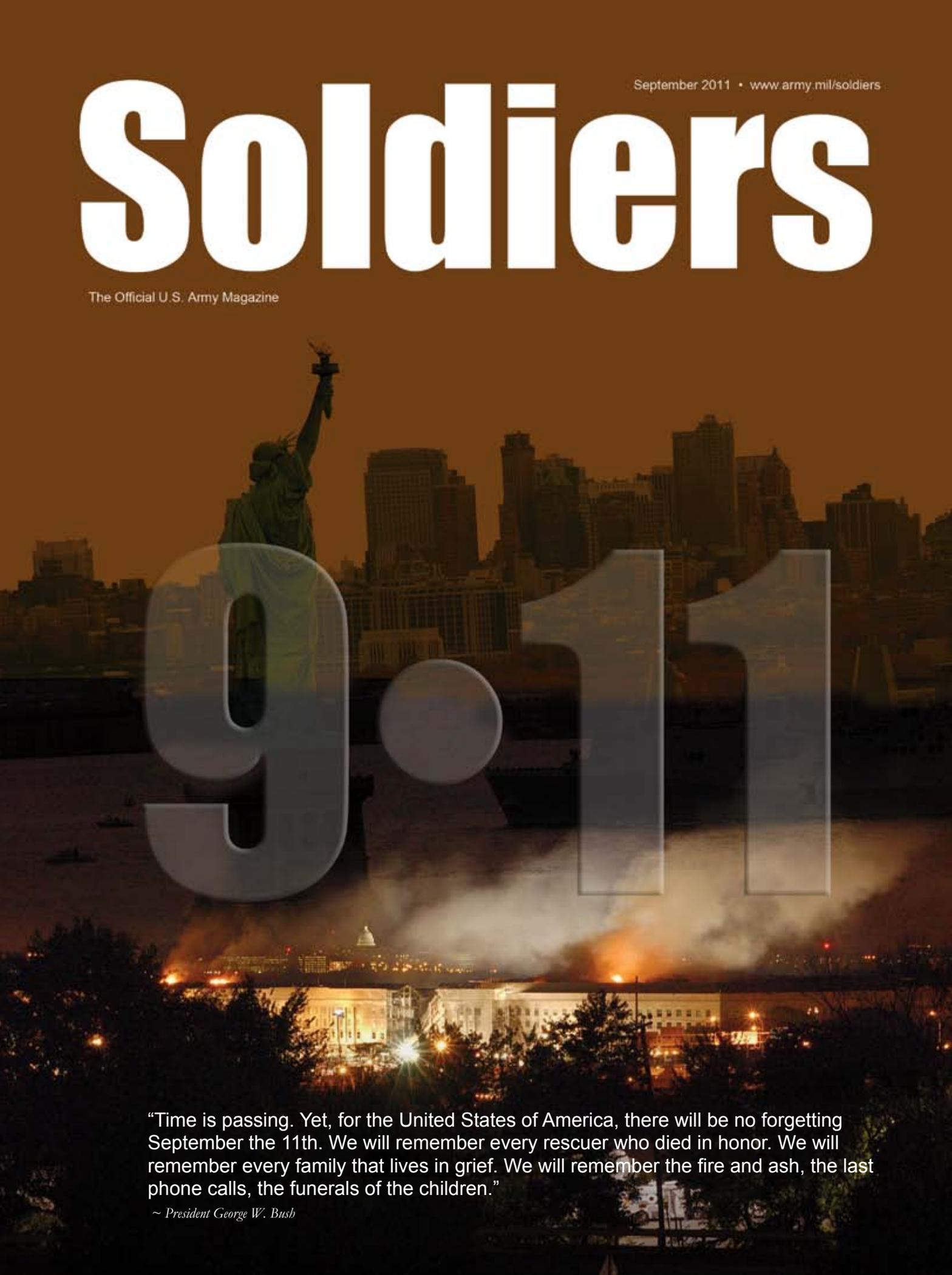


September 2011 • [www.army.mil/soldiers](http://www.army.mil/soldiers)

# Soldiers

The Official U.S. Army Magazine



9.11

“Time is passing. Yet, for the United States of America, there will be no forgetting September the 11th. We will remember every rescuer who died in honor. We will remember every family that lives in grief. We will remember the fire and ash, the last phone calls, the funerals of the children.”

~ *President George W. Bush*

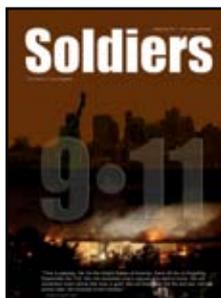


# Soldiers

September 2011 • VOLUME 66, NO. 9



Soldiers rush to help victims moments after a hijacked airplane crashed into the Pentagon, Sept. 11, 2001. (Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Jason Ingersoll)



[ On the Cover ]

Remembering 9/11. Cover montage by Peggy Frierson.

[ Coming Next Month ]

October 2011 - Natick Soldiers Systems Center: Equipping Soldiers, head to toe.



Soldiers from the The Old Guard lower a 28-by-30-foot flag from the west wall of the Pentagon. The flag was hung on the side of the Pentagon shortly after the 9/11 attack. (Photo by Angela M. Reitz)

September 2011

# Contents

## Features

- 4 **Iraq and Afghanistan timelines**  
A decade of photographs and milestones of an Army and nation at war.
- 16 **Soldiers born from ground zero ashes**  
First responders in New York tell their stories of 9/11 and the aftermath.
- 28 **'Capital Guardians' respond to needs of the nation**  
On 9/11, the Guard realized they could be called upon at any time to use their warfighting skills.
- 34 **9/11 up close and personal**  
Soldiers relate the impact of 9/11 on their lives and their service.
- 40 **Providing professional care of GTMO detainees**  
The mission of "Vigilant Warriors" is one of the most challenging the Army offers.
- 43 **How to save a life**  
A Soldier recounts her journey back from the brink of suicide.



## In every issue

- 26 **Army News**



# DEFENSE MEDIA ACTIVITY ARMY PRODUCTION

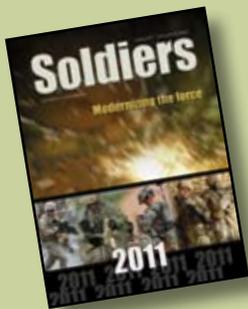
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The October issue of Soldiers will be the final monthly print issue. To access future content, visit [www.army.mil/soldiers](http://www.army.mil/soldiers). Fan Soldiers on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/SoldiersMag](http://www.facebook.com/SoldiersMag), or follow on Twitter for updates and information about our transition from print to web.

## Soldiers The Official U.S. Army Magazine

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September 1, 2011

Dear readers,

THIS month's issue of Soldiers marks the 10th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on our nation.

In this issue, you'll read about a few of the people who were in New York and at the Pentagon on that fateful day and the days following the attacks: A New York City firefighter and a cop who were on site at the twin towers and witnessed them collapse; a National Guard chaplain who was part of the recovery team at the Pentagon and a helicopter pilot who flew missions to and from the Pentagon.

You'll read other personal stories, written by people who were in New York and in or near the Pentagon that fall morning, as well as a timeline highlighting a sampling of the key events that have transpired in Afghanistan and Iraq in the last decade, both military and political.

I hope that this issue serves as a tribute to all those people lost, both on that day and in the years of war since then, as well as all those who answered the nation's call to duty in various ways. On behalf of everyone at Soldiers magazine, I extend my deepest gratitude to all the Soldiers, family members, veterans, retirees, civilians and contractors who have sacrificed so much for so long, yet asked for nothing in return. The debt we owe you will never be repaid.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carrie L. McLeroy".

Carrie L. McLeroy  
Editor in chief



# AFGHANISTAN IN A



## 2001

**Sept. 9**—Ahmad Shah Masood, a legendary guerilla fighter and leader of the primary opposition to the Taliban, is assassinated—the assassins posed as journalists. The event exposes the Taliban’s protection of Osama bin Laden, and serves to strengthen Taliban unity against the West.

**Sept. 11**—Al-Qaida hijackers commandeer four passenger planes from U.S. airports. Three of the planes are flown into the Pentagon in Washington and the World Trade Center towers in New York City. The buildings, symbols of U.S. economic and global influence, become icons of the war on terrorism. The fourth plane crashes into a Pennsylvania field after passengers storm the cockpit, refusing to allow the terrorists to crash into another target. The devastation in New York and Washington becomes the catalyst for the war on terrorism.

**October**—Osama bin Laden has been identified as being responsible for orchestrating the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States. After its leaders refuse to turn over Osama bin Laden, Operation Enduring Freedom is launched, with U.S. and British forces launching air strikes into Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Australia, Germany and France commit to military assistance.

**November**—Coalition forces march into Kabul days after seizing the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif.

*Boots on the ground: 2,000; 11 total U.S. deaths in Afghanistan for the year\**

**T**HE U.S. Army Center of Military History provided *Soldiers* magazine with a compilation of data, illustrating some of the key events that have occurred in Afghanistan and Iraq over the past 10 years. This compilation is not meant to be all-inclusive. It lists a sampling of events and figures which are meant to illustrate some of the efforts taken in last decade. The data is from open source materials, which may be found listed at the end of each section. All data was compiled by the U.S. Army Center of Military History. ♦

*\*Figures are through May 31, 2011. Data is from the Defense Manpower Data Center.*

*\*\*Boots on the ground data, where listed, is from “Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues” by Amy Belasco.*

## 2002

**May**—The UN Security Council extends International Security Force-Afghanistan until December 2002. The coalition force is a NATO-led contingent established to provide stability and security within Afghanistan.

**July**—Afghan Vice President Haji Abdul Qadir is assassinated in Kabul.

**September**—Afghan President Hamid Karzai survives an assassination attempt in Kandahar.

*49 total U.S. deaths for the year\**

# DECADE



Soldiers of Company A, 2nd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Division, 10th Mountain Division, prepare to board a CH-47 Chinook helicopter that will return them to Kandahar Army Air Field, Sept. 4, 2003, after a search for Taliban and weapon caches in Daychopan Province, Afghanistan, during Operation Mountain Viper. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Kyle Davis)



## 2003

**August**—NATO assumes control of security in Kabul, marking the first time in its history it has assumed control of a city outside of Europe.

*Boots on the ground: 4,100; 45 total U.S. deaths for the year\**

2nd Lt. Alexis Shilley, from the 339th Combat Support Hospital, Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, tries to learn some Farsi during a medical contingency assistance program held at the village of Sayad, Nov. 3, 2002. (Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. Steve Faulisi)

## 2004

**January**—A *Loya Jirga* (grand assembly) adopts a new constitution. The act provides for a stronger presidency.

**March**—Afghanistan negotiates a deal to receive \$8.2 billion in aid over three years. Abuses of prisoners at the Bagram Detention Center are publicized. The resulting loss of confidence and trust in U.S. forces creates public dissension at home and in Afghanistan.

**October/November**—With high voter turnout and peaceful polling, Hamid Karzai wins the Afghanistan presidential election with 55 percent of the vote.

*Boots on the ground: 9,800; 52 total U.S. deaths for the year\**

## 2005

**September**—Afghanistan's first parliamentary and provincial elections are held. This marks the first time in more than 30 years for such voting.

**December**—The newly elected Afghan parliament conducts its first session.

*Boots on the ground: 18,700; 98 total U.S. deaths for the year\**



Staff Sgt. Jen Brooks, with the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team, gives candy to students from the Abdul Karzai Middle School in Khandahar, Afghanistan, Sept. 14, 2004. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Joseph P. Collins Jr.)

## 2006

**February**—International donors meeting in London pledge more than \$10 billion in reconstruction aid through 2010.

**May/June**—Violent anti-U.S. protests erupt after a U.S. military vehicle crashes into several people, killing them. Scores of Afghans are killed in battles between Taliban fighters and Afghan/coalition forces.

**July**—NATO troops assume the lead on military operations conducted in southern Afghanistan. Fierce fighting erupts in Taliban strongholds as the Afghan government tries to extend its influence.

**October**—NATO assumes full security responsibility for Afghanistan.

**December**—The U.S. Air Force airdrops 3.5 million pounds of materiel to locations throughout the country.

*Boots on the ground: 20,300; 98 total U.S. deaths for the year\**



A Soldier crosses a stream in Paktika province, Afghanistan during an operation against the Taliban, March 30, 2007. The Soldier is assigned to Company C, 2nd Battalion, 87th Infantry Regiment. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Justin Holley)



A Special Forces team medic with Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force - Afghanistan treats another U.S. Soldier for shrapnel wounds he received from a rocket-propelled grenade explosion while battling Taliban in the Sangin District, April 10, 2007. The Soldier continued fighting minutes after he was treated. (Photo by Spc. Daniel Love)

## 2007

**March**—Pakistan claims to have captured Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, reportedly the third most senior member of the Taliban Leadership Council. Heavy fighting commences on Helmand Province as NATO and Afghan forces launch the largest operation to date in the south. The Shinwar massacre occurs.

**May**—Mullah Dadullah, the Taliban's most senior military commander, is killed in battles with U.S. and Afghan forces. Afghan and Pakistani troops clash in a series of border incidents, marking the worst violence in decades.

**July**—The Taliban kidnaps a group of South Korean Christians. Two are murdered, with the remaining hostages freed over several weeks.

**August**—UN reports indicate that opium production has soared to record highs.

**December**—Afghan officials accuse two senior European Union and UN envoys of making contact with the Taliban. The pair is expelled from the country. 8.12 million pounds of materiel is airdropped over the year, supporting operations within the region.

*Boots on the ground: 26,000; 117 total U.S. deaths for the year\**

## 2008

**February**—Prince Harry is pulled out of Afghanistan after his location is revealed. He had served for 10 weeks in Helmand Province.

**June**—The Taliban orchestrates enormous jailbreaks, releasing 800-plus insurgents. The British defense secretary announces UK troop numbers will exceed 8,000 in the spring of 2009, its highest total to date.

**July**—A suicide bomber attacks the Indian Embassy in Kabul, killing 50 people. Karzai blames Pakistani Intelligence, who deny participation.

**September**—President George W. Bush authorizes an additional 4,500 troops for operations in Afghanistan.

**October**—Germany expands Afghanistan troop presence from 1,000 to 4,500.

**November**—Taliban leaders reject peace talks with Karzai, refusing to negotiate until foreign troops leave.

**December**—Karzai and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari agree to joint operations to fight militants in the Afghan/Pakistan border regions. 16.57 million pounds of materiel is airdropped to various locations in support of operations in 2008.

*Boots on the ground: 27,000; 155 total U.S. deaths for the year\**

## 2009

**February**—Up to 20 NATO countries pledge to increase military and other commitments after the U.S. announces plans to add 17,000 additional troops.

**March**—President Barack Obama reveals a new strategy for 4,000 more troops to train Afghan army and police forces.

**May**—General Stanley McCrystal replaces Gen. David McKiernan. The largest drug seizure ever in Helmand Province nets 60 insurgents and more than 100 tons of drugs.

**August**—Presidential elections are held, but tainted by Taliban attacks at polling centers, low turnout and accusations of fraud.

**November**—After Abdullah Abdullah withdraws from the election, Karzai wins with 55 percent of the votes and is sworn in for a second term.

**December**—Obama boosts U.S. troop strength to 100,000. Seven CIA agents are killed in an al-Qaida suicide attack in Khost. In 2009, 32.26 million pounds of materiel is air dropped to personnel conducting operations in austere locations.

*311 total U.S. deaths for the year\**



(Below) Sgt. Matthew Roberts and fellow Soldiers of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, patrol Afghanistan's Korengal Valley during the early-morning hours of Aug. 13, 2009. (Photo by Sgt. Matthew Moeller)

## 2010

**January**—Parliament rejects three-fourths of Karzai's 24 cabinet nominations.

**February**—Operations in Helmand Province take place to establish government control in the south of that area.

**July**—Wikileaks releases thousands of classified U.S. military documents related to Afghanistan. Karzai's timetable for security control by 2014 is endorsed. General David Petraeus assumes command of U.S. and NATO International Security Assistance forces. There are 65 U.S. casualties in July. This marks the highest single month of casualties during the war in Afghanistan.

**August**—30,000 additional U.S. troops arrive in country. The Pentagon releases a statement expecting increased casualties.

**November**—NATO agrees to hand over control of security to Afghan forces by the end of 2014.

**December**—Airmen supporting deployed airdrop operations in Afghanistan airdrop a record 60.4 million pounds of cargo to austere locations throughout the country.

*499 total U.S. deaths for the year\**



# 2011

**January**—U.S. forces suffer 25 casualties, the lowest monthly total since April 2010. Karzai visits Russia to discuss cooperation.

**March/April**—A cache sweep intended to disrupt a Taliban spring offensive in southeast Afghanistan results in the deaths of 130 insurgents and six U.S. Soldiers.

**May**—Osama bin Laden is killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan, by U.S. Special Forces. His body is buried at sea.

**June 6**—The White House issues a statement that the U.S. will soon reduce troop levels by 15,000. Petraeus is confirmed as the new CIA chief. Marine Gen. John Allen will be his replacement as commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan.

*155 total U.S. deaths for the year\**



(Above) Escorted by dozens of children, Sgt. 1st Class Jeff Cesaitis exits the site of a future park in Qalat, Afghanistan, during a site visit, Oct. 28, 2010. Cesaitis was assigned to Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul's security force. (Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Brian Ferguson)



## Afghanistan timeline links/Web references

- <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/CASUALTY/castop.htm>
- <http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/afghanistan/conflict-profile/conflict-timeline/?gclid=CKeYirC3lakCFYlypAod-UzUdQ>
- <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/12/01/ap/government/main5850224.shtml>
- <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/us-war-afghanistan/p20018?gclid=CNSy4s-4lakCFYlypAod-UzUdQ>
- <http://www.pbs.org/now/shows/428/afghanistan-timeline.html>
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War\\_in\\_Afghanistan\\_\(2001%E2%80%93present\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/War_in_Afghanistan_(2001%E2%80%93present))
- <http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2010/feb/13/afghanistan-war-timeline/>
- [http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33210358/ns/world\\_news-south\\_and\\_central\\_asia/t/us-war-afghanistan/](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/33210358/ns/world_news-south_and_central_asia/t/us-war-afghanistan/)
- <http://www.timelineindex.com/content/view/170>
- [http://www.google.com/#q=timeline+of+afghan+war&hl=en&sa=X&tbs=tl:1,tll:2000,tlh:2019&prmd=ivnsu&ei=GpbmTfjJKoTCvgPJptHjCg&ved=0C DQYyQEoCg&bav=on.2,or.r\\_gc.r\\_pw.&fp=b293108ef6c36611&biw=997&bih=470](http://www.google.com/#q=timeline+of+afghan+war&hl=en&sa=X&tbs=tl:1,tll:2000,tlh:2019&prmd=ivnsu&ei=GpbmTfjJKoTCvgPJptHjCg&ved=0C DQYyQEoCg&bav=on.2,or.r_gc.r_pw.&fp=b293108ef6c36611&biw=997&bih=470)
- <http://warchronicle.com/afghanistan/news/timeline.htm>



# IRAQ IN



## 2001

**September**—Following attacks on the twin towers and the Pentagon, President George W. Bush declares a “war on terror,” citing Iraq as a significant player in an “axis of evil.” Evidence suggests that one of the attackers was at a Salman Pak training facility in Iraq, and that he had contact with an Iraqi official in the Czech Republic; the meeting is later verified. Iraqi defectors claim that Mohammed Atta was trained to fly a Boeing 707 at Salman Pak.

**Sept. 20**—Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden are potentially tied as having a fruitful marriage of convenience. British and U.S. planes bomb missile batteries in southern Iraq. Iraq denies connection with the Sept. 11 attacks.



An Iraqi national fills out a job application with the assistance of a civil affairs Soldier in downtown Baghdad, April 21, 2003. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Kevin P. Bell)

## 2002

**January**—Bush addresses a UN special session and refers to Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an “axis of evil.” He states the regimes “pose a growing danger.”

**March**—UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is unable to influence Iraqi representatives to allow UN weapons inspectors to return.

**September**—Bush calls for unilateral action against Iraq. Iraq announces it will allow inspectors to return, but recants the offer, specifying no new U.S. sanctions as a condition of acceptance.

**November**—UN Security Council Resolution 1441 calls for Iraq to cooperate with UN inspection teams.

# A DECADE



Soldiers with Company C, 2nd Battalion, 108th Infantry Regiment, New York National Guard, conduct a cordon and search in the town of Alalaa, Iraq, Aug. 24, 2004. (Photo by Sgt. April L. Johnson)

## 2003

**January**—Hans Blix and the International Atomic Energy Commission submit reports on Iraq weapons of mass destruction.

**March**—Arab summit calls for Iraq to disarm, without calling for regime change. The U.S. bombs Baghdad.

**April**—U.S. troops seize control of Baghdad.

**May**—Bush announces that the Iraq War is over.

**July**—Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay, are killed in a gun battle with U.S. forces.

**August**—Evidence suggests that intelligence estimates were increased to indicate Iraq was stockpiling WMD. Ali Hassan al-Majid, also known as "Chemical Ali," is captured. He does not divulge any new WMD information.

**October**—A UN Security Council Resolution recognizes the U.S.-endorsed provisional Iraqi government. The resolution authorizes UN aid under U.S. oversight, but calls for a timetable for Iraqi self-governance.

**December**—U.S. forces capture Saddam Hussein in his hometown of Tikrit.

*Boots on the ground: 93,900; 486 total U.S. deaths for the year\**



A Soldier with Company A, 4th Engineers, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, pulls security from his Humvee near Balad, Iraq, Sept. 23, 2003. (Photo by Sgt. Jack Morse)

## 2004

**March**—Terror attacks occur in Karbala and Baghdad during Ashura activities. Iraq's interim government submits an interim, U.S.-approved constitution.

**April**—Moqtada al-Sadr, a radical Shia leader, establishes his Mehdi army. The insurgent force fortifies itself in Najaf and Fallujah.

**June**—UN Security Council Resolution 1546 recognizes the interim Iraqi government and calls on the UN to support it. The U.S. hands over sovereignty to the interim government, headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

**August**—Coalition forces attack the holy city of Najaf to expel al-Sadr and his Mehdi army; Ayatollah Ali Sistani brokers a peace deal. Photo evidence emerges of U.S. abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Gharib. U.S. contractors are killed in Najaf, their bodies desecrated.

**November**—U.S., coalition and Iraqi forces attack rebel forces—led by al-Qaeda in Iraq-member Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi—in Fallujah. Reports suggest hundreds of civilians are killed and mosques and hospitals are damaged.

*Boots on the ground: 108,400; 846 total U.S. deaths for the year\**

# 2005

**January**—8 million people participate in Iraq’s elections for a Transitional National Authority.

**April**—Parliament elects Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani as president. Shia Ibrahim Jaafari is named prime minister. The Sunni Awakening movement (also known as the Sons of Iraq program) forms coalitions that unite to maintain security in their communities. The movement starts among Sunni tribes in Anbar Province to become an ad-hoc nationwide armed force in less than a year.

**May**—Continued violence (car bombings, shootings and bomb explosions) increases Iraqi civilian deaths to almost double those in April.

**October**—Voters approve a new constitution aimed at creating an Islamic Federal Democracy.

**November**—The Abu Mahals, a tribe located near the Syrian border, forms an alliance with the U.S. to receive weapons and security training, marking the beginnings of the Anbar Awakening.

*Boots on the ground: 161,200; 844 total U.S. deaths for the year\**



# 2006

**January**—United Iraqi Alliance, a Shia-led party, wins the December elections; however, it fails to gain an absolute majority.

**February**—Sectarian violence continues to permeate Iraq. A bomb attack in Samarra targets a Shia shrine, and the resulting clashes lead to hundreds of deaths.

**May/June**—Sectarian violence rages; civilian deaths average more than 100 per day. Al-Qaida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is killed by an air strike.

**December**—The U.S. Congress-appointed Iraq Study Group describes the situation in the country as “grave and deteriorating.” Saddam Hussein is executed.

*Boots on the ground: 155,100; 820 total U.S. deaths for the year\**

Spc. Kon Im, a medic, treats Staff Sgt. Alec Rubenstein. Rubenstein was injured by a fragment of metal during a cordon and search operation in Baquba, Iraq, April 2, 2007. (Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Stacy L. Pearsall)



# 2007

**January**—Bush announces a new Iraq strategy. The “surge” calls for 21,500 Soldiers and Marines to supplement the current forces in Iraq. Other announcements include job programs for Iraqis, more reconstruction proposals and \$1.2 billion in aid.

**May**—144 Iraqi parliamentary lawmakers sign on to a legislative petition calling on the United States to set a timetable for withdrawal.

**June**—The Iraqi Parliament votes 85 to 59 to require the Iraqi government to consult with Parliament before requesting additional extensions of the UN Security Council mandate for coalition operations in Iraq.

**September**—The Iraqi government revokes the license of U.S. security firm Blackwater USA after the killing of eight civilians, including a woman and an infant.

*Boots on the ground: 131,500; 903 total U.S. deaths for the year\**



Iraqi children in Bayji follow 1st Sgt. Michael Green, who is with 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment, 82nd Airborne Division, Sept. 16, 2006. (Photo by Spc. Joshua R. Ford)



Soldiers from the 136th Infantry Regiment prepare to search a building in Al Naumyah, Al Anbar Province, Iraq, during Operation Sledgehammer, Dec. 15, 2006. (Photo by Marine Corps Sgt. Cooper Evans)

## 2008

**2008**—Now in its fifth year, the war costs approximately \$12 billion a month.

**March**—Violence in Iraq is reportedly curtailed by 40 to 80 percent, according to a Pentagon report.

**September**—Bush, speaking on the fifth anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom, states that the war in Iraq has been “longer and harder and more costly than we anticipated,” and that there is “still hard work to be done.” But he said that the surge was working and had “opened the door to a major strategic victory in the broader war on terror.”

**November**—The U.S. signs a Status of Forces Agreement with Iraq. The agreement calls for all U.S. forces to be out of Iraqi cities by the end of 2009, and out of the country by 2011.

**December**—The overall level of violence in the country drops 80 percent since the surge began in January 2007, and the country’s murder rate drops to pre-war levels.

*Boots on the ground: 160,200; 313 total U.S. deaths for the year\**



Soldiers in M1 Abrams tanks from the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment patrol Tall Afar, Iraq, Feb. 3, 2005. (Photo by Air Force Staff Sgt. Aaron Allmon)



An Iraqi Army tanker drives an M1A1 Abrams tank under the instruction of Soldiers from Company C, 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Advise and Assist Brigade, 1st Infantry Division, United States Division-Center, Jan. 16, 2011, at Camp Taji. (Photo by Sgt. Chad Menegay)



An Iraqi boy relaxes with Soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division as they watch a soccer game in eastern Baghdad, April 18, 2009. The Soldiers were distributing soccer balls donated in memory of a fallen U.S. Soldier, Pfc. Nick Madaras. (Photo by Staff Sgt. James Selesnick)

## 2009

**January**—The United States officially hands over security responsibility of the Green Zone to Iraqi security forces.

**Jan. 31**—Iraq provincial elections are held. Voter turnout fails to meet expectations and is the lowest on record in Iraq. Some provincial candidates and those close to them face political assassinations and attempted assassinations; there is also other violence related to the elections.

**April**—Protesters march against U.S. occupation on the sixth anniversary of the fall of Baghdad to coalition forces. The UK ends combat operations.

**August**—The last brigade combat team leaves Iraq. This marks a significant decrease in boots on the ground, as well as improved Iraqi security force proficiency. Remaining troops are termed “Advisory and Assistance Brigades.”

**December**—The Iraqi Ministry of Oil awards contracts to international oil companies.

*Boots on the ground: 161,200; 148 total U.S. deaths for the year\**

# 2010

**April**—U.S. and Iraqi forces kill Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, in a joint American-Iraqi operation near Tikrit.

**Aug. 31**—“The United States has paid a huge price to put the future of Iraq in the hands of its people. We have sent our young men and women to make enormous sacrifices in Iraq, and spent vast resources abroad at a time of tight budgets at home. We have persevered because of a belief we share with the Iraqi people—a belief that out of the ashes of war, a new beginning could be born in this cradle of civilization. Through this remarkable chapter in the history of the United States and Iraq, we have met our responsibility. Now, it is time to turn the page.”

—President Barack Obama’s address on Iraq

**Sept. 1**—The transition to Operation New Dawn marks the official end to Operation Iraqi Freedom and U.S. combat operations in Iraq. The remaining 50,000 U.S. servicemembers serving in Iraq conduct stability operations, focusing on advising, assisting and training Iraqi security forces.

**Dec. 15**—The UN lifts sanctions on Iraq first imposed during the Saddam Hussein administration.

*48 total U.S. deaths for the year\**

## Iraq timeline links/Web references

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# 2011

**January**—Sons of Iraq membership totals 51,900; their role in building security has been significant.



Staff Sgt. Richard Thomas congratulates an Iraqi soldier graduating from an equipment training course on Joint Security Station Al Rashid in Baghdad, Oct. 7, 2010. Thomas, who helped instruct the Iraqi soldiers, is an armor crewman assigned to 3rd Battalion, 69th Armor Regiment, 1st Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division. (Photo by Sgt. Mary S. Katzenberger)

**Editor’s Note:** *The photo credits for all Iraq/Afghanistan timeline images include the ranks of the photographer at the time the image was taken, not their current ranks.*

# Remembering

## Soldiers born from ground zero ASHES

Story by Elizabeth M. Collins

SEPTEMBER 11, 2001 dawned as a perfect late summer day with beautiful weather and a clear blue sky. It was the kind of day almost anyone would be happy to spend outdoors—anyone, that is, but now-New York National Guard Capt. Thor Johannessen.

At the time, he was an 11-year veteran of the New York City Fire Department, assigned to its elite Special Operations Command. His job was to rescue other firefighters, as well

as victims of building collapses and airplane accidents. He'd spent the summer helping train new firefighters and all he wanted was to get back to work at Rescue Company 1. He didn't want to trek all the way out to the Bronx and waste two days in a mandatory scuba diving refresher course.

But as he put on his scuba gear and prepared to dive into the Long Island Sound from Fort Schuyler with a clear view of the lower Manhattan skyline, he had no idea that his wish would

come horrifically true, that he, New York and the United States were on a collision course with history.

He didn't know that 19 Muslim terrorists had just hijacked four cross-country flights, and that two were headed for one of his city's most visible landmarks, the World Trade Center's twin towers, or that by nightfall, some 3,000 Americans would be dead—including 11 firefighters from his own 27-officer company.

Like any first responder, Johan-



New York National Guard  
Capt. Thor Johannessen.  
(Photo courtesy of Capt. Thor  
Johannessen)

# 9/11

“This isn’t good what’s going on down there and a lot of people are going to die.”

New York National Guard



(Above) Soldiers from the New York National Guard’s “Fighting” 69th Infantry Division, which is based in midtown Manhattan, help with the response to 9/11 at the World Trade Center in New York City after terrorists crashed two airplanes into the twin towers.

(Far left) Soldiers from the New York City-based 69th Infantry Division, New York National Guard, help guard the streets surrounding the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan after terrorists hijacked two airplanes and crashed them into the center’s twin towers, Sept. 11, 2001. The 69th Inf. Div. was one of the first military units to respond to the attack.

nessen had known for years that New York City was a terror target. But a catastrophic attack in Manhattan was almost unimaginable—until one of Johannessen’s classmates, a fellow officer from Rescue 1, glanced across the water shortly after 8:46 a.m., the moment the first plane hit the North Tower.

“Holy cow,” he said, “Look at the chop at the Trade Center,” a chop being a fire. I turned around and couldn’t believe the amount of fire that was in that first building,” Johannessen remembered. The second plane crashed

into the South Tower at 9:03 a.m., and they were recalled from training.

Across town in northern Manhattan, police Detective Lou Delli-Pizzi—a good buddy of Johannessen’s from the NYANG, where he too is a captain—was on the trail of a robbery suspect. He had been on duty since the previous afternoon, so when his wife called to tell him about the Trade Center, Delli-Pizzi assumed it had been a small Cessna-like plane, but he turned on his police radio and then a commercial station anyway.

“After awhile...you hear different tones of people’s voices over the police or Army radio, and you can kind of gauge the severity of the situation,” he said. “I could hear that it was a pretty significant incident. Then I remember turning on the local news radio and there was a news chopper pilot...talking about a commercial jet. I remember another plane hitting the towers and...at first I thought it was an instant replay.” As he spotted clouds of smoke billowing from downtown, he wanted to believe that



New York National Guard Soldiers from the 69th Infantry Division and New York City firefighters band together to remove rubble from ground zero at the World Trade Center in downtown Manhattan following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Wearing a gas mask, a New York National Guard Soldier from the "Fighting" 69th Infantry Division pauses amid the rubble at ground zero.



the disaster was the result of some kind of navigational error or equipment failure.

Like Johannessen, Delli-Pizzi was almost immediately recalled. The 13-year police veteran was disturbed by the reluctance of some of his fellow cops to respond, but more so by the concern on the faces of senior, 40-year veterans in his squad. These men were unflappable and even they were shaken.

"I remember being in the car with my buddy going from scuba training down there, thinking—these things aren't easy to admit to yourself—I don't want any part of this," Johannessen echoed. "This isn't good what's going on down there and a lot of people are going to die.' Members of Rescue 1 would be right in the front. If there were people to be rescued, they'd be rescuing them. If firemen

Today, the World Trade Center is a bustling construction site and a symbol of rebirth from the devastation of the 2001 terrorist attacks. (Photo by Lt. Col. Paul Fanning)



needed help, they'd be there. That's what I was thinking: 'If my guys need help, who's going to be there to help them?'"

Together with another officer who was called in from home, the two firefighters made it to ground zero just as the South Tower began to collapse at 9:59 a.m., finding a scene of overwhelming destruction. They were shocked. They thought they had seen everything, but nothing could have prepared them for this. Two hundred firefighters were already missing.

"It was really like a war scene off a movie set with fire trucks flipped over and on fire," Johannessen said. "There was a big natural gas leak—you could smell gas in the air. It was a horror."

Delli-Pizzi arrived between the two collapses (the North Tower collapsed at 10:28 a.m.), and described the scene as "nuclear fallout." The cloud of smoke and debris was "intense," and thousands of New Yorkers were fleeing on foot. Especially strange, he thought, were all the shoes that littered the site. "I don't know if people just kind of ran out of their dress shoes or discarded their shoes as they were running. It's an odd memory."

The fires burned for about three months, and both Delli-Pizzi and Johannessen were part of rescue efforts that eventually turned to the gruesome and heartbreaking task of recovery. Johannessen explained that the destruction was so complete, all that remained was twisted steel and concrete. They never found a desk, a telephone or a computer. "But then in the middle of all that we might find somebody's wallet. The further we dug in this pulverized concrete and debris, we found people."

Between them, Johannessen and Delli-Pizzi found only one person alive in the wreckage: a firefighter and Vietnam vet Johannessen had known for years.

He "had been outside...extinguishing car fires and the building came down around him," Johannessen remembered. "I didn't recognize him, even when he told me his name. He'd had his teeth knocked out and I



Now-New York City Fire Department Lt. Thor Johannessen (far left) poses with fellow firefighters from Special Operations Company Rescue 1 in their truck. Rescue 1 is responsible for rescuing other firefighters, as well as victims of major disasters, such as a plane crash or a train derailment. The company lost 11 of its 27 members on 9/11, including the company commander and senior lieutenant, after the World Trade Center's North Tower collapsed. Johannessen later joined the New York National Guard, where he is a captain, and has used his search and rescue experience to help victims of the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

couldn't understand him. I'd known this guy for 10 years and I didn't know who he was. We were able to get him out somehow. (He) was the only person who I was involved in rescuing. I'm glad I had that one experience."

Just as a Soldier goes into battle for the men on his left and right, he explained, he was able to face ground zero almost every day for about six months for his fallen teammates and their families. As long as they were there, that was where he belonged.

"It was my job," agreed Delli-Pizzi, who was assigned to ground zero for weeks. "It was my mission."

Both he and Johannessen have a hard time remembering everything they saw and felt, and Johannessen added that if he never returns to ground zero, it will be too soon. Delli-Pizzi has visited the site a few times, and he sees the skyline every day on his commute. "It's like seeing somebody smile with a tooth missing," he explained. It's something that will always be with them.

Their regular missions didn't stop because of the Sept. 11 response. Someone still needed to fight crime, direct traffic and put out fires. It was, to Delli-Pizzi's recollection, the first

time the NYPD and the NYFD ever needed assistance. Police officers and firefighters from New Jersey, Long Island, Florida, Chicago and Los Angeles came to their aid. Even retired firefighters streamed into New York to work at ground zero.

So did the Army.

"You never saw any type of military in New York City," Delli-Pizzi said. "I can remember on that day hearing military aircraft flying relatively low to the ground. Later that afternoon, I could see the camouflaged guys of... the 69th Infantry (Division)...the first military unit to respond to the attacks. I remember saying to myself, 'Here I am in the greatest, biggest police department in the world, and the Army's got our back. I've got to get with these guys.'"

Feeling immensely lucky that no one from his immediate squad or his family was killed on 9/11, Delli-Pizzi knew he had to give something back. At the same time, Johannessen had always wanted to follow in the footsteps of his grandfather and namesake, who had fought with the 10th Mountain Division during World War II. He had just never been "properly motivated" until that day.



Now-Capt. Lou Delli-Pizzi of the New York National Guard shows Afghan National Army soldiers how to use a range finder at Hasan Karez, Zabul Province, Afghanistan, in June 2008.

Both men were able to get age waivers and were commissioned into the same Guard unit, the storied Fighting 69th, which dates back to the Civil War. Their subsequent training, drill and deployment requirements meant significant personal and professional sacrifices, but both men discovered that the Army made them better at their civilian jobs. At the same time, they brought valuable law enforcement and search and rescue experience to the Army.

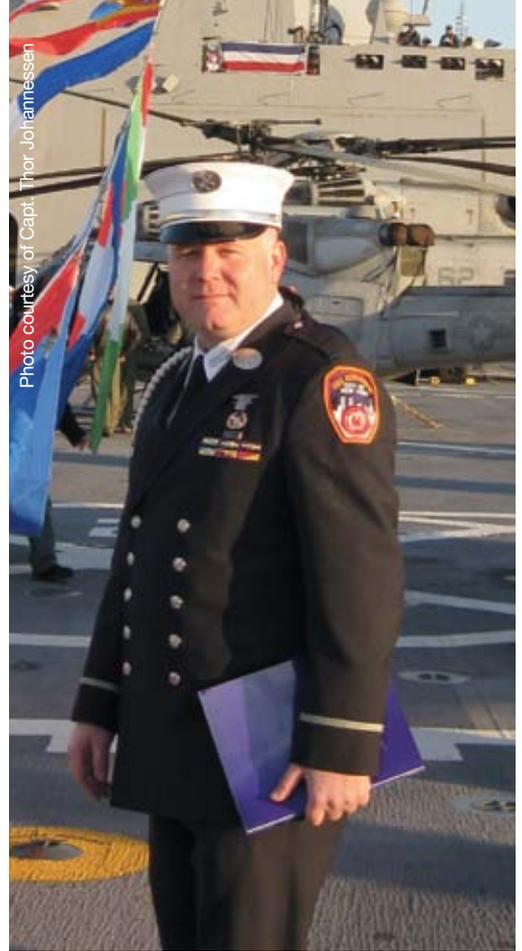
Johannessen, for example, is assigned to Joint Operations (J-3) at the NYANG Joint Force Headquarters. His experience on the NYFD as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's New York Urban Search and Rescue team helped get him the assignment, which he called a good fit, because it lets him bring "real-world tactical first-responder stuff to Special Operations."

That included a two-week deployment to Haiti just days after a mag-

nitude-7 earthquake decimated that country's capital, Port-au-Prince, and the surrounding areas, Jan. 12, 2010.

His team rescued several people from a collapsed grocery store the very day they arrived. The city, he said, reminded him eerily of ground zero. "It was brutal. That amount of destruction—parts of it were very reminiscent of work at the Trade Center with all of that pulverized cement and collapsed buildings. That really is a Third World country, and we don't really appreciate what a Third World country is like until we see one. There were horrible conditions."

And while Delli-Pizzi was attending the Army Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga., a colonel came from the War College at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., to discuss counterinsurgency tactics the Army was using in Iraq. As he talked about identifying "bad guys" who mixed in with the local population, reclaiming an Iraqi city block by block and building schools and infrastruc-



New York City Fire Department lieutenant and New York National Guard Capt. Thor Johannessen poses in front of the USS New York at its commissioning in New York City, Nov. 7, 2009.

ture, it started to sound very familiar to Delli-Pizzi.

"I said, 'He's talking about an insurgency as almost like a gang,'" Delli-Pizzi remembered. "It's almost like the neighborhoods we won back over in the early '90s in New York City.' I worked in a precinct that had...about 117 homicides in one year—those are the ones we knew about—and 25 police-involved shootings. Those communities were won back one block at a time by getting rid of the drug dealers. Not just by putting them in jail or by engaging in gun battles, but by winning over the community and ensuring that...the young kid in the neighborhood had an opportunity. We built schools. We did all of that.

"I kind of came to realize, 'Hey, I've got all this stuff we learned in the police department that's effective in community policing, effective in getting rid of gangs and drugs and violence. This is something we can use (in the Army).' That's why I think reserve-



Now-Capt. Lou Delli-Pizzi of the New York National Guard conducts a mounted patrol in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, Sept. 11, 2008, while wearing his New York City Police Department raid jacket over his Army uniform.



Now-Capts. Thor Johannessen and Lou Delli-Pizzi. (Photo courtesy of Capt. Thor Johannessen)

“Here I am in the greatest, biggest police department in the world, and the Army’s got our back.”

component guys, certainly cops and firemen...guys who have experience in those types of units, have an awful lot to offer,” he continued.

Delli-Pizzi deployed to Afghanistan in 2007 as a member of an embedded training team with the Afghan National Army. Their shared experiences with terrorism—with the people who had destroyed part of his city and their country—was powerful enough to

bridge their cultural differences. After one intense engagement, the Afghan soldiers even honored Delli-Pizzi and the other American Soldier on their team by giving them the leg of a goat they had cooked.

“They said we had earned it with our legs and by helping them,” Delli-Pizzi remembered. “They told us that we had given them the strength and the legs to fight the bad guys in their community. We talked about 9/11 that day, and we said we were there for a

common kind of mission to protect freedom and liberty for everybody.

“Three thousand people were killed, essentially on my watch, on 9/11,” he continued. “I was a detective in Manhattan, I was on duty and it happened right under my nose. For me, going to Afghanistan was almost like a continuation of my duty...trying to do my part to make sure that never happened again. I was taking the fight back to (al-Qaida). It was like I just transferred to a different precinct.” ♦

**Editor’s Note:** *The NYFD ultimately lost 343 firefighters and paramedics, and the NYPD lost 23 officers on 9/11, according to their official websites, [www.nyc.gov/fdny](http://www.nyc.gov/fdny) and [www.nyc.gov/nypd](http://www.nyc.gov/nypd). These numbers don’t include many first responders who later died of cancer or respiratory problems. See [www.nyc.gov/911health](http://www.nyc.gov/911health) for more information.*



## BRAC reshapes Army's structure, future

**S**INCE 2005, the Army has been reshaping its infrastructure to better support the force in compliance with Base Realignment and Closure legislation, and the process is on track for completion this month.

"Consolidating and repositioning several major commands will save millions in personnel and facilities costs and is needed to put the Army on the path to future sustainability," said Lt. Gen. Rick Lynch, commander of the Installation Management Command.

Through the BRAC process, many commands have instituted large moves.

U.S. Army Forces Command and the Army Reserve Command have moved from Atlanta to a shared building at Fort Bragg, N.C. The Installation Management Command moved from Arlington, Va., to Fort Sam Houston, Texas. The Armor School at Fort Knox, Ky., merged with the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Ga., and formed the Maneuver Center of Excellence. Army Materiel Command moved from Fort Belvoir, Va., to Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

One of the largest moves under BRAC is that of the 1st Armored



A post exchange facility at Fort Bliss, Texas, is being erected as a result of the growth of Soldiers and families to the area under BRAC. (Photo by Catrina Francis)

Division to Fort Bliss, Texas. This move is expected to see 29,600 Soldiers and 45,000 family members, all relocating to the El Paso, Texas area.

"When BRAC and Army Transformation are complete, Fort Bliss will have enough new facilities to accommodate five brigade combat teams, a division staff and their families," said Lynch.

Additional moves include the con-

solidation of transportation, ordnance and logistics schools at Fort Lee, Va.; and move of the Communications-Electronics Command activities to Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md.

"We have no way of knowing exactly what the future will look like," said Lynch, "but the 2005 BRAC process better positioned the Army to meet future challenges." ♦

—Brian Gebhart for ARNEWS

## SAGE aims to save fuel in Afghanistan

**T**HE Army has been developing programs and technologies to slice its high fuel demand and has rolled out an operational energy strategy.

The Smart and Green Energy for Base Camps initiative is one effort that will show how available technology can help the Army work toward that goal.

The SAGE initiative will test renewable energy, new structure designs, energy storage and control systems by using them to manage the power for forward operating base camps that serve between 150 and 2,400 people.

The key to SAGE is the smart micro-grid. The grids harness a generator's full power instead of the 20 per-

cent used now, allowing fewer units to do the same work. One generator could be wired to five tents instead of one, for example.

The Army is not stopping at base power. A popular phrase around the Pentagon is "make Soldiers power managers." PEO Soldier's program integrator, Steve Mapes, is helping them in the age of the digitized Soldier.

"What we've tried to do is introduce a variety of tools in a commander's box, so that he can employ the best he sees fit," Mapes said. "Right now, he's either going to have to reduce his battle rhythm—which means don't send guys out—or just walk around being the

light-switch police."

The 1st Battalion, 116th Infantry, led by Lt. Col. James Smith, has the unique responsibility of testing new technologies PEO Soldier pushes to the field. Right now, they have 15 Soldier power managers, 11 fuel cells of different types and sizes, and were scheduled to receive six JP-8 generators at the end of July.

"They're the evaluation unit right now," said Mapes, who was days from initial feedback from Smith at the end of June, "They're going to inform the Army's larger operational energy strategy and where we invest our dollars." ♦

—Megan Neunan for ARNEWS

## Survey suggests Army focus on leader development

**T**HE results of a recent survey indicate that Army leaders are seen as effective on a wide range of criteria, but that leadership development has not received the attention that it once did at the unit level.

“Unit leader development appears to be less of a priority,” said John Steele at the Center for Army Leadership, Fort Leavenworth, Kan. Steele is the project lead for CAL’s Annual Survey of Army Leadership, known as CASAL.

The latest CASAL, completed during November and December, had more than 22,000 Army leaders respond—sergeants to colonels—from both the active and reserve components.

Army leaders who reported a high priority on leader development at their

organizations/units were at an all-time low of 46 percent (compared to 53 percent in 2009 and 55 percent in 2008).

“If an individual is not getting leader development in the field, not seeing it as a priority, and the classroom is not effective in teaching leaders how to develop subordinates, then we need to figure out how to improve this.” Steele said, adding that the current operations tempo has affected the time and attention that can be devoted to professional development.

Only 57 percent of Army leaders reported that they have time to carry out the duties and responsibilities for developing subordinates. This was down from 63 percent in 2009. ❖

—Rob McIlwain/ARNEWS

## Goal-setting app on iPhone, iPad, now Droid

**S**OLDIERS can now set resiliency goals for themselves using a new application for iPhones and iPads.

The free app was developed by Sam Rhodes and teams at the Maneuver Center of Excellence, Fort Benning, Ga., and the Signal Center of Excellence, Fort Gordon, Ga. It was released in early summer as the i-version of the Resilience Goals Book under the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program.

“A lot of times we push off getting

back to stuff because we can’t get to it. The goal-setting now is right there in your pocket,” said Sam Rhodes, the action officer responsible for the app.

Rhodes said goal setting is the best way to enhance Soldier performance, and people who know about the app have latched on to the approach. Downloads to iPhones and iPads doubled from the product’s first to second week, from 196 downloads to 411. In three weeks, 552 users had the app.

Rhodes specifically mentioned the app as a small way to combat increasing suicide rates in the Army, but was careful to emphasize it benefits the general population, not just PTSD sufferers.

Using the app, people can set e-reminders to stay on top of goals that reflect their beliefs. Soldiers can also email what they tap out directly to first-line supervisors. The application can be downloaded at <http://www.apple.com/itunes/affiliates/download/>.

An Android-compatible app has also been developed, Rhodes said. ❖

—Megan Neunan for ARNEWS

## New lab aims to save energy at FOBs

**T**HE Army opened a System Integration Laboratory this summer at Fort Devens, Mass., to test futuristic technologies aimed at saving energy in theater.

The 10-acre SIL measures water, fuel and power usage at two sites that are modeled after forward operating bases in Iraq and Afghanistan. Each of the camps is occupied by 150 Soldiers for weeks or months at a time.



The Base Camp System Integration Laboratory, or SIL, will enable the Army to evaluate future technologies at Fort Devens, Mass., and provide solutions to reduce energy consumption.

The first camp at Fort Devens, a control group, will shadow standard expeditionary bases such as Force Provider. The second camp, a test group, will be almost identical to the first, but will integrate new technologies.

These technologies include energy-efficient shelters and water-filtration and reuse systems. They may also include alternative energy sources such as wind and solar power, said Lt. Col. Daryl Harger, product manager, Force Sustainment Systems.

“I don’t think we want to make any conclusions just yet, but we’re seeing promising results from the micro-grid already,” he said. “We’re excited about the technology, but we also want to take a structured approach and make sure the results we get are valuable and true.”

Once technologies are proven effective, officials said the SIL will share them with currently deployed and future expeditionary forces. The new energy-efficient technologies are expected to reduce base camp fuel requirements by 20 percent and water demand by 75 percent. ❖

—Brian Gebhart for ARNEWS



More Soldiers are using the iPhone and iPad Resilience App to set personal goals and monitor their progress. Soon others will be using the app on Droid. (Photo by Brian Gebhart)

# 'Capital Guardians'

## respond to needs of the nation

Story by Jacqueline M. Hames



1st Sgt. Ray Gould, (left), Military District of Washington Engineer Company (Technical Rescue) and Airports Authority firefighter Liedke examine the damage on the inside of the Pentagon's C Ring. (Photo by Staff Sgt. John Valceanu)

EVERYONE has a routine, be it an individual or an organization. Routines promote organizations and familiarity, and can even foster expertise. The Army builds Soldiers' discipline with strict routine, and civilians find comfort in the daily routines of their lives. But when a routine is disrupted, how do you adapt? How do you respond when your morning commute is shattered with the news that your office has been collapsed by a plane?

If you're a Soldier, you report to work anyway—the epicenter of the crisis becomes your place of duty.

On Sept. 11, 2001, hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the western side of the Pentagon at 9:37 a.m., killing 184 people and eventually causing a partial collapse of the building. Mere minutes after the impact, the National Guard mobilized.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Steven Mueck, an Active Guard Reserve pilot with the Joint Force Headquarters, District of Columbia National Guard, was on his way to work at Fort Belvoir, Va., when he heard about the attacks in New York City on the radio.

"By the time I got here, we had gotten word that that something hit the Pentagon and more airplanes were en route," Mueck said. Once he arrived at his office, he found a helicopter and flew to the Pentagon to help.

"I launched in a Huey, a UH-1, with a Chief Warrant Officer 2 Trent Munson and Sgt. Gary Elam, and we went up, landed at the Pentagon (and) started talking to those folks. As it turned out, they had doctors and corpsmen and nurses at Walter Reed

that needed to get there," Mueck said. "We spent the rest of the day bringing doctors and morphine and things like that to the Pentagon and taking other things back to Walter Reed on the reverse trip."

The magnitude of the situation didn't hit Mueck until about an hour into his mission, when he realized he was the only person talking to air traffic control at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in Arlington, Va.

"We were having a conversation instead of me trying to break in and wait for airliners, stuff like that," he said. "It was just me and him."

Mueck is the tactical operations officer for his unit, responsible for mission briefs and flight plans, schedules, assignments and coordination. Before 9/11, the JFHQ-DC medevac unit operated much the same way it does today, adapting to the situation as it happens. Mueck credits their quick and flexible response as the reason they were successful in assisting after the attack.

"We got the right crews out there, we went and did our job, we had people



The Pentagon burns moments after a hijacked jetliner crashed into building at approximately 9:30 a.m., Sept. 11, 2001. (Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Jason Ingersoll)

on standby. We had other aircraft up there for 72 hours after that on standby in case somebody was found,” he explained. “We actually had a lot of things in place already that turned out to work very well for us.”

Though Mueck and his crew adjusted quickly to the crisis, it was never a job he imagined he would be doing.

“It was beyond me that anything like that could ever happen here in the United States. To be doing what we did was a sobering experience, and quite frankly, something I hope I’d never do again.”

Not everyone in the D.C. Guard immediately mobilized to the Pentagon, however. Staff Sgt. Marcus McCauley of the 273rd Military Police Company was sent to ground zero in New York, not with the Guard, but as a member of Washington’s Metropolitan Police Department.

While in New York, McCauley performed honor guard duties for the fallen police officers and firemen who had responded to the attacks on the World Trade Center.

“Just being up there and seeing stuff, you know the whole site—it was just unbelievable to see how much destruction there was in the city,” he said.

“And then also, to see all the fallen officers,” McCauley paused, collecting himself. “That was a little rough.”

When McCauley returned to D.C. after two weeks, he deployed with the 275th MP Company to Fort Leavenworth, Kan., on a law and order mission, providing base security because of heightened threat levels nationwide.

Of course, some of the most difficult duties during the crisis happened amid the rubble: search, rescue and recovery. National Guard chaplains from as far away as Pennsylvania were called in to counsel recovery workers in the weeks immediately after the attacks.

Colonel William Lee, Joint Force Headquarters chaplain for the Maryland National Guard, got the call shortly after he heard the plane had hit the Pentagon; he was asked to go to the Pentagon as team leader for those chaplains who could come from Maryland.

“When we got there, we fell in

on the chaplains’ section,” Lee said. “There were chaplains from Virginia, D.C. Guard, Maryland Guard, West Virginia, Pennsylvania (and) Delaware Guard, because we were the surrounding states who could drive in.”

Assigned to the Pentagon’s North Parking lot in support of the FBI chaplains, Lee worked the 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift. The parking lot was marked in grids, he explained, and earthmovers brought over rubble to be sorted through. Some 200 recovery workers and intelligence agents went through the debris.

“They would go through it to try and find either pieces of the airplane, human remains or sensitive intelligence-type material or documents,” Lee said.

Everyone wore white biohazard suits, complete with respirators. Generators throbbed, powering lights so the crews could work through the night.

“Our job was to provide spiritual counsel and support to the folks on site, and that would especially happen in the middle of the night. About... two to four, there would be a break and everybody would come off the pile,” Lee said. The Salvation Army would come by during that time, supplying socks, dry T-shirts and hot coffee.

A nearby hotel served as a family assistance site, where there were boards with names of the victims. Families would wait there for word from Lee and his colleagues that their loved ones’ remains had been identified.

Lee said that in addition to the anxiety and uncertainty surrounding the event, finding human remains was difficult. Remains would be packaged in clear plastic bags, then into larger orange bags and finally transferred to a full body bag. The chaplains would recite prayers for the dead from the different faith groups.

“We did that out of respect for the remains, but also so the families at the

*The Guard is training in the same way as the rest of the Army, regularly and to the same standards, McCauley explained, and is prepared to respond if there is ever another 9/11-like crisis.*



Soldiers from the 3rd United States Infantry Regiment “The Old Guard” present a folded (28x30 foot) American flag to Maj. Gen. James T. Jackson (foreground back to camera), commander, Military District of Washington. The flag hung on the wall of the Pentagon after the Sept. 11 terrorist attack.

Memorial services were held on the grounds overlooking the Pentagon as part of the Sept. 14, 2001, National Day of Prayer and Remembrance. President George W. Bush declared the day in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. (Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jim Varhegyi)

(hotel) could know, and were told, that everything possible to show respect for the remains of (their) deceased loved one had been done,” Lee said.

Over the course of one evening in particular, the crew found a Barbie doll and a set of “pretty pajamas.”

“You could almost feel a ripple through the group with that,” Lee said. No one had thought about children being in the attack. Soon after the pajamas were recovered, the crew found a child’s foot.

That morning, Lee went to the hotel and looked at the list of victims. On it was a family with an 8-year-old daughter, Zoe Falkenburg, who was a lover of dance with perfect ballerina feet. The family was on Flight 77.

“At that point, I began to cry because I realized what we had found. It was about week three, and it all brought it home personally,” Lee said. At the time, his daughter was 11 years old.

Lee said his time at the Pentagon

changed him both professionally and personally, helping him stay focused on what is essential in his life, like faith and family, which makes him a better chaplain.

“Up until then, the Guard was the usual one-weekend-a month, two-weeks-a-summer scenario,” Lee said of the National Guard’s operations before 9/11. “Now, that’s how often we get people to go home, rather than when we’re drilling.”

“People talk about the fact that we didn’t have any contingency plans, but I don’t know how you can plan for the unthinkable,” Mueck added.

The Guard has also done much to change its public perception since the attacks, Mueck said. “I think what may have changed (are) the attitudes. I think before that, there was a conception about the National Guard—a peacetime flying club and things like that—and I would say to a certain extent that was probably a fair assessment.

“Maybe we didn’t take things as serious as we should (have),” he continued. “But now almost all of our folks have had a chance to deploy.” The Guard as a whole realized the importance of their training and the fact that they can be called upon at any time to use it.

The Guard is training in the same way as the rest of the Army, regularly and to the same standards, McCauley explained, and is prepared to respond if there is ever another 9/11-like crisis.

“Now, we’re a seamless part of the total team,” Lee said, adding that the Guard has become more integrated into the Army’s communication system and can plan for various contingencies in advance. The equipment, training and response to state emergencies have even improved in the years following Sept. 11.

“We continue to learn from our experiences and try and project into the future so we can remain adaptable,” Lee said. ❖

# New gallery showcases Guard's legacy

Story and photos by Jacqueline M. Hames



Various Guard uniforms are on display at the National Guard Memorial Museum, National Guard Educational Foundation in Washington, D.C. The museum houses displays corresponding to the early militia era, the Guard's coming of age, World War II, the Cold War and current military and civil missions.



An ammunition belt on display at the National Guard Memorial Museum, National Guard Educational Foundation in Washington, D.C. The belt, complete with clock and wire, was recovered in Iraq by Soldiers from the North Carolina Army National Guard, and was used by suicide bombers.

**T**HE National Guard Educational Foundation, established in 1975 as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that advocates for the Guard through education, is enthusiastic about telling the Guard's story. Situated in the National Guard Memorial Building just off Massachusetts Avenue in Washington, the office also houses a museum and library dedicated to the Guard.

Cathleen Pearl, deputy director for the Educational Foundation, said that this year would be an exciting year for the Guard and the museum. On Dec. 13, the Guard will celebrate its 375th birthday and it will also recognize the 10-year anniversary of 9/11.

"We're going to open (a) new gallery which will cover from Sept. 11 to the present, that very transformative decade," Pearl said. That exhibit will be a permanent display in the larger gallery at the museum.

She explained that since 9/11, the Guard has increased its operational tempo, deploying almost every brigade at least once, and keeping retention rates high. Pearl was in the Missouri Air National Guard for six years before moving to the East Coast as a civilian and believes the Guard's increased presence at home is good.

"Their presence since 9/11, although being a little shocking, is comforting for people," she said.

Pearl hopes the new exhibit and overall gallery will help reintroduce people to the Guard.

"If people aren't familiar with Guardsmen, the first thing that will pop up is Kent State," she said, "and there's a lot of misconceptions about the Guard, but they're an operational and ready force, they're not a reserve, they're not sitting on the sidelines. You can't go to war without the National Guard anymore."

Pearl believes the gallery will be a source of pride for Soldiers, allowing the different components of the Army to see what the others are doing.

"It's eye opening to see in total what the National Guard does, it's hugely impressive, and to be a part of that, I think, is really a source of pride for people when they come in," Pearl said.

The Educational Foundation hopes to open the gallery in December 2011, memorializing the nearly 700 Guardsmen killed in support of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and honoring the 375-year legacy of the Guard itself.

"Guardsmen are some of the most giving (people)," Pearl said. "If you need help, they are there."

For more information about the National Guard Educational Foundation and to learn more about the 9/11 exhibit visit: [www.ngef.org](http://www.ngef.org). ♦

September 11th

# We remember

*'Our personal reflections'*



## **■** *Capt. Emilee Venn*

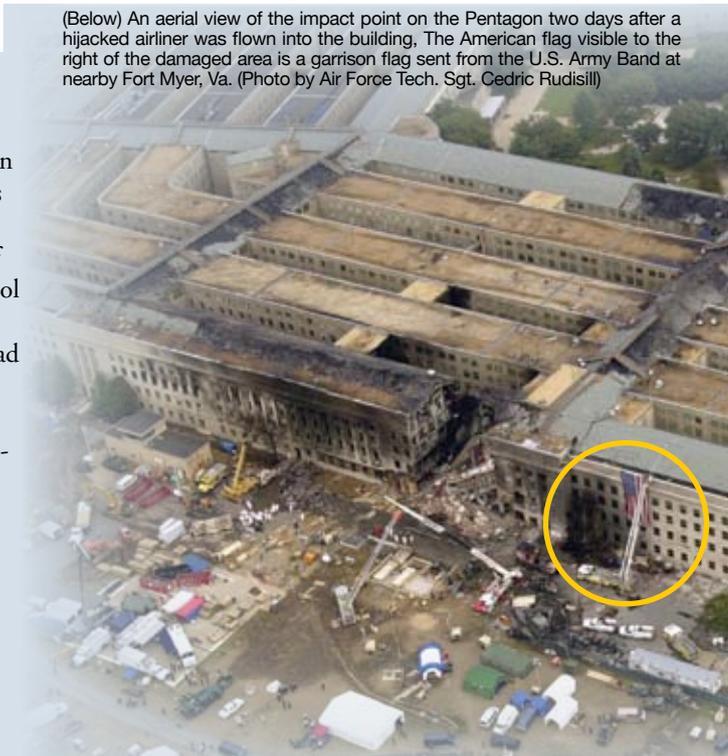
TEN years ago I was working on Capitol Hill in Washington as a U.S. Senate staffer. I was in D.C., Sept. 11, 2001, and was part of the mass evacuation of the U.S. Capitol complex that day.

We heard the jets go sonic overhead as they were rushing to intercept the already doomed Flight 93. Ten years later, I'm in Iraq with the 218th Medical Detachment Veterinary Services serving as the officer in charge of the International Zone Veterinary Treatment Facility in Baghdad. ♦



Firefighters work to put out the flames moments after a hijacked jetliner crashed into the Pentagon at approximately 9:30 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001. (Photo by Marine Corps Cpl. Jason Ingersoll)

(Below) An aerial view of the impact point on the Pentagon two days after a hijacked airliner was flown into the building. The American flag visible to the right of the damaged area is a garrison flag sent from the U.S. Army Band at nearby Fort Myer, Va. (Photo by Air Force Tech. Sgt. Cedric Rudisill)





Standing before a burned out automobile, an Alexandria, Va., firefighter inspects the damage to the Pentagon following the 9/11 attack.

(Below) Firefighters find an American flag intact among the rubble, shortly after a hijacked jetliner crashed into the Pentagon at about 9:30 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001.



Marine Corps Cpl. Jason Ingelsoll

**Chief Warrant Officer 5  
John M. Harris**

ON 9/11, I woke up like everyone to the shock and horror of the attacks. I was serving on an Army National Guard CAB (Combat Aviation Brigade) staff, and had just undergone major foot surgery the day before. I wanted to be able to help as soon as possible, but being on crutches, I knew I was grounded from flying for a while.

However, since I was living next to the 40th Infantry Division's headquarters, it turned out that they were in need of volunteers who could perform the role of division staff duty officer from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., and being on crutches was not a disqualifier. I was able to get a ride and at least perform some needed staff duties in the days immediately following the attack.

When (I) recovered from my foot



surgery, I was then able to deploy in December 2001 as a TDY augmentee to the staff of the 5th Special Forces Group/JSOTF-N in Uzbekistan. (I) was able to participate in missions over Afghanistan in support (of) our Northern Alliance allies.

Now, after having accumulated over 42 years of continuous Army service, I am most fortunate to continue serving our country as a Soldier; I am the G7 aviation officer for the U.S. Army Reserve's 91st Division (Training) at Fort Hunter Liggett, Calif., and I also perform duties as a UH-1 Huey instructor pilot, attached to the National Training Center Aviation Company at Fort Irwin, Calif. ♦



## ■ Debra Stoneking

I was working at the National Guard Bureau in Arlington, Va., in their IT department on Sept. 11, 2001. My office was a few blocks away from the Pentagon, where my husband worked for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I remember it being a beautiful autumn day with sunshine and a gentle cool breeze blowing. I had dropped my husband off at work, kissed him goodbye and continued to my office.

I got to work and started on my rounds to help people with their computer problems. I was on the third floor of my building when someone yelled, "Turn on the radio!" There was something in that voice that made everyone stand up and listen...something was happening but we did not know what yet. An old radio with a dial was found and we started to gather around it as the owner tried to find a channel through the static.

The static on the radio cleared up and we listened as the words "A plane has crashed into the World Trade Center," became clear. We did not know what was going on and people started to move back to their desks to find out more information. I think everyone thought, "It must be a horrible accident." The radio was in the cubical right next to mine, and as we were listening the unthinkable happened: Another plane veered into the second tower. "Oh My God!" it hit everyone at the same time. This was no accident.

I had so many thought running in my head: Who did this? Why would they do this? What was happening to

the people in New York? I had barely made it back to my office (where I had a TV and was looking at the recording from CNN), when the building shook and the world outside my window got dark and ash started to float by.

Oh my God, have we been hit? Then someone yelled, "The Pentagon has been hit!" I couldn't breathe—my husband was there. I don't know what I was thinking but I knew I had to get to the Pentagon. We started to evacuate the building and as people turned right to head away from the Pentagon, I turned left. My friends were telling me that there was no way I would find him but I knew that I had to try.

I had tears in my eyes and I could not hear anyone or anything. All I knew was I had to walk faster. (The 10-minute walk) to the Pentagon seemed like it took hours. There were people everywhere. I turned right onto Eads Street and was walking under the underpass heading into the Pentagon parking lot when the world opened up. People seemed to part and (as I looked) straight ahead, I saw my husband walking toward me.

The day was far from over but I felt safe again. We went back to work holding hands. I would not let him out of my sight for many, many hours. I was lucky that day; I had been blessed and spared from the loss of a loved one. (That day) changed me, and my world. It left a ghost that will haunt me forever. ❖

Debra Stoneking is a contractor with the National Guard Bureau.



(Above) A view of the Pentagon showing smoke rising from the building after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. The dome of the Capitol is visible in the background.

(Below) Firefighters work to put out the flames moments after a hijacked jetliner crashed into the Pentagon at about 9:30 a.m., Sept. 11, 2001.

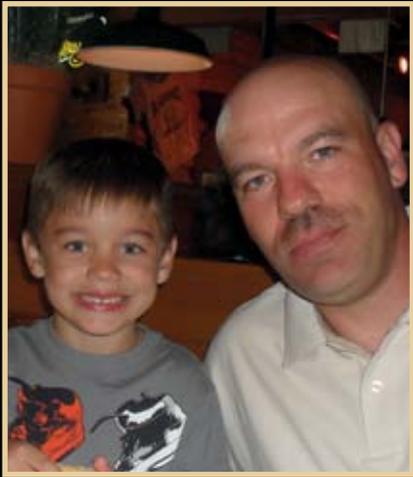


(Below) A family member of a victim killed during the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attack on the Pentagon holds yellow roses and an American flag in remembrance of his loved one. Family members visited the Pentagon to see the impact site on Sept. 15, 2001.



Staff Sgt. John Valceanu

*“Once we found out it was a terror attack, we all tried to figure out why...”*



■ *Master Sgt. Douglas Tolliver Jr.*

ON Sept. 11th, 2001, I was a staff sergeant stationed in Vicenza, Italy, with the 14th Transportation Battalion. I had PCS (permanent change of station) orders and was to leave Italy in 30 days. The battalion CSM (command sergeant major) was holding a promotion board in one of the classrooms of the Education Center right across the parking lot from our battalion headquarters. I had a troop appearing before the board.

When she had finished her turn in front of the board we were leaving the building. I was pretty happy, as the Soldier had done an excellent job. As we walked out, one of the privates in our unit was standing on one of the balconies of our building. (He) called my name and he told me that he had just seen on the news that a plane had hit the World Trade Center. I asked him to repeat what he'd said and after he'd done so, I told him to go watch TV and keep me posted on what was going on.

My Soldier and I immediately went in and started trying to get information on what was going on over our secure systems. We didn't really know what we



(Above) A New York City Police Officer points out damage to the World Trade Center to Reps. Ken Calvert and Jim Saxton on Sept. 24, 2001. The congressmen survey the site at ground zero. (Below) Spc. Steven Watt of the New York Army National Guard's Counter Drug Task Force, which supports the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Fire Arms, shows New York police officers and firefighters how to install filters and properly use respirators.

were going to find but I wanted us to do something to find out. We didn't get anything. Instead we had to watch the news like everyone else.

Once we found out it was a terror attack, we all tried to figure out why, much the same as anyone else. Once it came to light who had done it and



Sgt. 1st Class Tom Roberts



Sgt. 1st Class Tom Roberts

Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard's 145th Maintenance Company, Bronx, N.Y., move out to man posts to control access to ground zero at the remains of the World Trade Center, Sept. 16, 2001.



Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Jim Watson

What was once a glittering symbol of the financial center of the world now stands blanketed in ash and soot Sept. 14, 2001, in New York.

where he was hiding, (well) we all know what happened then; we went into Afghanistan.

My Battalion got orders to deploy and I still had to PCS. I hated having to put my troops on a bus while I was going to fly to the States. I think I got my PCS award or a plaque the day the unit left. After I got to Fort Hood (Texas) in late 2001, I think some of the teams out of my battalion were deployed.

The team I was assigned to, the 571st Transportation Detachment (Movement Control), finally got a chance to go do our part, when we

supported the 1st Cavalry Division for 13 months. After the deployment, I left the regular Army and went into the Reserves as an active Guard Reservist Soldier.

I have mixed feelings about the Middle East; we've been involved there ever since I can remember. Sometimes I think we'd be better off to let them deal with their own problems, yet I realize (the people) need assistance. I have a family now and I hope that the Middle Eastern nations get themselves fixed before my kids and the kids of my former co-workers have to go take a turn over there. ❖

Master Sgt. Douglas Tolliver is the senior movements NCO with the 458th Transportation Detachment (Movement Control).

Family members visit the Pentagon, Sept. 15, 2001, to view the area where their loved ones perished. At about 9:30 a.m., Sept. 11, 2001, terrorists flew a hijacked airliner into the side of the Pentagon. The Pentagon attack followed a similar attack on the Twin Towers of the New York World Trade Center on the same day.



Staff Sgt. John Valceanu



The World Trade Center towers sit as a pile of rubble in the streets of New York City days after the terrorist attacks.



Joseph Curry, deputy chief, New York Fire Department on Sept. 11, 2001, barks orders to rescue teams as they search for survivors in the rubble and debris of the World Trade Center buildings.

## ■ Staff Sgt. Rory Allen

I'M currently serving in Baghdad, Iraq, with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 417th Infantry Regiment, 98th Division. I've been a New York City firefighter for 10 years, and on Sept. 11, 2001, I was a member of Engine Company 209, quartered with Ladder 102 in Bed Stuy (Bedford-Stuyvesant), Brooklyn.

That day still seems like yesterday. I was at ground zero with my brothers (fellow firefighters). It felt like it was a (bad) dream. (We thought) there was no way anyone was left in the buildings when both towers fell to the streets below.

Everyone was asking about friends and family who might have been working that day, and I was concerned about my brother-in-law, firefighter Brian Cross, and his father, Battalion Chief Dennis Cross. I soon learned Brian was off that day, but Chief Cross was working, and soon after hanging up the phone the Battalion 57 chief's car drove past me and I thought all was well.

What I wasn't aware of was that Chief Cross was the acting deputy chief in Division 11, right across from the towers on the Brooklyn side. We lost Chief Cross that day. He was killed



while trying to pull a fireman out of harm's way.

The first night lasted forever and before I knew it, the sun was rising and the dawn of a new day was upon us—nothing (would ever be) the same for me, my family or our country. That day was only the beginning for me. I spent many days and hours upon hours digging with the hope of bringing my lost brothers and the many other innocent people home to their families.

The ultimate influence that day has had on me is really yet to be determined. I spend most days wishing I could have done more that day, as I'm sure most do,

but mostly I use that day to remember what we lost as a nation and the price we continue to pay.

It took me a few years, but the time became right again, and after a break in service I returned to the Army hoping to do my part.

Today I'm an 11-year vet of the FDNY currently working in Ladder 112 in the Bushwick section of Brooklyn. On the military side, I'm in my 12th year in the Army preparing to return home to New York this summer to continue my service with the FDNY and the United States Army Reserves.

That day has forever changed our nation and will remain close to me. I know that one day my children, and even my grandchildren, will ask about it. I'm proud of my service to New York City and to this country I love so much. On the 10-year anniversary of 9/11, I'll remember those we lost that day and all the days since, during our war on terror. ❖

**Editor's Note:** When he wrote this piece, Staff Sgt. Rory Allen was deployed to Iraq with Company E, 2nd Battalion, 417th Infantry Regiment, 98th Training Division, Army Reserve.

## ■ *Spc. Amie McMillan*



**A**S I reminisce on the events of Sept. 11, 2001, it is hard for me to believe that 10 years have passed since our country—our lives—were interrupted by terrorists. I never imagined being a part of the history future generations would read about in school.

On Sept. 11, 2001, I was sitting in health class, my sophomore year at Bay High School in Panama City, Fla. The lessons were interrupted by a student running through the hallways, door to door, telling everyone to turn on their televisions. Our teacher Ms. Ann Logue quickly turned the television on to the news station, just after the first plane hit the World Trade Center. I remember feeling like I was watching a bad movie, thinking that nothing that bad could ever happen to the United States.

My eyes were glued to the news, watching the story unfold, seeing people flee as the debris was filling the streets of New York. I was in tears when I saw the second plane hit the buildings, as I heard the people screaming, and running for their lives on the news. It was hard for me to believe that I was actually witnessing something so horrific and terrifying—my heart sank.

I felt so vulnerable, and uncertain of the future at that particular moment. Thousands of questions flooded my mind as I saw people jumping from the World Trade Center building. I couldn't fathom being in their situation.

The following days and weeks at school were depressing, as we had students with family who had perished in the World Trade Center attacks.

We had numerous conversations about what happened and how it made us feel, as well as what the next step might be in defending our country.

As more and more news stories unfolded, and interviews with family members and survivors, I saw how strangers were coming together to lend a helping hand to those people affected by the tragedy. It was at that moment I realized what America is all about.

Before the Sept. 11 attacks, I had never considered joining the military, but seeing how our brave men and women were stepping up to defend our country and honor those who lost their lives in the tragedy, another door of opportunity opened up in my mind. It was at that moment that I decided I wanted to do something to defend their honor and our country. If I could have joined the military in 2001, I would have signed up right then, but I still had two more years of school before I could graduate.

After the attacks, that was the first time I had ever seen our country come together as one, and it made me extremely proud to be an American.

It didn't matter what race you were, political party, religion, you were an American, and that is all that mattered. I knew I would one day join the military, and the ranks of those brave servicemembers I had watched on the news, fighting for our country.

In August 2005, I joined the United States Army, and I have to attribute my service to the events of Sept. 11, and all of the men and women who came together to help each other in a time where we were at our weakest.

Ten years after the attacks, I'm serving my second tour in Iraq with honor and pride. ♦

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Spc. Amie McMillan is a media marketing coordinator with U.S. Forces Iraq, covering U.S. divisions-North and Center for Boots in the Sand.

As rescue and recovery operations continue, family members gather to visit the Pentagon, Sept. 15, 2001, to view where their loved ones were killed.



## ■ Sgt. 1st Class Sarah Anderson



ON the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Soldiers of The U.S. Army Field Band were training for tours on behalf of the Army's chief of public affairs. "America's Big Band—the Jazz Ambassadors" and "The Volunteers" rock band would be touring New England as directed by the Department of Defense, but the Concert Band and Soldiers' Chorus were gearing up for their first visit to Alaska in 14 years.

In the Jazz Ambassadors rehearsal hall, one of the trombone players had cunningly hidden his cell phone on his music stand, as usual, and received a text message from his wife: "bomb in nyc." Following a later text: "plane into pentagon," he suggested taking a break, and showed the messages to the officer in charge. After that, the news went around pretty quickly.

The deputy commander slipped quietly into each training area, waited for a pause in the action, and pulled each officer in charge aside. After taking accountability, the Soldiers were released to collect their children from school, while the command staff began contingency planning with the little information that was emerging in the news.

Over the next few days, training schedules were altered to allow for the multi-hour backups at the few Fort Meade (Md.) gates that remained open. As normal schedules resumed, the first thing that



Old Glory is retired from the Smithsonian National Museum of American History by members of The Old Guard, Aug. 7, 2006. Sept. 12, 2001, one day after the terrorist attacks, this flag was draped over the side of the Pentagon.

was needed was to decide how it would affect the upcoming missions. During Desert Storm, tours had been lengthened and additional community performances had been scheduled to strengthen the bonds between the Army and the American people. Despite uncertain threat levels, that (could have been the case) for the "Jazz Ambassadors" and "The Volunteers" who would be touring by bus, but with all commercial aircraft grounded, what would happen to the missions in Alaska?

While training continued, the operations section scrambled to find alternatives. Could the National Guard fly us? Would trains work? They were able to breathe a sigh of relief once air travel resumed, but since all of the planned flights had originated from the still-closed Reagan National Airport, there were still plenty of questions.

Ultimately, Alaska Airlines was able to send a plane to Baltimore-Washington International, where they normally don't operate, using a gate loaned to them by another airline. On the planned departure day, the Concert Band and Soldiers' Chorus lined up at the Air Ghana desk, heavy winter

coats in hand, to board what essentially became our charter flight. Due to the weight of the instruments in the rear of the plane, flight attendants urged the Soldiers to sit as close to the front as possible. Despite fastidious weighing and measuring in the months of planning leading up to the tour, some of the larger percussion instruments couldn't fit through the cargo door and had to be shipped separately; when they later met up with us, the tracking labels said simply: "US ARMY FIELD BAND. GOD BLESS AMERICA."

As with all performances by the musical ambassadors of the Army, this tour included lots of patriotic music. Music was added commemorating those who had died in the fateful attack. Every performance was packed—even above the Arctic Circle—and every concert had three or more encores as audiences applauded until their hands were raw. ❖

Sgt. 1st Class Sarah Anderson is the library section leader with the U.S. Army Field Band.

J.D. Leopold

Staff Sgt. John Valceanu

## ■ Dan Stoneking



**A**UTUMN arrived quickly in 2001, and I was glad. Having arrived at my new job in the Pentagon, July 23, I had told my friends that I couldn't wait until the end of September, when, after 60 days of experience, I would have a better handle on how to be an effective Pentagon spokesman.

Here I was, ahead of schedule, shy of the 60 days, and doing well. I had already survived briefings and queries on the forest fires out west and a tragic plane crash that took the lives of 21 National Guard members. I knew my job and I felt comfortable.

That Tuesday began quietly enough. We had a regular briefing scheduled like we did every Tuesday and Thursday. My only responsibility was to escort some officers of the Naval Reserve to watch our daily press briefing as part of their professional development. At about 8:30 a.m., I sent an email reminder to my Naval Reserve counterpart letting him know where and when I would meet the group. The TV on my desk was turned on to CNN, but muted, so I could concentrate on my emails.

"Holy shit!" I heard one of my co-workers shout from across the press room.

"Channel 2," another co-worker barked. It was not uncommon for us to yell out to each other and draw attention to media reports, but their intensity was disarming. I turned toward my TV and raised the volume. It was 8:46 a.m.

I watched a dark plume of smoke billowing out of some of the higher floors of one of the World Trade Center buildings. As my colleagues conjectured on the cause, I grabbed the phone and called the command center for a situation report. One of my responsibilities was to be the Pentagon spokesman for disasters—this was clearly going to be in my lane. The command center indicated that they were faxing me the SITREP and before I could get out of my seat, Pentagon correspondents were at my desk asking for an explanation of the event and the phone started ringing.

I gave them a preliminary briefing, checked on the fax, which had not arrived yet, and began a log of events. As I continued to answer questions while watching the TV, I picked up the phone to call the command center. "Where's that fax?"

"Holy F#@\*!" someone screamed. I turned to the TV and watched United Airlines Flight 175 crash into the second World Trade Center building. It was 9:02 a.m.—truly a moment frozen in time. So many things became instantly clear. We were being attacked. We were at war. The world had changed. The first building was not an accident. There could be more. Everyone started moving. I kept the command center on the line as they continued to update me. Every phone was either ringing or being used to call out. Everyone was talking at once. People were flipping channels, looking at different angles, trying to make sense of what had happened.

"Sir, we can't seem to get the SITREP fax to go through, and we have another classified update you need to see," the command center, still glued to my left ear, drew me away from the TV reports.

"I can't wait any longer," I responded. "I'm coming to you." I told my co-workers where I was going, and I headed for the door.

"What if they hit the Pentagon?" I heard someone ask, over my shoulder, as I cleared the doorway and headed down the hall.

"People can be so paranoid," I

thought as I paced quickly down the corridor. My office was in the outer E-Ring at the end of the seventh corridor. I was heading toward an office between the 5th and 6th Corridors, still on the E-Ring. Still heading west, I was almost at my destination when I heard a loud explosion, felt the floor bounce, and saw dark smoke emanating toward me. People flew out of every door along the hallway, almost simultaneously, and started running. I would have described it as cartoonish, if it were not real. It was 9:37 a.m.

There was no doubt in my mind what had occurred. I knew immediately and did an about-face to return to my office to get my marching orders. On the way back, I realized by the frenzied remarks, that most people had no idea what had happened. Not many offices have TV's on their desks. Halfway back to my office, the sirens went off and the loudspeakers directed everyone to exit the building. I ignored the directive and continued on. I arrived back at the press office minutes later to discover everyone had gone. I returned to the hallway and followed the cattle-like movement toward the exit.

Most people were surprisingly calm. Certainly many of them had no idea what had happened. Those on the far side of the building may not have even heard the impact. But as we made our way slowly, occasionally I would hear someone crying or other frantic exclamations. As we rounded a corner and passed the courtyard, everyone could see and smell the smoke again. For those who were not previously aware, the fervor and urgency increased. As we finally approached the exits, the lines split in two and many left our line for the smaller one. I remained in my line, but not out of any bravado or false bravery. Actually, I was thinking about my nightly commute, and how every time I switched lanes, that lane would slow down. The thought almost made me laugh.

Then I looked up at a clock on the wall. It was 9:50 a.m. I knew what many around me did not know. I knew that the two Trade Centers were hit somewhere between 14 and 18 minutes apart. At this point, the plane had struck the





Air Force Staff Sgt. Larry A. Simmons



(Above) Firefighters work to put out the flames after a hijacked jetliner crashed into the Pentagon at about 9:30 a.m., Sept. 11, 2001. (Left) Burned and melted items sit atop an office desk inside the fifth floor of the Pentagon following the attack.

Pentagon 13 minutes earlier and there were several hundred people between the door and me. Would there be another? I felt eerily resigned to my fate as I took small steps and tried to smile reassuringly to the worried faces around me.

A few minutes past ten o'clock, I was joining thousands of others in the sunshine of the parking lot. Dark smoke filtered into the sky from what used to be the fifth corridor. Sirens blared. Some people scurried. Others dialed away furiously on cell phones that weren't working. Federal buildings throughout the area were being evacuated. The streets were at a standstill, (filled) with vehicles and pedestrians.

I gave my business card to a co-worker I had found. I told him I was going to the nearby National Guard Bureau office and would set up temporary operations there. I wrote the number on the back of my card and headed out of the parking lot. With over 40,000 people scrambling around and at least a half dozen paths between our buildings, I chose a path and began weaving through the crowd. As I walked, I dialed away at my cell phone as well. After repeated tries I finally got through to my son. "I'm OK," I told him.

"Why wouldn't you be?" he mumbled back from a sleepy haze.

"Turn on the television," I said. "I will call you again as soon as I can."

The next few hours, days and weeks became a fog. I worked the first 40 hours straight. My co-workers began shift work at a gas station in close proximity to the still-smoking and smoldering Pentagon. They had one telephone and no automation. I provided the fax, computer and Internet link from my location to internal and external audiences. Once my colleagues were able to set up full operations again inside the Pentagon, I took a few hours off and went home to sleep. There were 27 messages on my answering machine when I finally got there.

I wrote this account soon after the attacks of 9/11. I have shared it with family and friends, but never published it. There are memories that stand out that, for whatever reason, I did not include then. I remember vividly how I would sit in meetings afterward in Pentagon conference rooms and find myself staring at the ceiling imagining what the first split second of an explosion bursting through the tiles would look like. I remember how McDonald's parked a big tent in the parking lot for

many weeks giving out free meals to all employees, and even though I don't eat much fast food, I have found myself emotionally tied to golden arches ever since. To this day, every time I enter the Pentagon or even drive by, I catch myself looking to the sky.

I retired from the military Feb. 29, 2008. Since then I have found myself incapable of sharing what the military means to me. I have been chastised for not participating in some veterans events and failing to publicly recognize anniversaries, and I probably deserve the criticism. I have my stories and experiences like other veterans, but to capture and sum it all up in words is too much for me. I love the men and women who have served and are serving their country. But I have yet to find the words that suffice. So as I labor to come to terms with that, when asked to participate in an event, or give an interview, or share a blurb, I tend to borrow a line from (Herman) Melville's "Bartleby the Scrivener" and respond, "I would prefer not to." ♦

Dan Stoneking is the director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Private Sector Division.



## ■ Chief Warrant Officer 3 Karen Kilburn

**M**Y sons and I were in our government quarters in Hannam Village in Seoul, Korea (Sept. 11, 2001). It was in the evening and I was watching the “The Today Show” live. My sons were in the next bedroom playing video games. I saw the news change over to the plane hitting the tower. We stayed awake all night watching the news unfold. My sons Kyle and Jordan were in ninth and fifth grades.

In the days that followed there was no school for my sons. I could not drive the 2 miles to Yongsan (Army Base). I ended up walking in. It would take hours to get on base as every car was searched. When school resumed, a noncommissioned officer or officer rode on every school bus.

I was the 1st Signal Brigade Chief Network technician. ❖

**Editor’s Note:** Chief Warrant Officer 3 Karen Kilburn’s son, Jordan Whittington, is a private first class in the Army.



Soldiers assigned to the 89th Military Police Brigade Special Reaction Team, search vehicles entering the main gate at Fort Hood, Texas. Heightened security measures were put in place following the 9/11 attacks. (Photo by John Byerly)

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TA-062-0107

# ‘Vigilant Warriors’ provide professional care of GTMO detainees

Story by U.S. Army South Public Affairs and Photos by Robert R. Ramon

“**V**IGILANT Warriors.” These two words are not only the motto of U.S. Army South’s 525th Military Police Battalion, but they embody the mindset of the Soldiers serving within its ranks.

Their mission is one of the most challenging the Army has to offer: providing command, control and operational support to the high-risk detention operations at Guantanamo Bay.

The Soldiers are so good at what they do that since 2004, the people of the United States have entrusted them to conduct safe, humane, legal and transparent care and custody of detainees as part of Joint Task Force Guantanamo, said Command Sgt. Maj. Daniel F. Borrero, the senior enlisted Soldier of the 525th MP Bn.

“Personally, professionally, any way you want to say it, they perform outstandingly and that’s not giving them enough credit,” said Borrero. “A Soldier who stands a post for 12 to 15 hours a day, every day, epitomizes the definition of selfless service. They put that uniform on for their battle buddies to the left and right of them and for everyone back in the United States.”

One of the 525th’s specific tasks is to operate Camp 5, a state-of-the-art, two-story, maximum-security detention facility that can hold approximately 100 individuals. Camp 5 houses those detainees deemed to be the highest

threat to themselves, other detainees or guards.

“It’s a very difficult and challenging mission but our Soldiers are up to the call each and every day,” said Lt. Col. Christopher V. Wynder, commander of the 525th Military Police Battalion. “Each understands they have a role in the success of the battalion whether they are a support Soldier or one of the guard force personnel that work inside the camps.”

Camp guards work 12-hour shifts with a schedule of four days on and two days off. This is in addition to



The entrance to Camp 5, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. U.S. Army South’s 525th Military Police Battalion is charged with providing command, control and operational support to high-risk detention operations at Camp 5 as part of Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

standard Soldier-training requirements they conduct before or after their 12-hour shifts.

“The challenges of a long, hard duty day, four to five days a week, sometimes six days a week, are immense,” said Borrero. “Couple that with additional mandatory military training and, considering the residents that are here, this is probably the most challenging place to do this mission.”

It’s a challenge the 525th’s Soldiers are eager to take on, according to a

A 525th Military Police Battalion guard conducts checks in Camp 5, Cell Block A, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.





Detainee issue items sit in an empty cell in Camp 5 at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. U.S. Army South's 525th Military Police Battalion is charged with providing command, control and operational support to high-risk detention operations at Camp 5 as part of Joint Task Force Guantanamo.

guard who has served at Camp 5 for the past six months.

“Remaining vigilant at all times is a big challenge,” said the 525th internment relocation specialist, who, like all guards at Guantanamo’s detention facilities, is required to remain anonymous.

“You have to make sure you don’t get complacent. You do it day in and day out and can start finding shortcuts but you can’t fall into that.”

Caring for detainees includes a full spectrum of activities for which guards are responsible, including providing hand-served meals, continuously conducting detainee checks, providing access to medical care, creating an appropriate environment for religious worship, and providing intellectual stimulation through books, newspapers, magazines and television.

“The Soldiers always have to be mindful that they’re here to do a professional job,” said Wynder. “They can’t focus on things the detainees may have done prior to coming here, but have to provide them with quality custody and care.”

Professionalism is first and foremost, according to the Camp 5 noncommissioned officer in charge. In fact, he said the guards take pride in improving the lives of detainees under their care.

“When a detainee raises an issue, we do our best to take care of whatever that issue is,” the Camp 5 NCOIC said, “Improving their living conditions and their quality of life, and addressing the various issues they have are very rewarding.”

Yet Master Sgt. Mitchell Darknell, a 525th staff NCOIC, submits that guards must also always be mindful of the potential for bad things to happen. Detainee assaults on the guard force, both verbally and physically, occur on a regular basis.

“There’s always the situation where if the guards react too quickly, they’re overreacting, and if they don’t act soon enough, they didn’t take appropriate measures,” said Darknell. “This mission is so important and so scrutinized that they are held to a high standard to ensure procedures and policies are precisely followed.”



The Camp 5 noncommissioned officer in charge places detainee issue items in an empty Camp 5 cell at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. U.S. Army South's 525th Military Police Battalion is charged with providing command, control and operational support to high-risk detention operations at Camp 5 as part of Joint Task Force Guantanamo.



The U.S. flag flies at the entrance to Camp 5, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

Clear standard operating procedures are strictly adhered to at all times, said Wynder, and standardization teams conduct internal audits to ensure this. There is also active, on-site supervision by the chain of command.

Most guards are assigned to the detention facility for at least one year. Before arriving, each receives pre-deployment training to ensure they are professionally prepared for the mission. Training is conducted in a mock facility created specifically for guard personnel. In addition to predeployment training,

on-the-job training is conducted upon arrival.

“They come here with the knowledge, skills and abilities to conduct the detention operations mission,” said Wynder. “We make sure, with the pre-service training, that they receive the hands-on training that they need to do the job correctly.”

Along with the training, inherent traits are needed to be successful at the Camp 5 facility.

“It takes Soldiers with good interpersonal communication skills to

maintain their professionalism,” said Wynder. “It takes a lot of maturity and poise by all Soldiers inside the camp, regardless of their rank. The Soldiers understand that we owe the United States of America our very best in terms of providing the best possible care and humane treatment of the detainees, and we have to be on the moral high ground at all times.

“Our sons and daughters back home can rest assured that we’re doing quality work and that we’re putting forward our best effort to represent the United States of America,” Wynder added. ♦

**Editor’s Note:** *U.S. Army South, as the Army Service Component Command for U.S. Southern Command, conducts theater security cooperation with its Latin American and Caribbean partners in order to enhance hemispheric security and stability. It conducts contingency operations as directed by SOUTHCOM.*

525th Military Police Battalion Soldiers patrol the perimeter of Camp 5, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. U.S. Army South’s 525th Military Police Battalion is charged with providing command, control and operational support to high-risk detention operations at Camp 5.



# How to save a LIFE

Story by Elizabeth M. Collins

**I**T would have been so easy.

All Staff Sgt. Tiffany Skelton had to do was take a few extra pills—she was on Zoloft, Paxil and three others—and she would drift off into a peaceful, permanent sleep. Or she could nick her wrists with one of the swords she had collected in Iraq, and let her lifeblood drain away, taking with it all of the worries and pain she had carried for so long.

Skelton had it all planned, down to who would pick up her son. He would probably be better off anyway, she reasoned. How many nights had 18-month-old Kenyen taken care of her as she lay on the couch, too depressed and overwhelmed to move? He covered her with a blanket, and brought her dinner from whatever he could reach in the refrigerator. Then his day care teacher called: Did Skelton know that he no longer smiled or wanted to play? That he was biting?

“I just couldn’t take it anymore,” Skelton said. “I had made my decision. I was going to die the next day.”

## *A tough deployment*

Skelton’s road to suicide started long before that June day in 2009, when she was an emotionally abused little girl in Georgia. She wanted to serve, but more than that, she wanted to escape her mother’s death, and relatives who only cared if Skelton was around to cook for drunken uncles in



Staff Sgt. Tiffany Skelton is alive today because her chain of command at Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Human Resources Command-St. Louis, realized she was suicidal and banded together to support her and get her treatment in 2009. (All photos courtesy of Staff Sgt. Tiffany Skelton)

the middle of the night. An automated logistics specialist, Skelton was excited to escape all the way to Iraq in 2003, until, that is, she realized a new nightmare awaited her.

Skelton’s Reserve unit was assigned to the middle of the Sunni Triangle

(between Baghdad, Ramadi and Tikrit), otherwise known as the “Triangle of Death.” They were soon in the cross hairs of the fast-growing insurgency, facing multiple mortar and rocket attacks a day.

It was horrible, Skelton remem-



Staff Sgt. Tiffany Skelton poses with friends and family after her induction into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club, which is a leadership organization for noncommissioned officers. Skelton nearly committed suicide a few months later.

bered. “I’ve seen people die in front of my eyes.” She also suffered white phosphorous burns from one of the mortars, and she often slept with both a loaded M-16 and her gas mask.

Worse, to Skelton, the unit’s officers and noncommissioned officers didn’t seem to care. She felt angry and betrayed, and she didn’t handle the stress well. On separate occasions, Skelton “lit into” both her company commander and a senior NCO, receiving first an Article 15, and later losing a rank and a week’s pay for her conduct.

### ***A bittersweet homecoming***

Part of the problem was that as their redeployment date grew closer and Skelton’s fellow Soldiers talked excitedly of home—of parents, spouses, new babies—a knot started to grow in Skelton’s stomach. She had nothing to go back to but family problems, which she had left to fester for a year, and now she had added the salt of war to her open, oozing wounds.

“I didn’t have a home. All of that stuff that I’d been harboring started to boil...I hadn’t let it out yet,” she remembered.

But after Kenyen was born in

2007, Skelton became determined to make a better life for her son. She overcame the black marks on her record with hard work and high PT scores, and was selected for a position at Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Human Resources Command-St. Louis because of her potential, according to her former company commander, Maj. Daphne Davis. Skelton graduated in the top one-percent of her Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course; she studied for and was inducted into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club, which is basically an NCO honor society; she tried to go to school; she went to church events almost every night. She was exhausted. It wasn’t long before she had collapsed on the couch, barely able to move, let alone continue the busy schedule that had disguised the hole in her heart.

### ***Cracks***

No one had ever taught Skelton how to manage money, and she fell deep in debt after a friend stole \$25,000 during her deployment, and Kenyen’s father stopped paying child support. Skelton was months behind on car payments, and she couldn’t get

a security clearance—a requirement for her job at HRC. She was terrified she would lose her job and be unable to feed Kenyen.

In addition to her financial problems, her work began to suffer and Skelton had several unhealthy relationships—all of which are major warning signs for suicide, explained Davis, a Reservist who is also a licensed clinical social worker. Davis added that because Skelton was a single parent, she was under extra stress and especially vulnerable, but that Skelton’s mood swings were the most disturbing. Some days Skelton would be happy, others angry and still others, quiet and withdrawn. No one knew what to expect.

“I thought I wasn’t good enough for anything,” Skelton recalled. “My self-esteem was shot. I stayed in a depressive mood. It would be beautiful outside, but I would close everything and it would be dark. I would stutter. I would forget things. I was mad one (minute) and I would cry the next.”

“It just didn’t seem normal,” Skelton’s noncommissioned officer in charge, now-Master Sgt. Julio A. Vejar, said of her behavior. “When someone’s attitude changes very drastically, you know something’s not right. Too often we as NCOs or leaders are very quick to...go to the sword instead of counseling. Take the time. There’s always a reason for something.”

### ***The first steps***

Convinced something was seriously wrong, Vejar, Davis, 1st Sgt. Michael Gaston and Capt. Edgar Borgella, the company executive officer, sat Skelton down and told her they cared, that they wanted to help her. It worked eventually. Skelton started to open up, started to confide the painful details of her abusive childhood and traumatic deployment, first to a doctor during her periodic health assessment and then to Davis.

“I can’t do it anymore,” she told Davis after crying for two hours. “I feel the pressure. Everything feels like it’s falling apart.” Davis put her in touch with Military OneSource ([www.militaryone-source.com](http://www.militaryone-source.com), 1-800-342-9647), which in turn referred Skelton

to a psychiatrist. She was quickly diagnosed with severe post-traumatic stress disorder, severe anxiety disorder and severe depression, and put on five separate medications. (She was eventually diagnosed with bipolar type II disorder as well.)

“But it didn’t matter,” Skelton said. “It didn’t help the hurt.” It was the hurt she wanted to end—forever—and she started playing with her swords. Around the same time, however, HRC started its Army suicide prevention training and after one of the first sessions, another NCO went to Vejar: Skelton’s emotional withdrawal, erratic behavior, mood swings and financial and work problems were all signs they’d just been told to watch for, and he was concerned.

“I decided not to say anything to her,” remembered Vejar. “I just reiterated to the entire staff, ‘Hey if you guys have anything you want talk about, let us know.’”

“I had a personal experience when I was a young Soldier, and I feel like I failed somebody. I didn’t have the tools or skills to assist that person,” he later explained, adding that Soldier is dead and members of his own Family have committed suicide, so he was determined to keep Skelton from the same fate.

### *Saving a life*

Soon after, upset because Mommy was upset, Kenyen bit someone at day care and came home crying for the third or fourth time. Skelton was devastated. Her son didn’t deserve to suffer because of her. He deserved so much more. He deserved a better mother.

The next morning, June 13, 2009, she told Vejar, “If I leave here today, I’m not coming back” in the middle of a normal conversation.

To Skelton, it was not a cry for help. She was only stating what to her was obvious, but Vejar froze as the full meaning of her words hit him.

Was she going to hurt Kenyen? he asked.

No, of course not.

Was she going to hurt herself?

Yes.

That question, Skelton explained,

probably saved her life. “You never ask anyone ‘Do you want to commit suicide?’” she said. “They’re going to tell you ‘No.’ If you ask, ‘Do you feel

like hurting yourself?’ that’s a different question. A person who’s suicidal isn’t thinking ‘I want to commit suicide.’ They’re thinking ‘I want this pain to

Staff Sgt. Tiffany Skelton plays with her three-year-old son Kenyen. Both are happy and healthy now, thanks in part to support Skelton received from her chain of command, but Skelton was suicidal in 2009, and, reflecting his mother’s mood, Kenyen was also quiet and withdrawn.





Staff Sgt. Tiffany Skelton is surrounded by her battle buddies from Headquarters and Headquarters Company, Human Resources Command-St. Louis at a commemorative ball in April 2010. From left to right: Staff Sgt. Cynthia Garza, Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Best, Master Sgt. Dion Acevedo, now-Master Sgt. Julio Veja, 1st Sgt. Michael Gaston, Skelton, Capt. Edgar Borgella, Maj. Daphne D. Davis and Staff Sgt. Renayln Nelson.

end. I don't like the way I feel right now.' They don't want to commit suicide."

Vejar ordered her to stay where he could see her as discreetly as he could—nobody made a spectacle out of her or "took her shoelaces," marveled Skelton—while he called Davis, who was on leave. She dropped everything to help.

Skelton's biggest worry was her career: Could she still be a Soldier? Yes, of course, Davis and Vejar assured her. This was a private matter—it wouldn't become command gossip and it wouldn't affect her career. In fact, she had shown a lot of strength and courage by speaking up and they were proud of her. They were going to get her help.

Davis got in her car and tailed Skelton for the hour drive to her psychiatrist's office. "And when I say she followed my car...every time my car moved, her car moved. I can still remember thinking 'If I let go of this wheel, it would be so much easier. Nobody would have to worry about me anymore,'" Skelton said, adding that only the sight of her commander in the rearview mirror stopped her.

Together, they arranged for Kenyen to stay with a friend and found an out-

patient program at a nearby hospital. Davis made the hospital Skelton's place of duty for the next six weeks, so there would be no leave forms, no paperwork beyond what TRICARE required. The only problem was that it was the middle of the week and the program didn't start until the following Monday.

So Davis followed Skelton to her house, where she collected Skelton's medications and confiscated her weapons, even her butter knives. That was what had alarmed her most, Davis later explained—that Skelton knew exactly how she would kill herself.

"If there's a plan in place, that's very serious," Davis said. "If a person (says) 'Sometimes I think about it,' although that's serious, it's not quite to the next step. So when I asked her 'What exactly are you thinking about doing?' and she said hurting herself with one of her knives, that's a plan. It's scary."

#### **Recovery**

Skelton learned a lot about herself during her recovery, about how to handle her emotions and different ways to cope. She realized that she couldn't always control what happened to her, only how she responded to it.

But she also learned a lot about the

Army. Although Davis and Vejar had repeatedly told her everything would be OK, a part of her didn't believe them until she turned on C-Span to find Army Vice Chief of Staff Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli testifying before Congress about the climbing Army suicide rate. He urged Soldiers to get help.

It was a turning point for Skelton. He changed her life, she said. "It was OK. There was still life as a Soldier after being diagnosed. I listened, mesmerized, for like an hour. I still have that script. When they came out with the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program, I was jumping for joy, because somebody finally understood that we were struggling."

Equally important, Skelton still felt like part of a team. There wasn't a day that either Davis, Vejar, her first sergeant or the XO didn't call to check on her, they took her out to dinner and Vejar answered every time Skelton called at 3:00 a.m., desperate to talk to someone. They all remain in touch today.

"There's no checklist that says 'She's at the doctor. I don't have to worry any more,'" Davis said. "No. Caring does not go away."

The final portion of the Army suicide prevention training at HRC was scheduled soon after Skelton's return to work, and Davis worried about her reaction to the emotional training scenarios, which included a Soldier suicide. It also didn't help when some of the Soldiers, and even NCOs, in the audience laughed at the suicide as though it were a video game.

It hurt, Skelton said, but "I was so grateful, forever indebted, to the staff where I worked. They sat around me. They flanked me. I can remember thinking if somebody else in that audience needed help, they wouldn't want to tell anybody based on what they heard. It's sad for me to say that I was lucky, but I am."

"My civilian education and background helped me to know exactly what to do," Davis said. "But for my staff... the (Army) suicide prevention training... assisted a lot with giving Soldiers the courage to ask the question or to at

least...tell someone else.” If necessary, Davis continued, a commander can and should take a Soldier aside and say “You have an appointment with the chaplain,” or “You have an appointment with behavioral health. Nobody knows but us.”

The key is to know your Soldiers, Vejar added. “(Skelton’s) a success story, but she doesn’t have to be the only one. There’s different ways that people ask for help. We have to pay attention to our buddies, to our Soldiers, even to our leaders. It’s not bad to ask, ‘How are you doing today? Are you OK? Do you want to talk?’ It doesn’t take much. It’s not going to cost you anything. If somebody tells you ‘Help,’ get them help.

“I can tell you that from personal experience...a Soldier needed to talk...and I didn’t know how to deal with it.... I didn’t take him seriously. If you don’t take your Soldier seriously...you’re going to risk...going to bed sometimes and not being able to sleep.” He’s proud of Skelton, Vejar continued—proud, and grateful he too got a second chance.

### **A bright future**

Today, Skelton touches base with a therapist about once a week and continues to take one of her five medications, which she’ll probably need for life. She’s OK with that though, because she’s happy and she’s successful. She’s newly married to an Army sergeant and taking her husband’s name (Saffold), but most importantly, Kenyen is a happy, active 3-year-old.

A quartermaster career manager, Skelton recently passed the promotion board for sergeant first class. (At press time, she had expected to pin on her new rank sometime over the summer.) She’s in school for medical massage therapy with a physical therapy track, and hopes to specialize in treating post-traumatic stress patients one day.

Her story is featured on the new Army Shoulder to Shoulder suicide prevention video. (Look for the video under Training Videos at <http://www.armyg1.army.mil/hr/suicide/training.asp>.) She’s sharing it, she said, because she’s a strong Soldier, because

no one would ever suspect she’s been through such challenges.

“Don’t be afraid to talk about what’s wrong,” she said. “Get the help that you need. You can return to duty and...become stronger than ever because that’s one thing that’s not weighing you down anymore.” ❖

**Editor’s Note:** *For an Army psychiatrist’s take on suicide, post-traumatic stress disorder and other behavioral health issues, see the May issue of Soldiers magazine: <http://www.army.mil/article/55474/protecting-the-mental-health-of-the-force/>.*

### **A Soldier may need help if:**

- He talks/hints about committing suicide or hurting someone else.
- She plans to acquire the means to kill herself (weapons, pills, etc).
- He expresses a desire to die and/or has an obsession with death.
- She has a history of previous suicide attempts or a family history of suicide or violence.
- He was diagnosed with a serious medical condition or recently experienced a significant loss such as the death of a loved one.
- She abuses alcohol and other substances, or has a history of depression or other mental illnesses.
- He has been exposed to severe, prolonged and/or unmanageable stress.
- She has an overpowering sense of powerlessness, helplessness and hopelessness.
- He begins to give away his possessions and finalize his personal affairs.
- She withdraws from friends and activities.
- His behavior becomes bizarre, unusual or otherwise out of character.
- She has relationship problems.
- He has financial problems.

- She has work-related problems, or experiences other career, academic or personal setbacks, including civilian job loss if she is in the Guard or Reserve.
- He is undergoing a major life transition such as retirement or military discharge.
- She is facing disciplinary or legal action.

### **Suicide risk is highest when:**

- The Soldier sees no way out and fears things may get worse.
- His predominant emotions are hopelessness and helplessness.
- She can only see the negative things in her life.
- His judgment is impaired by the use of alcohol or other substances.

*(The above risk factors are from the Army Public Health Command’s “Suicide Prevention: Warning Signs & Risk Factors” tip card, which can be viewed or ordered at <https://usaphcapps.amedd.army.mil/HIOShoppingCart/viewItem.aspx?id=114>.)*

### **Where to turn for help**

Military OneSource  
[www.militaryonesource.com](http://www.militaryonesource.com)  
800-342-9647

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline  
<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>  
800-273-TALK (8255)

Wounded Soldier and Family Hotline  
800-984-8523

Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury  
[www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx](http://www.dcoe.health.mil/24-7help.aspx)  
866-966-1020

Army Suicide Prevention Program  
<http://www.preventsuicide.arm.mil>

Army Behavioral Health  
<http://www.behavioral-health.army.mil>

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### Sgt. Aaron Manis

Sgt. Aaron Manis was a Bradley gunner on patrol in Iraq when an insurgent sniper changed his life. After multiple surgeries, months of recovery and the loss of his right eye, Manis asked to be returned to active duty. He was right-handed, but he

was determined to re-learn to shoot—with his other eye—and he did. Today, he serves in the 101st Airborne Division, ready to deploy and answer the call of his nation again.

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# Take 5

before the climb!

## Go Climb a Rock

- Learn how to rock climb on walls at a gym or similar facility
- Have certified safety equipment and know how to use it
- Before stepping off, check with others who have already climbed there
- Check your knots, helmet, ropes and belays
- Always have enough rope
- Climb with a buddy
- Pay attention to weather



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NEVER FORGET



SEPT. 11, 2001