



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

Vol. 47, No. 33

Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

Aug. 14, 2020

Soldier safety

Protocols in place to guard against coronavirus

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — When you move a 5,000 Soldier brigade combat team anywhere — whether it is to the backwoods of the unit's home station for a field training exercise or halfway across the country to the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk to train for future combat operations — safety is paramount.

When there are more than 1,000 pieces of moveable equipment, weapons — both big and small — and personnel, safety always plays a major role. Throw in a COVID-19 pandemic and the safety protocols and mitigation increases exponentially.

Not only are commanders and leaders concerned with the health and safety of Soldiers in their charge, but their Families back home also want to have their fears allayed.

That's exactly what the team of medical and S-1 personnel from the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and the JRTC and Fort aim for as JRTC Rotation 20-09 gets set to kick off Aug. 17 with an air assault operation.

The last two weeks were spent moving the BCT's equipment from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, to the JRTC via barges at the Central Louisiana Regional Port in Alexandria, and getting the Soldiers settled into North Fort.

The last group of 75 Soldiers arrived at the JRTC Operations Group Clam Shell on North Fort via bus late Aug. 12. Maj. Laura Rollins, the 2nd BCT S-1, explained how each group was processed as part of the team's RSO&I — reception, staging, onward-movement and integration at JRTC.

"Our responsibility as the S-1 and medical side is to bring them (Soldiers) in, manifest them and do a medical screening," she said. "If there is any additional screening needed, we have our PA (physician assistants) and brigade nurse on hand if they need to swab (COVID-19 test) or they show any signs or symptoms."

Rollins said once a Soldier is cleared — tests take about 2 hours to come back — they are returned to duty. The Soldiers are then briefed, go back to their bus and are transported to where they will stay until the rotation kicks off. She said it takes her team, which consists of



Capt. Brent Turpin, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division head nurse (seated), conducts a COVID-19 screening on one of the unit's Soldiers after he arrived at North Fort Polk Aug. 12.

Soldiers from both the 2nd BCT and Fort Polk's 32nd Hospital Center, about 2 hours to process 400 Soldiers.

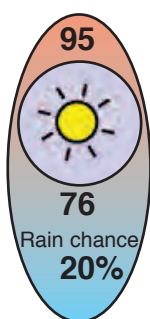
Soldiers began rolling in to the reception site on Aug. 2 and Rollins said it's been a steady flow to keep

everyone processed.

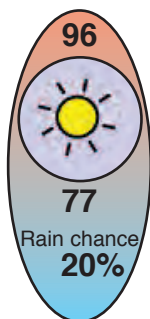
If a Soldier tests positive for COVID-19, Rollins said the Soldier is isolated and placed into a confined area set aside for that express

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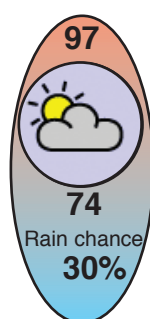
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Saturday



Sunday

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Viewpoint

In our view

Guardian staff asked the JRTC and Fort Polk community,
"What was your favorite subject or class in school and why?"
Here are their responses:



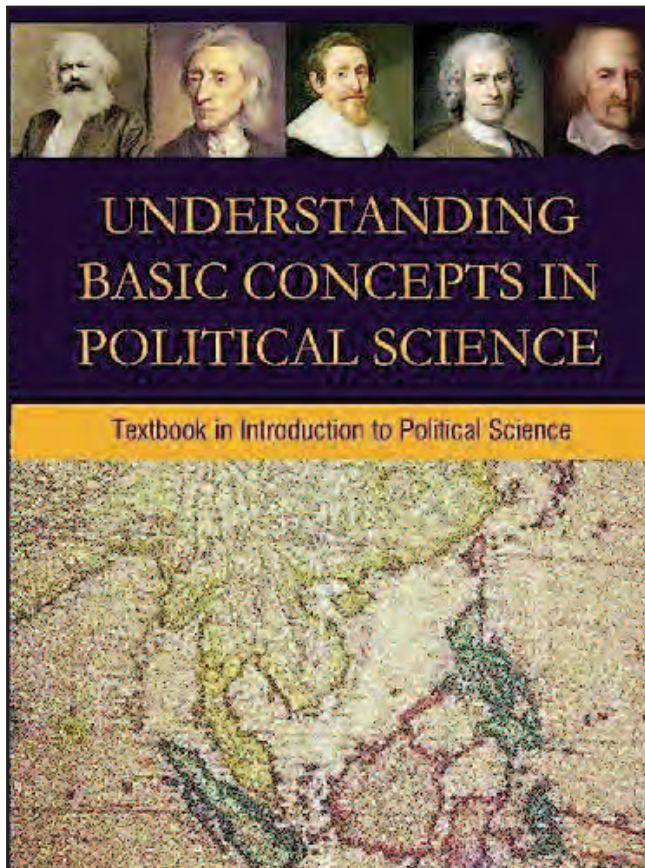
Reese Prichard: "Graduation — this meant it was all over!"



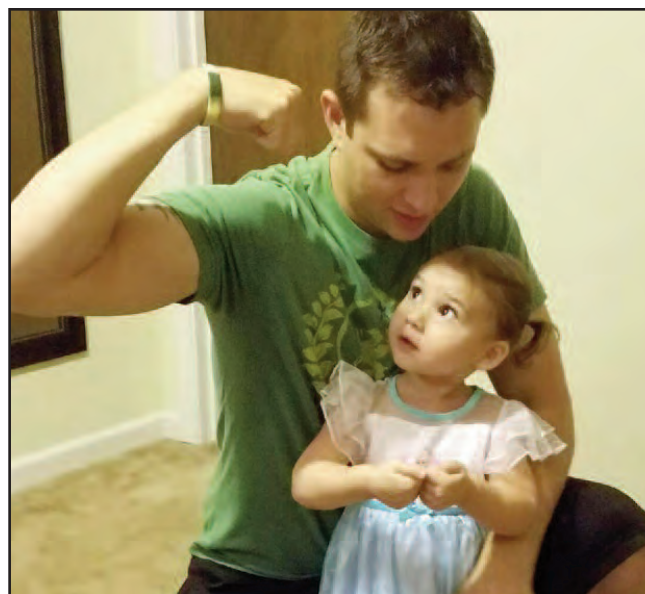
Kathleen Volak: "English is my favorite because it incorporates every other subject. You can learn about a particular time in history class, and that is the era in which a book is set. You are exposed to a certain scientific concept, and someone wrote a short story about it. It's a very efficient subject because no matter what you study you're never wasting your time."



Linda Perkins: "I've always loved history. Whenever we go on a trip, I am always interested in the history of that town or place. We have been blessed to travel across the United States and Europe — so much history to enjoy!"



Claudio Delgado: "Political Science was my favorite. It helps every day, ordinary citizens become engaged citizens by creating political efficacy, thus helping propel the citizens' social structure and communities."



Gregory Graham: "My favorite subject was always gym class. From learning the science of the cardiovascular system to learning how people build coordination — physical education has always fascinated me. It is amazing how PE helps you live a healthier lifestyle."



Guardian

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The **Guardian** is published weekly by the Public Affairs Office, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

The **Guardian** can be found on the JRTC and Fort Polk web site at home.army.mil/polk and the JRTC and Fort Polk Facebook page at [@JRTCandFortPolk/](https://www.facebook.com/JRTCandFortPolk/). **Guardian** archives can also be found on the JRTC and Fort Polk website.

Links to the **Guardian** are also included in all-users emails to government email users and by request to non-military units. To be included on all-users messages email kimberly.k.reischling.civ@mail.mil.

All editorial content of the **Guardian** is prepared, edited, provided and approved by the Public Affairs Office, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.

For more information on Fort Polk units and happenings visit the following Facebook pages: [@JRTCOperationsGrp](https://www.facebook.com/JRTCOperationsGrp), [@BayneJonesACH](https://www.facebook.com/BayneJonesACH) or [@fortpolkmwr](https://www.facebook.com/fortpolkmwr).

Briefs

DA photos

While the Department of the Army has removed the requirement for DA photos to be part of promotion and selection packets, they are still a matter of military record. Fort Polk's DA photo lab is now accepting appointments, but COVID-19 mitigation measures remain in place.

Soldiers must wear their uniforms to the appointment, as the changing rooms are unavailable. It is recommended that Soldiers carry their jackets on a hanger.

Masks must be worn until the photographer is ready to take the photo. After the picture is taken, the mask must worn again.

Soldiers are asked to bring their own pens to sign work orders.

Please refer to AR 640-30 regarding regulations dealing with DA photo requirements.

Call 531-4254/6818/6428 to make an appointment.

Suicide prevention

There will be Ask, Care and Escort Suicide Intervention skills training Sept. 4, 11, 18 and 25 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in bldg 4275 on Polk Army Airfield.

The course, recommended for sergeants and above, teaches participants to recognize when someone may have thoughts of suicide and how to properly address the situation. Masks will be mandatory.

For more information, contact John Pilgrim at john.l.pilgrim.civ@mail.mil or 531-6187.

Vehicle release

The Directorate of Emergency Services Traffic Section will release the following vehicles to a towing company for disposal on Aug. 19, if they remain unclaimed.

Vehicles are listed with the last four numbers of their VIN.

If one of these vehicles belongs to you, please contact the Fort Polk Police Traffic Section at 531-1806/2677.

2002	Pontiac	Bonneville	3776
2003	Chevrolet	Cavalier	7798
2002	Pontiac	Firebird	4585
2002	Ford	Taurus	0589
2005	Nissan	Sentra	7413
2010	Chevrolet	Malibu	9609
1999	Jeep	Cherokee	5435
2002	Nissan	Altima	5680
2012	Toyota	Tacoma	0296
2007	Pontiac	Grand Prix	1872
2005	Mitsubishi	Galant GTS	8409
2007	Toyota	Camry	7497
2008	Ford	F250	1075
2002	Subaru	Impreza	6083



Fort Polk can access new Army Digital Garrison app

By DEVON SUITS
Army News Service

WASHINGTON — The Army has launched the new Digital Garrison mobile app that provides information and facilitates access to a full array of on-post services, as part of a partnership with the Army and Air Force Exchange Service.

The app, which is available for the Fort Polk community and can be downloaded on Android and Apple devices, provides users with secure access to facility information and other "quality-of-life" services by consolidating data from three related networks, said Scott Malcom, Army Installation Management Command public affairs director.

"It puts real-time installation information in everybody's pockets," Malcom said. "There are hundreds of thousands of people that access Army installations every day. Almost every one carries a cell phone. The app will add value to their time spent on an installation — whether it is to live, work, train or play."

Within the easy-to-use app, Soldiers, Families, veterans and civilians living or working at a Digital Garrison-enabled post can access resources about their local exchange; Army Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation program; and other services.

More than 60 installations are represented on the app, with plans to add more in future updates, Malcom said. Joint bases operated by other services and select garrisons without sites on the networks that feed the app will not be incorporated in the initial launch.

Users can customize the app to meet their needs. Digital Garrison will include an installation directory, gate locations and hours, fitness and recreation options, weather, event informa-

tion and more, he said.

Soldiers and families who are new to an area can also access in-processing and other newcomer material before a permanent change of station, Malcom said.

"When they do move, they enjoy the continuity provided by an enterprise solution," he added.

Digital Garrison also provides an in-app shopping function through ShopMyExchange.com, along with local AAFES shopping and restaurant details. It also features a mobile wallet function where shoppers can use their MILITARY STAR card.

Program officials are set to continually improve the app through daily updates, based on in-app feedback from users, in addition to regularly scheduled major updates.

One of the first major updates will include local commissary information and a link to Click2Go, the Defense Commissary Agency's online grocery ordering portal and curbside pickup service, but only if the capability is available at a given installation.

"Feedback is important to us," Malcom said. "The app includes a feedback portion where users can communicate and help us shape it going forward. Users can count on the fact that we will continually optimize the app after launch."

Push notifications for emergencies are also an important feature of the app, Malcom said. For example, installation officials may send a pre-drafted notification during an active-shooter situation or at times of inclement weather.

Leaders will also have the ability to write their own customized messages and announcements to distribute to the force through the app after

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Army mobile app gives Soldiers remote management tools

By JOSEPH LACDAN

Army News Service

WASHINGTON — As part of the “This is My Squad” initiative, the Army is developing a new mobile app to help leaders better connect with squad members and manage everyday tasks.

Sgt. Maj. of the Army Michael A. Grinston recruited a team of 15 noncommissioned officers from a variety of career fields to give feedback and help build the app’s features. The app will be introduced at this year’s Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting in October.

The app development squad will work with Army Futures Command to explore mobile solutions for training management, counseling and sponsorship.

“We’re really looking at how to give a squad leader an app — like a leader’s book — right there in the palm of their hands,” Grinston said during a virtual town hall at Fort Campbell, Kentucky on Aug. 3. “It does more than just record data.”

Grinston said he has had discussions about adding a virtual counseling feature that allows NCOs to document counseling sessions with Soldiers from their phones. The application will replace the Army Training and Doctrine Command’s “Squad Leader” app, which let NCOs and junior Soldiers access learning and development tools. No release date has been announced and development of the project will continue into the next fiscal year.

Under the “This is My Squad” (TIMS) initiative, Grinston said that leaders focus on the positive aspects of their Soldiers’ lives.

The effort involves getting to know squad members on a deeper level by building trust and learning their backgrounds. TIMS also emphasizes taking ownership and responsibility while focusing on leadership.

“It’s not about one program. It’s about the leader in the middle,” Grinston said. “If we could focus on leadership, then all these things that are happening around us get better. It’s really looking at a positive culture, where we look at



Staff Sgt. Nilberto Navarro, center, a squad leader in the 51st Transportation Company, briefs his Soldiers and performs pre-combat checks prior to the start of a training patrol July 29, 2015, in Sennelager, Germany. As part of the “This is My Squad” initiative, the Army is developing a new mobile app to help leaders better connect with squad members and manage everyday tasks.

2ND LT KYLE HENSLEY/ U.S. ARMY

things in a positive way.”

Grinston said TIMS lays the foundation for Project Inclusion. That Army-wide initiative focuses on eliminating practices that discriminate while striving to improve diversity and equity.

Building trust with other Soldiers makes difficult conversations on race possible, Grinston said.

“That’s what it means to be in your squad. You don’t shy away from topics that are difficult to discuss,” Grinston said. “Because, if you trust that the person on the other side is a valued member of your team, then you know they’re not going to judge you. They’re going to help you if you’re going through difficult times, and you’re comfortable talking to them.”

The deaths of Minnesota resident George Floyd and Spc. Vanessa Guillen from Fort Hood, Texas, recently brought the national discussions

of race to the forefront. Army senior leaders have pledged for a greater examination of racial diversity, equity and inclusion within the Army’s ranks.

In June, the service announced it would start removing official photos from promotion boards to eliminate unconscious bias. The Army also called for a re-evaluation of race disparities within its legal justice system.

Grinston said he had emotional family discussions regarding diversity and inclusion with his 18-year-old daughter. Grinston said TIMS could apply to multiple squads in a Soldier’s life, including their Family.

“There was a lot of questions about diversity,” he said. “She was struggling with it. That’s what it means to be in my Family; it means we sit down and we talk about these difficult times and what’s going on. You don’t just ignore it.”

DHA to recognize COVID-19 front-line innovators and leaders, new award made

HEALTH.MIL

The response to COVID-19 has placed front-line health care heroes in the spotlight while championing safe patient care. The Defense Health Agency is honoring those who show resiliency, leadership and ingenuity during the pandemic through the creation of a new peer-to-peer recognition mechanism hosted by the DHA Patient Safety Program.

This new accolade, known as the Ready and Resilient Award, allows staff of military hospitals and clinics to recognize their peers for two attributes which are critical during difficult situations, explained Dr. Brian Lein, assistant director for Health Care Administration. Exemplary efforts of teamwork and team resilience will be recognized, as will examples of individual vigilance to ensure safe, reliable care for all patients.

“COVID-19 brought personal and professional threats of uncertainties and emotions that could have deterred, distracted or derailed the safe delivery of care,” said Heidi King, DHA Patient Safety program manager for Medical Affairs. But, across the Military Health System, professionals went above and beyond to improve patient and staff safety. From infection control/prevention to innovative safety measures, King has heard stories from the field of the tireless efforts of health-care staff.

Recent nominees received recognition for their efforts in developing and implementing virtual check-in processes, pop-up screening tents and the creation of protective shields for staff, among other examples.

“This award is a way for staff to share their story and celebrate peers at all levels across the MHS,” King said. The award will be ongoing,

recognizing both clinical and non-clinical professional staff to highlight extraordinary efforts throughout the DoD during this unprecedented time.

An April memo sent by Dr. Paul Cordts, deputy assistant director, Medical Affairs, focused on mitigating risks to improve patient safety. In the memo he highlighted principles under Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety. The Ready and Resiliency Award program is a component of TeamSTEPPS, which is an evidence-based teamwork system designed to improve the quality, safety and efficiency of healthcare. TeamSTEPPS consists of a collection of instructions, materials and tools to help drive a successful teamwork initiative from the initial planning to implementation

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Operation Wingman provides support for Fort Polk Soldiers

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — Soldiers from Fort Polk's 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division traveled to the United States Military Academy at West Point to conduct cadet summer training from June 5 to Aug. 17 — Task Force Ramrod.

As a world class training platform, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Soldiers were at West Point to do what they do best — train incoming cadets, said Sgt. 1st Class Jerry L. McMillian, Fort Polk Ready and Resilient Performance Center Program Manager.

Stressful might be too mild a word for the challenges that the Soldiers of 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment were dealing with, so support from home seemed to be a natural step.

"We had a request from 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div to utilize the R2 Performance Center's resources to support their Soldiers at West Point. That set the goal in motion to virtually bring in resiliency and wellness support based on their current operational environment," he said.

Chap. (Capt.) Ryan Pearse, 2nd Battalion, 2nd Infantry Regiment, was on the ground at West Point and said, after fighting through all the COVID-19 restrictions, Fort Polk Soldiers conducting the summer cadet training were busy trying to fit three months of training into two months.

"Also, training doesn't stop for us just because we are at West Point. In that sense, we are doing two missions at the same time. We are continuing to train our force while training the future leaders of America," he said.

Pearse said they don't have an R2 team representative at West Point with them; instead, they decided to request support from Fort Polk, integrating behavioral health, Army

Wellness and more into their environment at West Point.

"Senior leaders know these topics; but to many team leaders, this is brand new information, and they are the ones we want getting this information. One of our goals is to build up team leaders who are in charge of three or four Soldiers," he said. "High risk Soldiers — the ones needing this behavioral health, wellness and resiliency message — are our junior Soldiers, and the team leaders are the ones interacting the most with those Soldiers. We have to make sure team leaders know the resources available if any junior Soldiers on their team need help, free of charge, on Fort Polk," he said.

That's when Operation Wingman, a task force that falls under the auspices of Fort Polk's R2 program came into play.

The Fort Polk R2 program's mission is to support the Home of Heroes by providing training that improves individuals' and units' resilience and performance. It also provides guidance and resources for master resilience trainers and their commanders to execute the R2 Program and share best practices across the force.

Operation Wingman takes those same initiatives and applies them to cases where support is needed for Fort Polk Soldiers training away from Fort Polk.

McMillian gathered his team to include the Army Wellness Center, and Operation Wingman presented its program to Fort Polk Soldiers stationed at West Point Aug. 6-7.

"We provided education, skill sets from our performance experts and information on our services," said McMillian.

Jessica Burgett, JRTC and Fort Polk R2 Performance Center performance expert, participated in the Operation Wingman program. Burgett said one of the most important things Operation Wingman



3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division Soldiers train West Point cadets in the proper ways to rappel down a 75 foot rock formation.

provided Soldiers was information regarding resources available on post once they return.

"You can't access an asset unless you know it's there," she said.

Burgett said that she often feels like the R2 Performance Center and Army Wellness Center are underutilized.

"One of the first things we have to do is make sure they (Soldiers) realize we even exist, because we have so many things to offer," she said.

Burgett said their presentation provided information about the major trainings and courses R2 offers.

"We broke down what we pro-

vide by explaining who can participate, when it's offered and what exactly the training is about," she said.

Burgett said now that Operation Wingman has provided that information and more, she hopes Soldiers will reach out to R2 when they come back.

"That's what we are here for," she said.

Fort Polk's R2 Performance Center teaches upcoming resiliency trainers how to perform resiliency training at the unit level and to work with individual Soldiers.

Burgett said whatever perform-

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Garrison

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the first major update scheduled to occur at the end of August, Malcom said.

Residents of on-post housing can link to their installation's privatized housing partner, he said. Personnel living in military housing will eventually have a similar capability.

Digital Garrison will become the Army enterprise mobile app for installations, Malcom added. Local app solutions will cease, ensuring all applicable garrisons comply with the Federal Information Security Management Act and other cybersecurity protocols.

The partnership that brought the Digital Garrison app to life started in July 2019, Malcom said. At that time, the Exchange, IMCOM and Army MWR were all developing apps to essentially do

the same thing — provide information about on-post services or activities.

"The Exchange is honored to partner with the Army to ensure the 125-year-old Exchange benefit remains relevant to its communities," said Karen Cardin, AAFES senior vice president for customer experience.

The team released a Digital Garrison beta version in January, which fueled a more significant test of it in early March. During the limited user evaluation a total of 10 installations were chosen by program officials to participate, Malcom said.

"During that process, we learned how garrisons should prepare their online data to optimize its presentation in the app," he said. "We learned that the better a garrison maintains their

websites that feed Digital Garrison, the better the garrison is represented in it. The pilot allowed us to work out all the details and provide clear instructions to all the installations feeding the app to prepare their data for transmission."

The decision to create the app shows the Army's eagerness to transition from the "industrial age to the information age," Malcom said.

"The Exchange worked side-by-side with IMCOM to put real-time information in the hands of Soldiers, families and civilians," Cardin added.

"Digital Garrison is another chapter in our long relationship with Army families, allowing us to fulfill our mission to make life better for those who serve."

Moral courage personified

Geronimo NCOs set standard for peers to emulate

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — They are often unceremoniously referred to as “the most hated unit in the Army.”

The Soldiers of the world famous 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment (Geronimos) have as their mission to make rotational units passing through the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk experience their worst day of combat in the rolling piney hills of JRTC rather than down-range in a foreign country.

But, as J.R.R. Tolkien writes in his Lord of the Rings trilogy, “not all that is gold glitters.”

Two of Geronimo’s finest recently bore that fact out with their actions on two different occasions.

Staff Sgt. Troy Bradford, Baker Company, 1st Bn, 509th Inf Reg (Abn), was at Fort Benning, Georgia, to attend the Army’s Advanced Leader Course. His second day there, Bradford tested positive for COVID-19. He was removed from the course for medical purposes and placed in a positive isolation quarantine camp for 14 days.

For his first few days in the camp, Bradford said he sat back and watched the goings on around him, taking notes on ways the living conditions could be improved.

“When you arrive at the camp, you carry all of your belongings to the CQ (charge of quarters) desk, and then you are sent to the laundry room to be counseled and given the times you have to check in daily,” he said.

Soldiers in the camp, mostly consisting of basic or advanced individual training trainees, had vital signs and accountability checked four times a day: 5 a.m., 8 a.m., 1 p.m. and 5 p.m., Bradford said.

Next for Bradford was a room assignment.

“It was dirty,” he said. “Because of COVID-19 consideration, the staff was not able to check the rooms to see if they were clean when Soldiers left. If the departing Soldier trashes the room when they leave, the next Soldier has a trashed room.”

Bradford said he scrounged a few cleaning supplies to make his room liveable. He said he then began taking notes on the conditions of the camp.

“The first thing I noticed was the food,” he said. “Breakfast was supposed to be at 8 a.m., but often didn’t arrive until after 9 a.m. Lunch would come anywhere from 1-2 p.m., and dinner at 4:30 p.m.”

Bradford said portions were small and lacked items such as fruits, condiments or salads.

“I started making suggestions to the cadre, such as could we start getting more nutritious food,” he said. “Could we get more vegetables and fruit? They said they would try.”

The food selection, lack of cleaning supplies and living conditions led Bradford to compose an email and send it to the post commander, post command sergeant major and garrison commander.

“A lot of things started changing then,” he said. “I waited until I had plenty of things to ask about before sending the email.”

As if that wasn’t enough to test Bradford’s



Bradford

moral courage, he was also faced with a dilemma that could have cost the life of another Soldier.

Bradford said the CQ cadre called and told him a young Soldier had passed out in his room. Bradford said he responded and found the Soldier unresponsive, not breathing and with a weak pulse.

“I immediately began a sternum rub and first aid,” he said. “I picked him up and carried him down the stairs because I had no medical supplies. I took him to where the cadre was.”

Bradford said when he arrived near the CQ desk, he could not find assistance. He said he was told they were not allowed to come in, that he should carry the Soldier to the gate where EMT personnel could pick him up.

“I put him on my shoulders, carried him to the gate, continued the sternum rub until EMS finally showed up and hauled him off,” he said. “That’s what really drove me to write the email,” he said. “They put me in touch with Colonel Wylie, and we sent emails back and forth about what was going on in the camp.”

Col. Ryan B. Wylie is the commander of 198th Infantry Brigade One Station Training Unit, and commands the isolation camp.

Wylie wrote Bradford’s battalion commander, Lt. Col. John H. Moltz, and Command Sgt. Maj. Vladimir A. Querales about their Soldier’s “moral courage.”

“Staff Sergeant Bradford, on his own, stepped up to assume a key leadership position in the camp during his two-week stay,” Wylie wrote. “At one point, recognizing there were things in the camp that needed to change for the benefit of the Soldiers he was responsible for, Staff Sergeant Bradford had the moral courage to speak up and alert senior leaders, including myself.”

Wylie said because of Bradford’s input and suggestions, important changes were made in how the camp operates. He also thanked Bradford for his quick response in helping a fellow Soldier in duress.

“Bottom line, I am impressed with this NCO,” Wylie said. “He has represented your battalion and JRTC extremely well.”

Bradford said he just did what any noncommissioned officer should do.

“That’s the definition of being a leader: You always put someone else’s needs before your own,” he said. “It states that in the NCO Creed. For me, I wanted to see real change for these Soldiers; that’s why I sent it up so high.”

Bradford said moral courage is not something you learn, you either have it or you don’t.

“There are a lot of NCOs in this company that would put other’s needs before their own,” he said. “Without leaders who have moral courage the Army will grow stagnant and Soldiers will not want to do their jobs.”

Moral courage is important; combine it with physical courage and you find Geronimos are indeed a rare breed. Sgt. Patrick Maher, Delta Troop, 1st Bn, 509th Inf Reg (Abn), was headed to Alexandria on La. Hwy 28 when he saw a dog run in front of his vehicle.

“I slowed down, and then right behind the dog, I saw a little kid run out into the road,” Maher said. “I immediately pulled over to the median, jumped out of my car, ran into the road and grabbed the kid, then took the kid to the median.”

Maher said about 10 seconds after he had moved the child out of the road, a passing vehicle plowed into the dog, killing it.



Maher

Another motorist, Retired Navy (Capt.) Donald J. Stafford, also stopped and was with Maher when the dog was struck. Maher said Stafford called the Vernon Parish Sheriff’s Office.

Maher said he did his best to comfort the youngster, whom he estimated to be about 3 years old. Maher said he asked the tot where he lived, and the child pointed down a long, tree covered path that eventually led them to a trailer.

Maher said he left the child with Stafford, then walked up to the trailer’s door.

“The door was wide open, so I went up to it, knocked several times and identified myself, but no one answered,” he said. “I didn’t want to walk in because I might have gotten shot.”

Maher said he went back to Stafford and they waited for the deputy sheriff to arrive. Once the deputy was on the scene, he entered the trailer

Please see **Soldiers**, page 8

Rotation

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purpose — separating those who are positive from those who are not.

“They also take those personnel who were on the same bus with the Soldier who tests positive and place them in quarantine,” Rollins said. “It’s usually 14 days, but it can be expedited to 7 days depending on if they show symptoms or not.”

Rollins said mitigation efforts are in place throughout the Soldiers’ trek from Fort Campbell to Fort Polk.

“The buses can carry 52 but we only but 26 on a bus,” she said. “They have to wear their masks and maintain social distancing throughout the trip.”

Additionally, Rollins said each of the Soldiers was tested for COVID-19 prior to leaving Fort Campbell.

“We had a testing site set up,” she said. “If they tested positive, they did not come. They could retest, but they had to test negative twice to be cleared to come.”

Once the rotation begins Monday, Rollins said Soldiers will still be required to follow COVID-19 protocols, to include wearing masks and following social distancing guidelines when feasible.

“It will be difficult, but I think with the safety measures and discipline, we’ll be OK,” she said. “We’re the first brigade combat team to go through this, and we’ll see how it goes.”

Rollins said there is a “little bit” of pressure knowing that big Army is watching to see how the 2nd BCT handles the rotation with the COVID-19 protocols.

“But we’ll get through it,” she said. “We’ve been doing this a while.”

Once Rotation 20-09 begins, it’s the job of the physician assistants to provide medical assistance to the Soldiers.

Maj. Lance Oldorf, 2nd BCT PA, said caring for 5,000 Soldiers in an austere environment with the threat of a pandemic, can be a daunting task, but one he and his team are up for. He said the work is broken into two parts: Pre-rotation and rotation.

“Our job today is to screen Soldiers who have failed their initial screening or answered yes to any of the six questions they are asked in the pre-screen,” he said. “Once they come back here they sit in these chairs that are spaced six feet apart, maintaining the COVID-19 mitigation requirements.”

Oldorf said his team interviews the Soldiers again to see if they need to be held at the pre-screen site and tested.

Once the rotation begins, Oldorf said every Soldier would have their temperature checked twice at day — at morning and evening chow.

“In addition, for every tactical assembly area, where every battalion is located, they have a set of medical providers that are there to answer any questions, and if the command or Soldier has symptoms that are concerning to them, they are taken to the aid station and evaluated,” he said. “If they need testing, or even if it’s something not COVID related, such as a spider bite, they will be taken care of.”

Oldorf echoed Rollins’ comments on how the 2nd BCT, 101st Abn Div would handle a rotation while maintaining COVID-19 protocol.

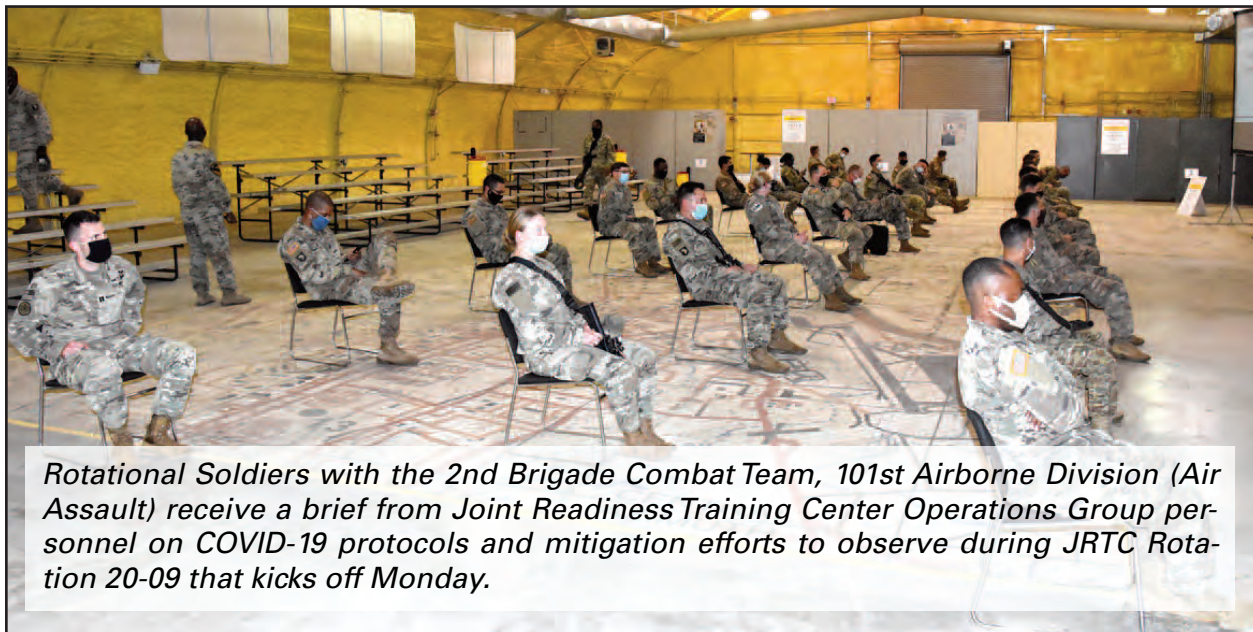
“Utilize the leadership,” he said. “It’s a leader-



Rotational Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) arrive at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Aug. 12 after a bus ride from Fort Campbell, Ky., for Rotation 20-09, maintaining Covid-19 protocols.



Rotational Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) in process at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk before joining the rest of their unit for JRTC Rotation 20-09.



Rotational Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) receive a brief from Joint Readiness Training Center Operations Group personnel on COVID-19 protocols and mitigation efforts to observe during JRTC Rotation 20-09 that kicks off Monday.

Please see **Rotation**, page 8

Rotation

Continued from page 7

ship-driven entity to make sure those COVID mitigation strategies are enforced. It's saying if you can't stay 6 feet apart, then wear the mask."

The leaders must remain engaged with their Soldiers, Oldorf said.

"If they (leaders) see symptoms that are starting to develop, or they have concerns, the leaders know to take that Soldier out of the mix and push them over to the aid station where they can get evaluated properly," he said.

While taking care of RTU Soldiers is always at the forefront of operations at JRTC and Fort Polk, it's also important to remember there is a large force of permanent party Soldiers and civilians responsible for overseeing the training, including the world famous JRTC Opposing Force: The 1st Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment (Airborne) Geronimos, often referred to — respectfully — as the most hated unit in the Army.

"We're here to train and beat Geronimo, but all the while doing what we can to mitigate COVID."

Maj. LANCE OLDORF
2nd BCT, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)

"We check everyone going into and out of the 'box' (JRTC training area) every time they enter or exit," said Lt. Col. Michael Davidson, JRTC and Fort Polk command surgeon.

"We have a team set up that checks the temperature of each person entering the box, then as

they leave, their temperature is checked again."

Those protocols were put in place during Rotation 20-08 in July with the 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade, and Davidson said they will continue for the foreseeable future.

"The health and safety of our Soldiers, civilians and rotational Soldiers is our No. 1 concern," Davidson said.

COVID-19 protocols have been emphasized enough that Oldorf said Soldiers should understand the importance of following the rules.

"They know they are not supposed to do anything that would jeopardize the mission, and COVID-19 mitigation is part of that mission," he said. "We're here to train and beat Geronimo, but all the while doing what we can to mitigate COVID."

We're here to fight and win, and keep our Soldiers safe."



Spc. Stephanie Rivera, 32nd Hospital Center, Fort Polk, checks the temperature of an inprocessing 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) Soldier in JRTC Ops Gp's North Fort Polk clam shell Aug. 12.



Spc. Stephanie Rivera, 32nd Hospital Center, Fort Polk, checks the temperature of Staff Sgt. Ronny Garza, Joint Readiness Training Center Task Force 2, after she asked him to remove his mask to facilitate the test, before he heads into the Joint Readiness Training Center "box" Aug. 12.

CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Soldiers

Continued from page 6

and found the child's parents sleeping.

Maher said he held on to the child while the deputy talked with the child's parents. He said he saw nothing special about his actions in removing the child from the four-lane highway.

"I think it's something that anyone with half a brain would do," he said. "God allowed me to be there at that time to save that child. I just did what I did."

Maher said his military training came in handy when he was faced with the prospect of the child being in danger.

"I didn't hesitate, and once I made a decision, I stuck with it," he said. "I just did what I thought was the right thing."

Stafford, who wrote to Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, said he was impressed with Maher's quick thinking and actions.

"The police initially got no response when they knocked on the door, and drew their weapons in preparation for a tactical entry," Stafford wrote.

"Sergeant Maher instinctively moved the child to a nearby spot providing cover and concealment."

Stafford said he could tell the police officer was "visibly upset" seeing the speeding highway traffic and deceased dog, realizing the child could have easily been killed if not for Maher's

quick actions.

"Sir, Sergeant Maher's actions in these difficult circumstances were the visible embodiment of Army Core Values," he wrote. "It was a privilege meeting him."

For Moltz, it was nice to hear from others what he said he's known all along — Geronimos lead the way.

"Every day in Geronimo and across Fort Polk, there are NCOs who are setting the example for others to follow," Moltz said. "It means a lot when other units and retirees remind us that we are surrounded by greatness. The NCOs and Soldiers of Fort Polk are what make this a great place to live and work."

Fort Polk Soldiers awarded for work at North Fort Screening Site

By **ANGIE THORNE**

Public affairs officer

FORT POLK, La. — An award ceremony was held Aug. 7 at the North Fort screening center — a temporary structure established to screen mission essential Soldiers and support staff during Joint Readiness Training Center rotations.

A joint team of Soldiers from the 32nd Hospital Center and 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment worked to establish and oversee the first combat training center screening site of its kind to initiate COVID-19 measures and mitigate the dangers of the coronavirus.

The screening site's purpose is to have a central location to check temperatures, ask health and wellness questions and, if necessary, help trace anyone who might show COVID-19 symptoms. That's possible because common access cards are scanned each time a person goes through the screening site.

In recognition of their hard work, Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank presented a Commanding General's Certificate of Achievement to each Soldier that participated in setting up and running the North Fort screening site. In addition, a few Soldiers were awarded commendation medals.

Frank told the Soldiers standing in the socially-distanced formation that they have and will continue to have a huge impact on JRTC and Fort Polk rotations. "We are here today to recognize you for the hard work you did in June.

"You performed and processed 23,000 screening checks during the 4th Security Force Assistance Brigade rotation. You have been our front line of defense," he said.

Frank said he knows the Soldiers of the screening staff have a tough job.

"The days and nights are long and hot, and the work is hard, but what you do is essential," he said. "You are an unbelievable staff of exceptional professionals. Whether you are in 32nd HC or Geronimo, you have worked as a team to run this screening site and make sure individuals followed all COVID-19 procedures," he said.

Frank said senior Army leadership was watching the first large-scale collective training event since the COVID-19 pandemic began and couldn't believe the number of completed screenings when they heard it.

"You guys checked out everybody — Geronimo Soldiers, staff, contractors, role players and rotational Soldiers — and you made sure that the rotation went off with no problems. No Soldiers came down with COVID-19 during the rotation. Based on those results, the Army has a lot of confidence in you," he said.

Rotation 20-09 will be even bigger, so the mission isn't done, said Frank.

"With 5,000 Soldiers headed to the box in the next rotation, there's probably going to be even more work for you to do," he said.

Frank said but having a team of Soldiers that performs screenings in an organized and professional manner has motivated people to come through the health screening station.

"That's pretty amazing and we thank you for your efforts," he said. "What you do is greatly appreciated," he said.

Staff Sgt. Michael Garcia, 32nd HC clinic operations noncommissioned officer in charge, said he doesn't think he did anything extraordinary.

"We just did our jobs and did them well," he said.



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, (center) thanks the Soldiers from the 32nd Hospital Center and 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, Aug. 7 at the North Fort screening site for their hard work in setting up an onsite location capable of administering COVID-19 screening to Soldiers during rotation 20-08. Command Sgt. Maj. Michael C. Henry, post command sergeant major, (left) stands at his side. Frank then presented the Soldiers with the Commanding General's Certificate of Achievement. In addition, some Soldiers received commendation medals.

Garcia said JRTC and Fort Polk provided the help and assets needed to get the screening site ready for success.

"They made our job easy. The biggest difficulty we faced was the unknown because we've never been in a situation like this before," he said.

Garcia said recognition for their hard work by senior leadership is nice.

"It makes me feel good. What we are doing here is protecting everyone participating in the rotation from outside influences and giving them the opportunity to do what they are here to do — train and get ready to deploy," he said.

Sgt. Keegan Reeves, 509th Inf Reg line medic and squad leader, said the screening site created a safety bubble to ensure there is no COVID-19 transmission.

"We want to make sure everyone is able to conduct rotational training in a safe and healthy environment," he said.

Reeves said thanks to the teamwork between the 32nd Hospital Center and 509th Inf Reg, the screening site has been running smoothly from the beginning.

"Before this, I hadn't worked with the 32 HC very much. They have been a huge benefit to Geronimo. When things got busy and Geronimo needed help, they (32nd Soldiers) would help us out, no questions asked, and we would do the same for them, he said. "Together, we maintained cohesion through the heat and stress, and I think that reflects well on both units," he said.

On a personal level, Reeves said he appreciates being recognized.

"It's nice, and I think I can say that all the other awardees feel the same," he said. "At the end of the day, being appreciated is what motivates us to work even harder."

Reeves said he is grateful for the opportunity



Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general (left), presents the Commanding General's Certificate of Achievement to Sgt. Keegan Reeves, 509th Inf Reg line medic and squad leader, at an award ceremony Aug. 7 at the North Fort screening site.

to help. "As medical professionals, we are going to do what we have to do to take care of our Soldiers," he said.

Army bounds over COVID-19 hurdles, vBLC exceeds expectations

By **CHRISTY GRAHAM**

Guardian editor

FORT POLK, La. — Last spring, the COVID-19 pandemic altered numerous trajectories. High school seniors had to find creative ways to celebrate their achievements, school boards devised plans to feed and educate school-aged kids and the Army found safe ways to continue necessary professional and leadership education.

In many cases, military training exercises halted due to safety concerns, but education was a different yet equally important area of focus. Distance learning options allowed Soldiers to maneuver around COVID-19 lock downs and still receive the necessary education to supplement their previous training, nurturing their leadership skills in different ways.

One such example is the Army's Basic Leader's Course, which is intended for junior enlisted personnel that are preparing for team leader positions. According to the Noncommissioned Officer Leadership Center of Excellence (NCOLE) webpage, BLC students develop skills relating to written and oral communication, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, leadership and counseling, drill and ceremonies, training, character development, nutrition and fitness, troop leading procedures and mission orders.

During the initial months of the pandemic, the BLC curriculum had to reconfigure to fit into an online format using **Blackboard.mil** (BB) — it transitioned into the virtual Basic Leader Course (vBLC).

"We ensured that the curriculum was not compromised," said Juan Ortiz, director of the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Directorate.

"At the start of the pandemic, the NCOLE team drafted guidance, which wasn't cookie-cutter, and sent it across the Noncommissioned Officer Academies. We gave commandants the latitude to operate within their limits," Ortiz said.

"You would be surprised at the intuition and creativity these commandants and their staffs displayed. All across the Army, we've had different types of virtual BLCs being administered in various formats — some were fully online and others were blended — but each one responded with innovative ideas that maintained the curriculum."

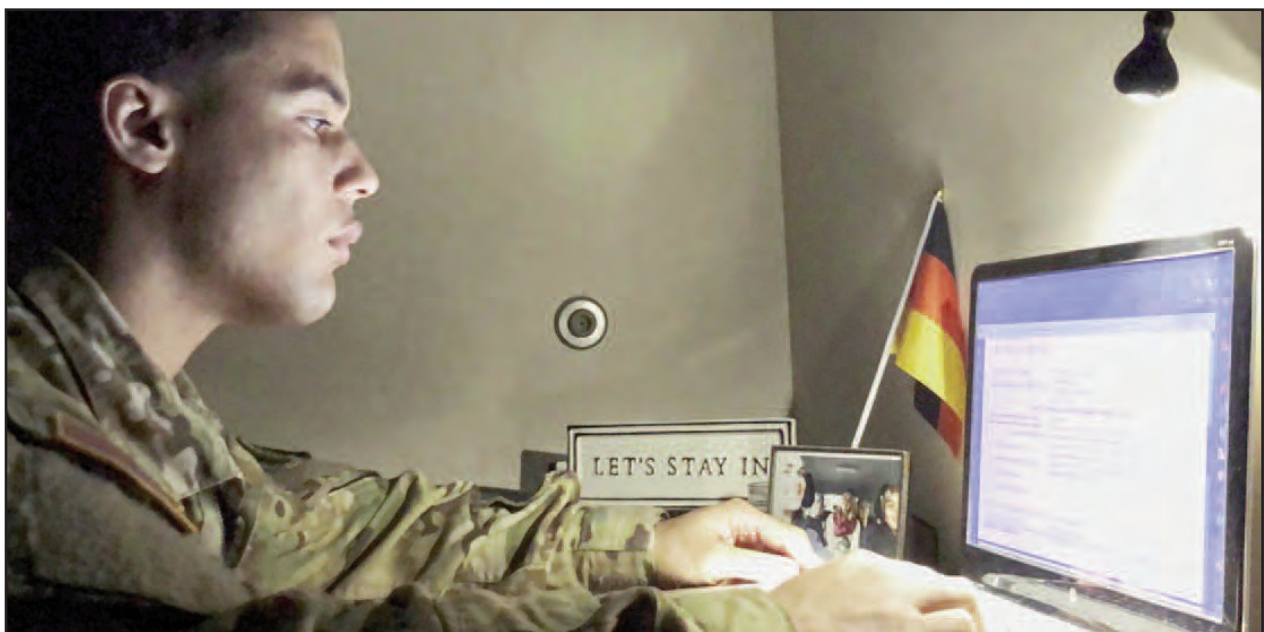
The vBLC curriculum delivers the same essential lessons to upcoming Army leaders. Specialists and corporals begin their professional military education with BLC, so it's a crucial juncture for future leaders. Adhering to its content was paramount for Sgt. Maj. Christopher A. West, NCOLE BLC course manager.

"Sergeant Major West has been the catalyst behind this whole curriculum operation," said Ortiz.

West was able to use an emergency BLC model earlier in the year to pilot what became vBLC.

"In December and January I had time to look at BB and work on the redesign for the course. We went into testing that platform at the Fort Bliss, Texas NCOA," said West. "We also benefited from early testing in Korea, which went into a lock-down phase before the United States. It paid out big for us; it led the way forward with the virtual format and BB platform."

For Fort Polk Soldiers, BLC is a course received through Camp Cook, Louisiana. That



DANIELLE O'DONNELL/NCOLCoE PAO

A soldier completes the Army Basic Leader Course using a virtual format during COVID-19.

NCOA's Commandant, Command Sgt. Maj. Troy Barron, is just one of many that met the challenges of COVID-19 directly.

"There are definitely some challenges in the virtual realm; but overall, I think it's been a success," said Barron. "We had to cancel two iterations of BLC at the start of the pandemic. We did it to make sure we could get everything set the way we wanted for an effective vBLC experience."

To prepare for the inevitable hindrances of switching to a fully distance learning environment, Barron said that his NCOA conducted mock classes, given and received by the schoolhouses' facilitators.

"We did a virtual class for ourselves. Some facilitators played the role of student and others still functioned as the instructor. It took us three weeks to develop a good plan and setup. Then, as we went through the first class, we annotated what did or didn't work and adjusted fire."

One of the biggest difficulties has been working around instances when the BB platform goes down. "That's one reason we videotaped lessons: we wanted to still be able to get the lessons to the students via email or YouTube, even when there are technical difficulties," said Barron. "It's been a learning experience: Each class builds up the next one, making the vBLC experience more successful."

Staff Sgt. Timothy R. Bouyea and Staff Sgt. Steven Ranel are both facilitators at Camp Cook's NCOA, and they believe that the vBLC model continues to benefit and challenge the Army's future leaders.

"Each day we log on with our Soldiers through Skype and we go over that day's training schedule. Students watch the prerecorded video lessons, answer questions regarding that topic and then they participate in a group discussion using the online forum," Ranel said. "We also do an evening call to go over what the Soldiers learned that day and follow up with any remaining questions."

The group discussions still function in much the same way they did in the resident course — facilitators bring up the topics and Soldiers are left to carry the conversation forward using the discussion posts, said Ranel.

If a student has a question, then they can con-

tact their facilitator through the GroupMe application or a Skype call.

"At the end of each phase of learning, students are graded and counseled. This helps facilitators acknowledge when Soldiers have done really well during a phase or if there were some issues that need to be addressed," said Bouyea. "We are still getting the future Army leaders in for training; they are still getting the knowledge and information they need to be successful."

A Fort Polk Soldier and recent graduate of vBLC, Sgt. Stephan Cavanaugh, 2nd Battalion, 4th Inf Reg, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, said he appreciated the flexibility of vBLC.

"The virtual course was helpful in that I was able to work and complete the course from home. Some Army units can't handle not having their Soldiers completing tasks, so it was nice having the option to do coursework and telework simultaneously, as opposed to being away from the unit completely."

Although the virtual model has proven successful in the face of adversity, the Army plans to move BLC back to a resident course.

"The Army wants BLC to remain a resident course; due to the current circumstance, we have been pushing forward with virtual training. We have this ability to do it and, just in case the need arises again, we have this plan on the shelf, waiting to be dusted off and implemented even more seamlessly than this experience," said West. "Some academies are already returning to resident courses, depending on their local community's and commander's instructions."

In the meantime, leaders at the highest levels are stressing the importance of professional military education, like BLC, to young Soldiers, even in the face of COVID-19.

"There's a difference between education and training. In training, there is a lockstep of how to do a specific task, without really knowing the theory behind it. The importance of education in a Soldier's career is learning that theory behind the things we do in the Army. It's the difference between being a trained robot and being able to think outside the box," Ortiz said.

Having the skills to think outside the box, as Ortiz highlighted, are critical in times like these, when creative solutions drive missions forward.

AT Awareness Month: iWATCH campaign urges Army community vigilance

By MITCHELL SMITH

DPTMS, Antiterrorism officer

FORT POLK, La. — August is Antiterrorism Awareness Month across the Army. According to the **Army.mil** website, it is a time when iWATCH, a program focusing neighborhood watch concepts on threats of terrorist activity, is promoted within the Army community.

Aiding this goal begins with defining community members' roles. In general terms, a bystander is a person who is present at an incident or event without participating or an individual who may witness concerning behavior prior to an attack, incident or event.

While the term bystander is traditionally defined this way, counter terrorism professionals sometimes use an expanded definition of bystander. The Federal Bureau of Investigation defines bystanders as individuals whose relationship and level of interaction with a person of concern enables them to witness or become aware of activities or behaviors that may indicate radicalization or mobilization to violence.

Bystanders are categorized into groups, which are listed below.

- **Family:** Individuals such as parents, spouses, stepparents, sibling, aunts and uncles.
- **Peers:** These are people like coworkers, classmates, close friends and acquaintances.
- **Authority figures:** Individuals like religious leaders, professors, employers, mental health professionals and law enforcement.
- **Strangers:** These are persons from commercial establishments who sold precursor material or weapons, or individuals who witnessed offender behavior in online- or offline-public spaces.

Some people believe that reporting suspicious behavior or activities isn't their job; but in reality, community safety should be viewed as everyone's responsibility. In fact, local law enforcement officials count on citizens' observations and information to help protect the community. Community members provide the eyes and ears for any given environment.

The bystander effect (when the presence of others discourages someone from responding in an emergency) is widely used in education programs for anti-bullying or to teach ways to identify sexual violence. These concepts also apply to the willingness to report suspicious criminal or extremist activity.

As it relates to possible terrorist/extremist activities, signs of suspicious activity may be precursors toward a mobilization to violence.

In most terrorist or extremist attacks, concerning behavior was observed in the year before an attack. Some examples of the type of behavior or activity, which bystanders may observe, and should report to local law enforcement include:

- Persons advocating support for terrorist or violent extremist organizations.
- Evidence of terrorist training or attendance at terrorist facilities.
- Persons repeatedly viewing websites that promote terrorism or extremism.
- Persons exchanging information on websites that promote use of force against the U.S.
- Seeking religious or political justification for a planned violent act.
- Expressing acceptance of violence as a necessary means to achieve ideological goals.
- Communicating a desire for revenge, promoting violent extremist narratives, sharing and praising violent extremist videos.
- Attempts to radicalize others, especially peers and family members.
- Participating in on-line sites or groups that promote violent extremism.

- Persons joking or bragging about association with a foreign intelligence service, terrorist group, or violent extremist group.

No single behavior should be considered an indicator of potential violence; rather, all behaviors and circumstances combined should be considered an indication of potential violence.

An aware society is the best foundation for preventing terrorism and targeted violence. Bystanders are often best positioned to spot indicators of radicalization and mobilization toward violence before it occurs. Being an active participant is the cornerstone of the "See Something, Say Something" concept.

Every member of the Army community plays a part in this fight. Increasing awareness and vigilance can prevent terrorism.

If you have any questions regarding AT Awareness and iWATCH, call 531-0413/6007 or email mitchell.smith3.civ@mail.mil or jeffrey.m.sweeney.civ@mail.mil.

Remember, if you "See Something, Say Something!" Report all suspicious activities to 531-2677 or the Antiterrorism Hotline at 531-6584.



ANGIE THORNE/GUARDIAN

Antiterrorism Proclamation

On Aug. 11, during Antiterrorism Awareness Month, Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, signs an AT proclamation.

Award

Continued from page 4

through to sustainment.

"The idea is to recognize the exemplary and heroic work by front-line staff, their teams and all others doing selfless acts of service in our MTFs during COVID-19," said Cordts.

"A top priority is to provide peers across the Military Health System the opportunity to honor their colleagues," added Lein. "During COVID-19, it's important to recognize and celebrate staff given the personal commitment of nominators and nominees to promote a culture of safety and be a champion for resiliency."

Criteria for peer-to-peer or team recognition should include the following attributes as part of Ready and Resilient Care:

- Put people first.
- Take care of yourself.
- Take care of your team.
- Prioritize on the essential.
- Ask for and offer help.
- Do the right thing right.

Teams, as well as individuals, are eligible for the award. The DHA Patient Safety Program will accept and review submissions. Military hospi-

tals and clinics can nominate as many individuals and teams as they wish — there is no cap or threshold. Dr. Cordts reads every submission and personally signs each certificate, according to King.

The DHA recognized the first group of awardees across many military medical treatment facilities during a virtual ceremony in July.

Anyone with questions about the award can email the Patient Safety Program. To nominate an individual or team, please visit the TeamSTEPPS page on the Patient Safety Learning Center site.

UCMJ violations lead to separations, restrictions, extra duty

OSJA

FORT POLK, La. — At the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, the commanding general and subordinate commanders take good order and discipline seriously.

However, certain disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent across Fort Polk, such as breaking quarantine or isolation orders; violating General Order No. 1; driving under the influence of alcohol; wrongful use or possession of controlled substances; fraternization; and sexual assault. Below are recent examples of adverse legal actions for units within the Fort Polk jurisdiction.

- A first lieutenant assigned to 3rd Battalion, 353rd Regiment, Joint Readiness Training Center Operations Group, was issued a General Under

Honorable Condition characterization of service at a Board of Inquiry for wrongful use of a controlled substance and conduct unbecoming of an officer.

- A chief warrant officer two, assigned to 519th Military Police Battalion, was issued an Under Other Than Honorable Conditions characterization of service at a Board of Inquiry for embezzling, stealing, purloining and converting various articles belonging to the United States military — of a value exceeding \$1,000 — and misconduct unbecoming of an officer.

- A sergeant, assigned to 710 Brigade Support Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, was issued a General Under Honorable Conditions characterization of service for assaulting his spouse. The Soldier was separated under Chapter 14-12c.

Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member's educational benefits.

- A specialist, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div, was punished under Article 15 for violation of General Order No. 1 by inviting others into his/her room while he/she was quarantined, in violation of Article 92, Uniform Code of Military Justice. The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-1; forfeiture of \$866 pay for two months, suspended for six months; extra duty for 45 days; and restriction for 45 days.

- A specialist, assigned to 46th Engineer Battalion, was punished under Article 15 for wrongful use of tetrahydrocannabinol, a Schedule 1 controlled substance, in violation of Article 112a, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-3; extra duty for 45 days; and restriction for 45 days.

Wingman

Continued from page 5

ance issue a Soldier has, R2 can collectively help increase the likelihood that the Soldier will achieve whatever they are setting out to do.

"We are small piece of a really big puzzle when you think about the life of a Soldier. We fit into that piece and want to be able to collaborate with other entities to serve the Soldier holistically," she said.

If Burgett concentrated on what would be the resiliency of the mind, then Eric B. Middleton, Fort Polk Army Wellness Center director, was focused on the resiliency of the body when making his presentation via Operation Wingman.

Middleton said the Army Wellness Center wants Soldiers to understand they have access to the physiological measurements they can utilize to improve not only their health, but also their performance by educating them on better ways to support their health and physical fitness.

"We support Soldiers in journeys that better themselves, improving their physical abilities as a warrior," he said.

Middleton said one of the things his presentation focuses on, as Soldiers navigate their way through COVID-19, is stress management.

"I think many people's lives have been turned upside down. There are a lot of rapid and frequent changes, and that can take a Soldier out of their normal battle rhythm and lead to a lot of negative behavioral issues," he said. "We tried to help the Fort Polk Soldiers at West Point by educating them about better ways to manage their stress and teach their junior Soldiers how to do so as well."

Beyond stress, Middleton said, sometimes Soldiers have the mentality that they are invincible and

nothing can hurt them.

"They don't think they need to change their bad habits, especially if they are young and healthy. But, halfway through their career, they realize they should probably look into some of the things we have to offer," he said.

Middleton said they (Army Wellness Center) work to capture a Soldier's attention in different ways.

"We try to educate them on performance improvement or enhancement. As Soldiers, they might be looking at building muscle mass or creating an appropriate exercise program, and we can help them figure out how to accomplish that," he said.

Additionally, the Army Wellness Center works to educate Soldiers about basic nutrition, said Middleton. "We want them to take advantage of these free services because they are going to improve the ability to manage their health, not just as a Soldier but throughout life," he said.

Capt. Johnpaul Norman, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div behavioral health officer, said it's important for him to take part in training situations like Operation Wingman because Soldiers need to know that he is there to help them.

"There are many preconceived notions about behavioral health. Often, Soldiers believe that trying to get help wouldn't be a positive or helpful experience and might make things worse," he said.

To combat that thought process, Norman uses an analogy to help get his message across.

"If a Soldier gets a cut and lets it fester, it will become infected, and he/she's going to get sick. At some point, they would go to a doctor," he said.



Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division traveled to West Point to conduct summer cadet training. Part of that training included learning to rappel down rock formations.

Norman said it's the same for Soldiers with invisible wounds. Those injuries might be as challenging as post traumatic stress disorder or as simple as dealing with the every day stresses of Soldiers.

"Being a Soldier is tough. Internalizing your issues and letting them stew isn't the answer. There are better ways to handle those stresses," he said.

In addition, Norman said he ensured he told Soldiers about their available resources and advised them to get the help they need.

McMillian said he thinks the integral aspect of Operation Wingman is teaching Fort Polk Soldiers that, if they need R2 for any reason, they are available to help.

For more information call the R2 Performance Center at 531-2427.



Col. Jody L. Dugai, left, commander, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, receives a plaque from Capt. Nikki Reeves, BJACH chaplain, at a tree dedication Aug. 10. The spruce tree was given to the BJACH maternity ward by Thomas and Yon Bankard who tragically lost their baby, Monica, a few short hours after her birth on Nov. 8, 1994.

BJACH plants, dedicates “angel baby” spruce tree

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

FORT POLK, La. — Sometime in 1994, Thomas and Yon Bankard learned that they were expecting a baby; at some point early in the pregnancy, they also learned that their child would not survive more than a few hours after birth. On Monday, the Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital planted a spruce tree, originally gifted by the Bankards, and dedicated it to baby Monica Bankard and in memory of all “angel babies.”

Capt. Nikki Reeves, BJACH chaplain, spoke at the tree dedication and presented the plaque, which now rests at the base of the tree, to Col. Jody Dugai, BJACH commander.

After greeting attendees, Reeves told the Bankard family’s story and detailed their connection with the BJACH maternity ward.

“Theresa Pendley, head registered nurse for BJACH’s obstetrics and gynecology clinic, spent many hours with the (Bankard) couple, helping them come to grips with the events that would unfold. Monica was born November 8, 1994...her parents had but a few precious hours with their daughter.”

As Reeves explained, the Bankard family chose to present Pendley with a spruce tree highlighting their gratitude for the nurse’s compassion and care during their ordeal. “For 26 years, that tree lived in BJACH’s command suite,” said Reeves. Now, as the tree has outgrown its pot, the decision to plant and dedicate the tree was natural.

“This tree will serve as a memorial for baby Monica and other angel babies that have been lost; it will also be a place Families can come to honor and remember them,” said Reeves.

Unfortunately, the Bankard’s story isn’t singular; other Families have faced this trial. In light of



This plaque rests at the base of a spruce tree given to the BJACH maternity ward. The tree outgrew the pot in which it has been growing for 26 years. It was dedicated to “angel babies” and planted outside of BJACH’s Bravo entrance on Monday.

this, Shestie Austin, another BJACH nurse, created the “Fingerprints of Love Program,” which provides resources to Families grieving the loss of their angel babies.

Reeves closed the ceremony in prayer saying, “Bless (this tree) as a memorial to baby Monica and other little ones that have been lost. Let this place become a healing balm on the hearts of parents that grieve.” She also prayed for the BJACH team to be empowered as they continue to serve Fort Polk Families “with honor, grace and compassion.”

Briefs

Vernon Parish schools

With the increase of COVID-19 cases in Vernon Parish and the governor’s extension of phase 2 restrictions, the Vernon Parish School Board voted on Aug. 11 to adjust the opening day of school.

The new start dates, based on grade and last name, will be staggered over Aug. 31, Sept. 1 and 2.

The VPSB is concerned with the health and safety of its students, parents, faculty and staff members. For this reason, the two-week delay for opening the school year was implemented and deemed the safest option for VPSB stakeholders.

MILITARY STAR card

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service is helping first-time MILITARY STAR cardholders at Fort Polk save a little extra on their back-to-school bill this year.

Until Aug. 27, MILITARY STAR card shoppers will receive 15% off all their first-day’s purchases instead of the typical 10% discount.

New account holders will receive the 15% discount on all first-day purchases at military exchanges, commissaries and online at ShopMyExchange.com, MyNavyExchange.com and ShopCGX.com.

For more information, visit MyECP.com.

Updated chapel times

Please note updated service times at the Fort Polk Main Post Chapel.

Congregants are welcome to attend services under social distancing and 50% occupancy guidelines, or they can view live-streamed services by visiting [@FortPolkChapelPage](https://www.facebook.com/FortPolkChapelPage).

- Catholic service, 8:30 a.m.
- Chapel Next service Protestant service, 10 a.m.
- Gospel Protestant service, noon

BOSS events

Upcoming Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers include:

- Aug. 15 — Fishing day trip; 9 a.m. at Toledo Bend (\$10)
- Aug. 20 — Cooking demonstration class; 6 p.m. at the Warrior Center (free)
- Aug. 23 — Paintball; at the MWR range (\$10)

For more details, call 531-1948.

e-Guardian email list

If you’re interested in receiving the weekly e-Guardian to your inbox, then please send your personal email address to kimberly.k.reischling.civ@mail.mil, and you’ll be placed on the distribution list.

BJACH promotes National Immunization Awareness Month

By **GENEVA MERIDITH**

Preventive medicine

FORT POLK, La. — National Immunization Awareness Month is an annual observance held in August highlighting the importance of vaccinations for people of all ages. Vaccines give people the power to fight against preventable and sometimes deadly diseases. This month is a reminder for people to remain vigilant with their recommended vaccination schedules.

Pregnancy is a critical time for vaccinations. The flu, for instance, can be more serious for pregnant women. Changes in the immune system, heart and lungs during pregnancy make pregnant women more prone to severe illness from flu. Risk of premature labor and delivery is increased in pregnant women with the flu. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has also seen between 10,000 and 50,000 cases of whooping cough in the United States since 2010 — most of the deaths each year are in babies younger than 3 months.

Mothers have the power to protect themselves and their babies during each pregnancy from serious diseases like whooping cough and flu. Vaccinations during pregnancy can help protect babies after birth by passing on antibodies from their mothers. These antibodies can give short-term protection from flu and whooping cough until it is recommended for babies to begin receiving their own vaccinations. Ask your doctor or nurse about the recommended vaccines during pregnancy.

Adhering to the recommended childhood/adolescent vaccination schedule is equally as important. These vaccines protect children against serious diseases like measles, cancers caused by the human papilloma virus and whooping cough. Although some diseases are no longer common in this country because of vaccination, if these vaccinations stopped, the few cases noted in the U.S. could quickly become tens or hundreds of thousands of cases. The 2019 measles outbreaks are a key reminder of how quickly diseases can spread when children aren't vaccinated.

Preteens and teens need four vaccines, which protect against serious diseases, including the



meningococcal conjugate vaccine to protect against meningitis and bloodstream infections; the Human Papillomavirus vaccine to protect against cancers; the TDAP vaccine to protect against tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough and a yearly flu vaccine to protect against the seasonal flu. The CDC has a parent-friendly immunization schedule to see which vaccines children need by their ages, which can be found on the CDC [website](#).

Maintaining up-to-date vaccination records is vital throughout adulthood, as well. Every year thousands of adults in the U.S. become seriously ill and are hospitalized because of diseases that vaccines can help prevent. Many adults even die from these diseases. By getting vaccinated, you can help protect yourself and your family from serious or sometimes deadly diseases.

Adults should talk to their doctor or nurse to ensure that vaccinations haven't been missed. The CDC also has an adult vaccine assessment tool on their [website](#) to see which vaccines are

recommended by age, health conditions, job and lifestyle. It is especially important for patients with chronic health conditions to be up to date on recommended vaccinations, since they are at an increased risk for complications from certain vaccine-preventable diseases.

It is important to keep in mind that vaccines are tested to ensure they are safe and effective at preventing serious diseases. They are also monitored after they are in use. To learn more about this topic, visit the U.S. vaccine safety monitoring system. Like all medical products, vaccines can sometimes cause side effects; however, the most common side effects are mild and go away quickly.

For more information on immunizations and vaccines visit the CDC [website](#). If you are active duty military and have questions contact the Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital's Preventive Medicine — Occupational Health at 531-6131. Questions in reference to pediatric vaccinations should contact 531-3991.

Comfort zones become caution zones: Pushing higher learning, performance limits

By **BENTON F. ILES**

Operations group physical security manager

What comes to mind after hearing the words 'comfort zone?' Perhaps it conjures images of the place you go to unwind with your inner circle. Although a valid answer, it isn't what I am writing about.

Instead, I ask readers to think of how the words apply to one's ability to learn. Then, think of the method by which you best learn. Are you a reading-comprehension type of learner? Do you learn best through hands-on activities?

The Army teaching method combines all of these learning methods. When I attended the Instructor-Trainer Course several years ago, the instructor told us this: "I am going to tell you what I am going to tell you today. Then I am going to

demonstrate it while telling you, and, lastly, I am going to tell you what I told you — again."

So, the Army has figured out that most people learn best through repetition. When I taught, I used that method. I told students what I was going to tell them, I told it to them and, finally, I'd repeat it, all the while providing demonstrations.

But when do we learn the most? I submit to you that, if we remain in our comfort zones, then we cheat ourselves out of learning opportunities. I recently attended a course where the subject matter was new to me. I was not well versed in the area of discussion, and I found myself in an uncomfortable state. I paid more attention in class, studied more after class and found myself conducting independent research in order to become more comfortable with the topic.

When we are familiar with a material or a task, we tend to let our guard down, rely on our past

experiences and, sometimes, don't spend the appropriate amount of time preparing. We do these things because we feel comfortable; we are in our comfort zone. But, when we find ourselves outside this space, we tend to spend more time preparing. When we are well prepared, the tasks at hand or the learning climate improves drastically.

I challenge you to look for opportunities in your daily duties requiring you to leave your comfort zone, and learn new approaches to tasks or problems. Problem solving and becoming more efficient go hand-in-hand with how much time we spend preparing or learning. I posit that we learn better, enhance our performance and demonstrate more competence when we leave our comfort zones.

Malcolm X once said, "Education (or learning) is a passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today." It is hard to always be ready for the unknown, but we can always try to be prepared.



Commentary

Toledo Bend Lakeshore General Store offers patrons trip essentials, rentals

By ANNABELLE ARCAND

MWR illustrator

FORT POLK, La. — Toledo Bend Army Recreation Site officially opened the Lakeshore General Store and welcome campers and day visitors to shop for necessities and souvenirs.

The Lakeshore General Store is more than the average convenience store. The newly rebranded store offers everything needed for a weekend at the lake; it also has boutique style accessories and souvenirs. The store has unique offerings unlike any other on the lake.

The store is stocked with a wide selection of travel items, The Famous Dot's Pretzels, candy, breakfast pastries and grilling necessities. The store's ice-cold refreshments and little snacks are must-haves for hungry campers and water sports fanatics as well.

The store's pride and joy, however, is the boutique feel it provides. Every item is handpicked to fit the needs and desires of the Fort Polk Army community.

Additionally, the store now carries a wide range of Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk merchandise, so patrons may show their "Warrior Spirit." New merchandise includes unit-specific shirts, koozies and Army Garrison Fort Polk hats and shirts. Lake and fishing themed shirts also make a perfect souvenir to remember a great day at the lake.

The Lakeshore General Store also carries a broad selection of fun beach toys and sun protection items. Water bottles, SPF beach towels and sarongs are just some of many summer fun essentials the store offers.

Last but not least, the store is proud of its exclusive spa items. Signature scrubs, body lotions and soaps make great gifts to bring home.

The Toledo Bend Army Recreation Site offers cozy cabins and yurts to rent for camping adventures or vacation plans. As a one-stop shop, visi-



ANNABELLE ARCAND/MWR

Lakeshore General Store offers signature spa items, lake essentials and Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk merchandise. Patrons are also welcome to rent equipment or make reservations from within the store.

tors will find that all rentals and reservations can be made at the shop.

The store is conveniently nestled between the cabins and the lakeshore, right next to the boat launch. Patrons have the option to rent from a variety of boats, or they can launch their own for

a small fee.

Water enthusiasts will be thrilled to learn that the MWR-run facility offers rentals, not only by the hour, but also for an entire day.

For more information, visit polk.armymwr.com.

Back to school
drive thru

August 15
9 a.m.-noon

Former commissary
parking lot

Back to school
goodies
hot dogs
and
cookies

SAFETY CORNER

USAG Fort Polk – Garrison Safety Office
7130 Pennsylvania Loop, Bldg 4209-D
Fort Polk, Louisiana 71459
(337)531-1981
usarmy.polk.imcom.mbx.garrison-safety@mail.mil

Find us in the app store
"Fort Polk Home of Heroes"

August is Pedestrian Safety Month

67% of pedestrian fatalities occur between the hours of 1800 - 0600

Wear bright clothes

Carry a flashlight

Clip on a safety light

Wear a reflective vest or belt

Always make yourself visible to vehicles