



FORGING THE WARRIOR SPIRIT

THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

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Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

Sept. 11, 2020



Stallings

ANGIE THORNE / GUARDIAN



Directorate of Emergency Services firefighters battle a blaze in the Fort Polk housing area Sept. 7.

FORT POLK DES



A DES firefighter rescues a pet dog, Buck, from a house fire on Fort Polk Sept. 7.

FORT POLK DES

We Are The Home of Heroes MP's quick thinking averts catastrophe

FORT POLK, La. — **Editor's note:** This is a first hand account by Sgt. Christopher Stallings, 91st Military Police Detachment, 519th Military Police Battalion.

"On Sept. 7, at about 2:30 a.m., I was asleep downstairs when someone began beating on my door and screaming for help. Upon opening the door, I realized it was my neighbor who lived on the ground floor. She stated that there was a fire in her kitchen and she had exhausted her fire extinguisher. She asked for mine. I went to my kitchen and grabbed it from above the sink and went with her toward the rear of her home. It

was a shock to see how fast the fire was spreading.

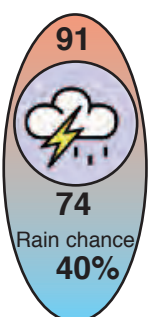
Upon reaching her patio area, I saw the fire had grown and was rolling along her ceiling, far wall and coming out of the rear door. I told her that a fire extinguisher was not going to help and that we needed the fire department.

Before I joined the Army, I was a volunteer fire fighter, so I knew it had gone too far to be helped with fire extinguishers.

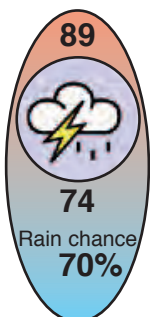
She stated she needed to get her cat and went

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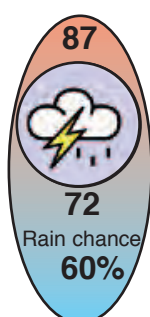
Weekend weather



Saturday



Sunday



Monday

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Viewpoint

In our view

Guardian staff asked the JRTC and Fort Polk community,
"What were you doing on 9/11 and what was your reaction?"
Here are their responses:



Sgt. 1st Class James Moore: "I was in the field training at Fort Hood, Texas. My sergeant told us to pack up and we headed back to post. When we found out what had happened, we all knew we were going to war."



Sherry Harris: "We were in Kentucky visiting family. My first thought was of my daughter and young grandson. They were stationed in Germany. I was horrified for them and what might happen next."



Maria Kinder: "I was home and my husband had come home from working a night shift at Fort Polk. My daughter called and told me to turn on the television and wake dad up. We saw the planes hit the towers and were in total shock. My husband was devastated. The loss of life was horrifying."



Sgt. 1st Class Kevin Proctor: "I was in economics class. I was a senior in high school. At first, I thought it wasn't real because I couldn't believe that something like that could happen to us."



Winnfred Jones: "I was a recruiter at the time and I was headed to work. I walked in to an empty office because everyone was in the back watching what was happening on the television. I walked in and saw the second plane hit. I thought, 'What's going to happen now?'"



Merjoery Lott: "I was walking into a beauty shop to get my hair done. They had a television on and it was showing the first plane hitting the tower. I was petrified. I couldn't believe what I was seeing. After I went home, I watched coverage the whole day. My heart hurt for the people we lost when those towers came down."



Guardian

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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).

NewScope

Briefs

DG app

The Army's new Digital Garrison mobile app is now available for Fort Polk. The DG app, which can be downloaded on Android and Apple devices, gives users access to resources about their local exchange, Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs, facility information, direct links to on-post housing entities and other services. The app is portable among numerous installations.

Users can customize the app to meet their needs, and it is set to receive improvements through daily updates.

The local JRTC and Fort Polk app is no longer in use as the new Digital Garrison mobile app replaces it.



e-Guardian email list

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Tailgate drive thru

The Fort Polk Directorate of Family Morale, Welfare and Recreation hosts a Drive Thru event Sept. 25 from 4-7 p.m. in the old commissary parking lot.

The first 200 vehicles that "drive thru" will receive a pizza, along with other prizes. DFMWR will also hand out raffle tickets for a chance to win great prizes.



JRTC and Fort Polk Command Sgt. Maj. Michael C. Henry (left), Sgt. 1st Class Adriana S. Fox, JRTC Operations Group (center), and Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, place a wreath in memory of those killed in terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001, during a 9-11 ceremony Sept. 11 at the Fort Polk Main Fire Station.

JRTC, Fort Polk remembers events of 9-11

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — The COVID-19 pandemic and Hurricane Laura's aftermath might have put a damper on planned proceedings for a ceremony honoring the 19th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, D.C., but it didn't stop the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk from paying homage to those who unselfishly sacrificed themselves for others.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, JRTC and Fort Polk, was keynote speaker at a 9 a.m. ceremony in the Fort Polk Main Fire Station Sept. 11 that was recorded and later posted on the JRTC and Fort Polk Facebook page. He said some might wonder why the event was held at the fire station and not Memorial Park.

"This is our JRTC and Fort Polk tribute to our first responders — firefighters, police officers and EMTs — that were the first to arrive at the World Trade Center to assist their fellow Americans following the attack," Frank said.

Forging the Warrior Spirit

Frank said JRTC and Fort Polk's motto — Forging the Warrior Spirit — was a fitting way to describe the heroic actions following the attack 19 years ago on the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington and a farm field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. In all, 2,977 people were killed in the attacks.

Warrior Ethos

When police, firefighters and paramedics selflessly entered the Twin Towers they demonstrated Warrior Ethos, Frank said.

"They ran into danger to protect fellow American citizens and ensure no one was left behind," he said. "Through the brave act of 40 passengers on Flight 93, an attack on the U.S. Capitol was averted by everyday citizens who stood up for our nation. Todd Beamer's words 'Let's roll,' became a rallying cry for hundreds of thousands of

Soldiers, who have since deployed during the last 19 years of combat."

First responders

Frank thanked Fort Polk and Central Louisiana first responders and their efforts to keep the installation's Soldiers and Families safe.

"These police officers and firefighters place themselves in danger to provide a safe environment for Fort Polk Soldiers," he said. "We truly appreciate sacrifices."

Memorial Park

While JRTC and Fort Polk has connections to past military conflicts, the granite monument in Memorial Park symbolizes America's longest period of conflict, Frank said.

"From the fall of 2001 to operations currently conducted in theater today, our Army has been decisively engaged in operations against the enemies of the United States for the last 19 years — 15 years longer than World War II," Frank said. "Our monument reflects the World Trade Center and Pentagon and is inscribed with the names of 96 fallen Fort Polk Soldiers."

Frank recalled the image of President George Bush standing on a debris pile at Ground Zero beside a New York City firefighter, and his promise that those who knocked the buildings down, "will hear all of us soon."

"Our heroic first responders would pass this fight to those of us in camouflage as our nation would defeat terrorists in multiple regions around the globe," he said.

Remembering fallen heroes

Frank then asked those who live on Fort Polk to listen to Taps at 9 p.m. and remember the more than 5,000 fallen American service members who have died on the battlefields of Iraq and Afghanistan. Following his remarks, Frank was joined by JRTC and Fort Polk Command Sgt. Maj. Michael C. Henry and Sgt. 1st Class Adriana S. Fox, JRTC Operations Group, in placing a wreath in memory of those who died in the attacks.

Survivor: Soldier overcomes battle with suicide

By JOSEPH LACDAN
Army News Service

JOINT BASE MYER-HENDERSON HALL, Va. — Chelsea Porterfield sang the ABCs softly as she rocked her 2 year old to sleep. In the quiet solitude of her son's bedroom, her mind drifted and fixated on her husband's .45 caliber pistol.

In November 2018, the sergeant first class thought about suicide for the first time.

Since she had accepted an assignment to serve as a platoon sergeant in the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), Chelsea struggled to strike a balance of time for duty and family.

"I was good enough at work," she said. "I wasn't good enough at home. I was failing somewhere. ... Nothing was good enough."

She tried to envision how her life would be different if she ended her life.

Porterfield paused and cast the thoughts aside, kissing her son as he slept peacefully and pulled the covers over him. She wiped her tears and tried to go to bed.

But the ideas crept back into her mind again the following evening. At 3 a.m. on Nov. 30, no longer able to rest, she drove from her house in Alexandria, Virginia, out into the cool fall air toward Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall.

When she arrived at her office, dread overwhelmed her as she plunked into her desk staring at the black computer screen. She wanted to kill herself and the idea would not go away.

"It scared me. I knew I wanted to die," Porterfield said. "But I didn't know what I was going to be capable of doing."

The outpour of tears came uncontrollably.

Her coworker, an older NCO, asked if she needed help. Porterfield waved him away, indicating that she was OK.

Embarrassed that she had been seen in such a state, she rushed to her car and drove to Joint Base Myer's Andrew Rader Health Clinic only to learn it had closed for the day.

She took a drag from a cigarette as she sat inside her car. The nearby D.C. rush hour traffic had begun to simmer as she began the 20-mile drive south from Joint Base Myer to Fort Belvoir.

After checking into Belvoir's inpatient behavioral health center an hour later, Porterfield sat in the waiting room next to two Marines and another Soldier waiting to be treated. Chelsea tried to suppress the tears but she could no longer contain them. Doctors would later tell her that she had suffered a panic attack.

"I thought I might kill myself today," Porterfield whispered. One of the Marines, an older gunnery sergeant, turned toward her.

"Well," he said to her, "it happens to the best of us."

According to the most recent Defense Department study, suicides claimed the lives of 305 Soldiers or 30.9 suicides per 100,000 in 2018, up from 29.7 in 2017.

Curbing rising suicide numbers continues to be one of the Army's top priorities. Last year the service launched a year-long pilot program to assist suicide prevention at three installations, examining factors that lead to suicides. In July 2019

the National Guard also established the Suicide Prevention and Readiness Initiative to identify risk factors that lead to suicide. The Guard, which has the Army's highest suicide rates, announced that it would renew all 11 of its pilot programs implemented last year to identify and evaluate the best suicide prevention methods.

Soldiers with suicidal thoughts can turn to behavioral treatment facilities at any Army post. They can also contact their first sergeant, supervisor or unit chaplain, and even get help anonymously by calling the Military Crisis Line at (800) 273-8255.

The burden of duty

It has been more than two years since Porterfield left the mental health treatment facility at Fort Belvoir.

In her crisp, spotless dress blues, Chelsea hits her cadence hard during ceremonial walks, the way she had painstakingly rehearsed dozens of times.

Visitors lock on her during each ceremonial changing of the guard, as she marches along Arlington National Cemetery's solemn grounds. And when they see her, they see more than a solitary Soldier. They see a representative of the U.S. armed forces.

In September 2019, Porterfield became the first woman to lead a marching element onto Arlington, and in the spring became the 38th Sergeant of the Guard.

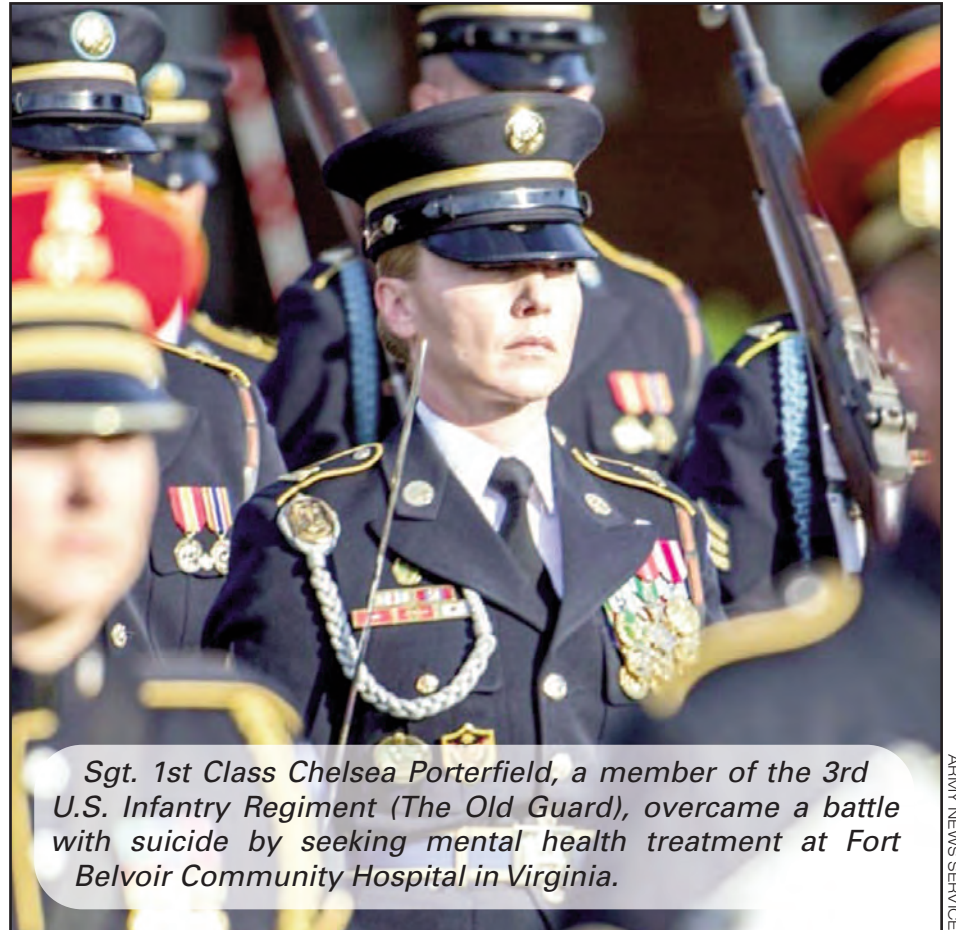
Porterfield knows the pressure of representing her service weighs heavily upon her with each turn of her heel and each unlocking of her M-14 rifle. As a member of The Old Guard, she must be at her sharpest at all times.

Among Arlington's fallen lie the Soldiers who gave more than the average troops. Soldiers with Purple Hearts, Silver Stars and meritorious service medals. Medal of Honor recipients.

And for 83 years, The Old Guard has watched over the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

She has virtually grown up in the Army. Since her high school graduation, she has never known anything else but military life.

She had spent most of her 20s overseas or on a deployment. Then-Pvt. Chelsea Mason had barely settled into serving at an Army post in Germany when she learned she would be deploying to Iraq for the first time. She later traveled with a unit that helped rebuild Iraq on her second deployment.



Sgt. 1st Class Chelsea Porterfield, a member of the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard), overcame a battle with suicide by seeking mental health treatment at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital in Virginia.

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"I didn't know how to be me," she said. "I had spent all of my youth in Iraq. Part of me is still always going to be in Iraq."

"I watched Iraq burn and I watched it get built back up. There's no ambiguity there ... You know, you wear a uniform every day, all day, every day. You don't have to worry about looking cute or being a woman, or wearing your hair a certain way or putting makeup on or dressing up."

She spent two years as a drill sergeant before working around the clock on police investigations at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii. The workload became so burdensome, some days she'd sleep in her office so she would not have to beat the Oahu rush-hour traffic.

Early in her career, she felt the pressure to not only meet the same standards as her male counterparts; she wanted to exceed them.

To see Porterfield now, it would be difficult to understand why she considered suicide. She holds a respected leadership position in one of the Army's most renowned infantry units. And younger Soldiers turn to her for counsel and advice.

But those who knew her understood the immense burden she placed on herself. No longer is she the carefree girl who grew up playing on the Texas prairie. The Army had changed her in ways she had not imagined. Years of being the only female in military police units had taken its toll.

And when she returned to the family home she shared with her husband of six years in Alexandria, the stress didn't subside. Her hus-

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519th MPs answer call to action to support Beauregard Parish

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — As the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk was reeling from Hurricane Laura and focusing on power restoration for installation residences, clean up and recovery efforts and returning as quickly as possible to normal operations for the combat training center, one unit stepped up to support a neighboring parish.

The 519th Military Police Battalion is the aligned community partner with Beauregard Parish in support of the public affairs community relations program. Within hours of the storm the Beauregard Parish Sheriff's Office set up a unified command center. With the help of the chamber of commerce they established a centralized location for donated items. Through grass roots efforts, private organizations and individuals from the region started gathering supplies to send to Deridder, Louisiana.

When notified that the first tractor-trailer delivery was headed to the area, the team realized they didn't have the manpower to unload, sort, inventory and redistribute the incoming supplies

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Spc. Juan Martinez, forklift operator and volunteer from 41st Transportation Company, 519th Military Police Battalion, offloads donated pallets of water at the Beauregard Parish centralized donation point in the wake of Hurricane Laura.

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Fire

Continued from page 1

towards the burning home. I managed to keep her away from the residence and called the emergency dispatcher providing the address and situation. Once they told me the fire department was coming, I went around to the middle of the apartments where the staircase was.

My military police training kicked in at that point and my main objective was to get anyone still in the building out and to safety before the fire spread any more.

I tried to stay calm for everyone around me. I told myself not to panic because that's when mistakes happen and that could cost people their lives.

The fire was making its way to the second floor and blocking the stairs. I knocked on the adjacent downstairs apartment and notified the tenant to evacuate. As I went back toward the front, the spouse from upstairs was coming out and said her husband was trying to find their dog. A moment later her husband could be heard in their garage asking which way to go, as the smoke was thick and black. I went into the garage and grabbed his arm and led him back out. I then went to check the garage for the second floor apartment farthest from the fire to see if it was occupied. It was locked and the downstairs neighbor said sometimes they parked their car inside. I managed to breach the side entry door and go upstairs to beat on their door. It was later de-

termined the occupant was out of the area.

Everyone seemed to be in a state of shock and confusion. I'm just glad I was able to help them in some small way. I wish I could have done more, but I'm glad they all made it out alive.

"I told myself not to panic because that's when mistakes happen that could cost people their lives."

Sgt. CHRISTOPHER STALLINGS
519th MP Bn

The fire department arrived and took command of the scene. I stayed back and checked on the tenants to make sure they were OK until their leadership arrived. While talking with the neighbor, I had asked her if she knew how it happened, and she said she may have left a candle lit, but wasn't sure. I passed that information to fire department personnel as they were looking for the source of the fire. At 5 a.m.

I departed the scene with the on-duty traffic units and began my shift as their relief.



Fort Polk DES firefighters use a ladder engine truck to battle a house fire on Fort Polk Sept. 7.

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to the 12 distribution locations across the parish. One call to Lt. Col. Shawn Keller, 519th MP Bn commander, from the Greater Beauregard Chamber of Commerce President Lisa Adams was all it took to mobilize volunteers from the unit to help. The next day 20 volunteers from the battalion showed up to assist and continued to work for the week following the storm and throughout Labor Day weekend to support their parish partners.

Keller said the hurricane didn't just affect Fort Polk but also the surrounding parish communities.

"When the request came for assistance, I didn't think twice about it," he said. "At the time we were engaged in protecting and serving the Fort Polk community, but I knew we had Soldiers who could and would love to assist. I also knew that if we needed assistance on post, the Deridder community would do the same for us. Our partnership with the City of Deridder is a solid bond. We look forward to the future and always stand ready to assist our partner community, whatever the need."

Staff Sgt. Jessica Catlin, religious affairs specialist, Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment, 519th MP Bn, was charged with organizing and coordinating the volunteer efforts. She was asked to serve as a liaison between the sheriff's office and Soldiers to ensure they were taken care of and help keep track of volunteer hours.

Catlin said the trucks and trailers full of donated supplies came from across the nation.

"I remember one truck came from Andalusia, Alabama," she said.

When the supplies arrived, Soldiers would organize the items by nonperishable food items, tarps, cleaning supplies, baby items and more. Once the trucks were unloaded, they separated, sorted, inventoried and evenly divided up the supplies into 12 stacks for delivery to the distribution centers across the parish.

Catlin said it felt good to give back to the community.

"Beauregard Parish and the City of Deridder are always doing things for the 519th Military Police Battalion," she said. "Every year they host an organizational day for us in Deridder and I am glad we were able to reciprocate the support when they needed us. We have such a great partnership and relationship with this community, they are always there for us and we should be there for them too."

Jared Morton, chief deputy of the Beauregard Sheriff's Office, is the designated point of contact for the donation center. He said deputies have separated themselves from the search, rescue and recovery efforts to provide a central location for donation deliveries and have manned the center every day since the storm.

"The 519th was a phone call away," he said. "We only had a handful of people available when we first stood up the donation center, and we realized how large this operations was going to be. The next day 20 Soldiers showed up with awesome attitudes ready to work."

He said the conditions were terrible when the donation center was set up, the heat and humidity was high and there was no power in the building. He said without the Soldier's volunteer efforts they would not have been able to successfully operate the centralized location.

Morton said the donation center will remain



More than 20 Soldiers from the 519th Military Police Battalion volunteered their time to assist the community by unloading, sorting and inventorying donated items for Beauregard Parish citizens affected by Hurricane Laura.

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open as long as the need exists. He said 80% of the parish remains without power (as of press time), and BPSO will continue to accept donations as long as people are in need. He said if there is a person with a specific need, they will try to help that person.

"We were notified of a child who required special medication and through our networks were able to have that medication flown in," he said.

During the interview for this article he received a call regarding a 92-year-old woman who was alone in a remote area of the parish, and he dispatched a patrol to do a welfare check as volunteers were loading up supplies to deliver to her.

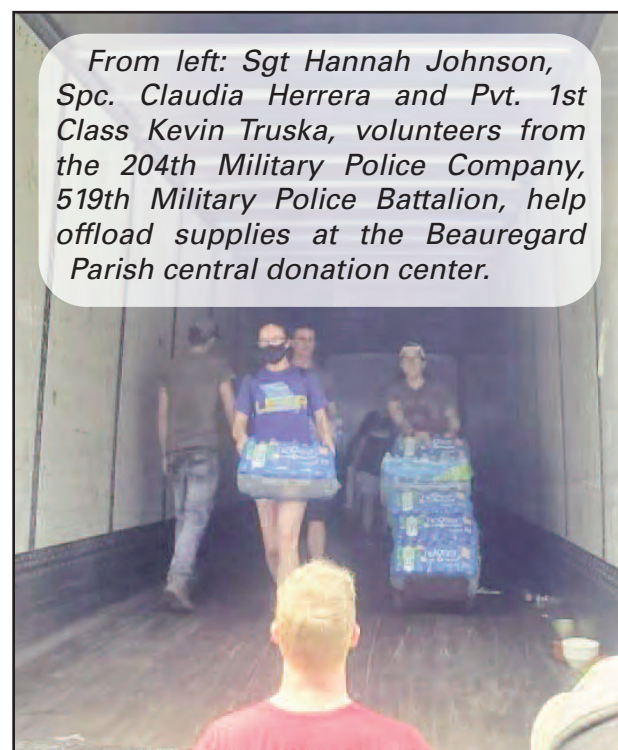
One volunteer, Sgt. 1st Class Isaac Otero-Alicea, 204th Military Police Company, 519th MP Bn motor sergeant and Deridder resident, said he volunteered because of the devastation he saw and had seen growing up after storms in Puerto Rico. He said as a kid he wasn't able to do much.

"This time I had the opportunity to lend a hand and help this community," he said. "Beauregard Parish has shown a great amount of care for its people and an incredible togetherness. I am glad I was part of this volunteer operation."

Editor's note: As things get back to normal at the JRTC and Fort Polk in the aftermath of Hurricane Laura, remember Beauregard Parish is still struggling through recovery efforts. Power has not been restored to the majority of the parish and many are struggling to maintain basic needs. If you or an organization you are associated with have items to donate or want to help the citizens of Beauregard Parish please call Jared Morton, (337) 375-1326 or Sarah Martinez, (337) 396-4052. Morton and Martinez are managing the donation center on behalf of the Beauregard Sheriff's Of-



From left: 519th MP Bn Soldiers Pvt. Francisco Lopez, Spc. Juan Martinez, Spc. Claudia Herrera, Staff Sgt. LeAnn Hurth, Pvt 1st Class Carlos Maese and Pvt. 1st Class Michael Richardson volunteered at the Beauregard Parish distribution center.



From left: Sgt Hannah Johnson, Spc. Claudia Herrera and Pvt. 1st Class Kevin Truska, volunteers from the 204th Military Police Company, 519th Military Police Battalion, help offload supplies at the Beauregard Parish central donation center.

fice. As of the publication of this article, the community desperately needs nonperishable food items, baby items and fans.

Suicide

Continued from page 4

band, a fellow military police Soldier, didn't like living in the D.C. metro region — the heavy traffic, and lines of cars that could make a 5-mile drive a 40-minute slog.

She spent eight months toiling at work trying to earn the respect of her peers by posting high marks on her ceremonial tests. By November of 2018, unknown to her coworkers, her problems at home had reached a boiling point.

Her husband asked her to apply for another assignment so the family could leave D.C. During that same month, Porterfield began brainstorming on the cleanest method to take her own life.

Unshakeable bond

When Knight, a staff officer in The Old Guard learned that her friend, Chelsea, had considered suicide and had been admitted for treatment, it rattled her. Four months passed since the pair had worked together — Knight as the platoon leader and Porterfield as her platoon sergeant. But the two remained in touch through messages on Facebook, or occasionally stopping by her office at Joint Base Myer.

Knight and Porterfield instantly clicked after meeting in January 2018. Knight, then a first lieutenant, joined The Old Guard three years removed from her graduation from the U.S. Military Academy. Porterfield, a seasoned NCO, had applied for the position after serving as an instructor at the Army's Military Police School in Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri.

On the surface they had many similarities. Both women possessed an intense work ethic, holding themselves to sometimes impossibly high standards. Both had light blond hair and the way they joked with each other could easily be mistaken for sisters or lifelong friends, Knight said.

In other aspects they could not have been more different.

Porterfield, in her mid 30s, already had 16 years in the Army under her belt. Porterfield had already been on four deployments and spent three years molding Soldiers as a drill instructor. She also had a family.

Knight, then a 25-year-old single woman and a devout Christian, leaned on her faith to weather difficult circumstances. Instead of turning to a higher power while in distress, Porterfield relied on herself.

Despite their differences, they possessed a mutual respect for one another, and had a similar leadership style and both pushed for giving Soldiers cross training opportunities such as shadowing other Soldiers in other units.

"We came from different backgrounds but I think we spoke the same language," Knight said. "We have the same drive."

Each Soldier joining The Old Guard must complete ceremonial certification. Soldiers endure a rigorous process where they must learn the finer points of drill and ceremony.

"There is a lot of pressure, either imposed or self-imposed," Porterfield said. "You don't want to be the one that consistently fails."

By completing ceremonial training, members of The Old Guard earn their distinguished "buff strap," an honorary Regimental Distinctive Insignia made from rawhide, woven into the black shoulder strap of their knapsacks, a tradition that was adopted in 1792. This distinguished the 3rd

Infantry from other units in the Army.

Porterfield decided she wanted to complete the Regimental Sword and Saber certification in less than three months. In the competitive environment of The Old Guard, NCOs must often jostle against each other for coveted positions.

"She took that burden on herself to be like, 'I must do these things to prove myself somehow in this regiment,'" Knight said. "I'm not sure most people would do that."

Porterfield hid her depression while masking her feelings behind a smile. She'd be the first Soldier to report for duty, arriving before the sun rose. And she often would stay late to mentor other Soldiers, instead of spending time with her infant son. Knight would come to the office to find Porterfield at her desk already at work. Porterfield would fret over how leadership looked upon her.

She understood the burden Old Guard Soldiers must weather in a priority assignment.

Porterfield felt the weight of taking this duty, feeling alone, and didn't want to let her mentors down, she said.

Double tragedy

Nine months later Knight assumed a new role as a member of the military police staff of The Old Guard.

Knight returned to her home state of New York to visit family for the holidays in December 2018. On Dec. 23, she received a call from her old supervisor and mentor, Maj. Chris Nogle, who had been stationed in Hawaii.

Two months before, Nogle had visited Knight during a training session and the two had lunch in Washington. Knight noticed Nogle's listless expression and became concerned.

That winter morning, he texted her what he thought was a funny picture of someone who resembled Knight. He wished her a Merry Christmas and asked how Knight's family was doing. She told him her family was doing well and Knight wished him the same.

Later that day, the major died by suicide.

When Knight heard the news from a fellow Soldier in her old unit, she sat shocked. "What more could I have done?" Knight asked herself.

She tried to compose herself for what would be a bittersweet holiday.

Knight texted Porterfield "Merry Christmas" and had not heard back. Three days later, Knight's first sergeant told her that Chelsea had been contemplating suicide and had checked



Sgt. 1st Class Chelsea Porterfield, left, and Capt. Tessa Knight became close friends after serving as platoon leaders in The Old Guard in 2018. Knight helped Porterfield cope with recovery from having suicidal thoughts.

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into the behavioral health clinic at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital.

Internal struggle

Porterfield spent three weeks in the inpatient center and had to recite what had happened in November. She also recalled her internal battles during deployments and her recent problems at home. Doctors continually monitored her mental state and she had to be kept away from sharp objects.

"I wondered 'how did I get here?'" Porterfield said. "I couldn't even shave my legs without being supervised."

Porterfield followed that treatment with a 12-week outpatient program where she learned to cope with her internal struggle.

A psychiatrist later told her that her feelings likely came from a combination of ailments: Depression, adjustment disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. He added that she had repressed feelings that finally manifested that November. She hadn't dealt with the trauma she experienced from years of going to war.

Porterfield has forgotten most of her first tour in Iraq. But treatment helped her deal with the memory loss. She remembers entering Iraqi vil-

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What payroll tax deferral means for Soldiers, DA civilians

By THOMAS BRADING

Army News Service

WASHINGTON — With plans to put payroll taxes on ice for the rest of the year, Army finance officials warn Soldiers the tax breaks are temporary and will be collected starting in January.

To provide relief during the COVID-19 pandemic, a presidential memorandum was issued last month, followed by guidance from the Internal Revenue Service a few weeks later, to temporarily defer Social Security taxes.

Effective this month and through the end of calendar 2020, the federal government will defer the withholding of payroll tax to provide relief during the COVID-19 pandemic. Soldiers will be responsible to pay their deferred taxes between January and April 30, said Larry Lock, chief of Compensation and Entitlements for the Army's G-1 office.

The Federal Insurance Contributions Act, or FICA, is the U.S. federal payroll tax and part of former President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal domestic program. It's essentially a trust fund for American workers, with every paycheck

taking 6.2% in gross wages for Social Security.

FICA taxes go into a government trust fund, which pays out to retired Soldiers and eligible beneficiaries. Soldiers need to understand their money goes back into the Social Security program come next year, Lock said.

So what does this mean for the Soldiers? According to the emergency declaration signed by President Donald Trump last month, individuals whose monthly basic pay is less than \$8,666.66 will benefit from this deferral.

If the monthly rate of basic pay is at or above this threshold, the Social Security tax withholding will not be affected by the temporary deferral. This threshold was established by the Department of Treasury.

Soldiers with monthly wages under the threshold are not eligible to opt-out of the deferral, which will happen automatically.

This essentially impacts all enlisted Soldiers; officers at the grade O-1 through O-4; grade O-5 with less than 16 years of service; grade O-6 with less than 14 years of service; and all warrant officers from W-1 through W-4.

If Soldiers separate or retire in 2020 before So-



cial Security taxes are collected in 2021, they will still be responsible for the tax repayment, Lock said.

The best way to plan is two-fold, Lock said. First, Soldiers should check their Leave and Earnings Statement, or LES, in the deductions sections for FICA-SOCIAL SECURITY taxes. Once there, they can identify the amount deferred for the applicable pay period, he said.

After that, Soldiers should adjust for their tax liabilities during the period of January through April 2021. The deferral and tax liability will be administered by the Defense Finance and Accounting Service.

As more information becomes available, it will be posted on: <https://www.dfas.mil/taxes/Social-Security-Deferral/>.

Suicide

Continued from page 7

lages during raids. She recalls the endless night patrols across the desert.

When she dealt with adversity or stress, she admittedly buried any trauma within.

Her husband removed all firearms from the family's house. Porterfield promised to alert him or her commander if her harmful feelings resurfaced.

Porterfield told Knight what had happened in November. They talked about her suicidal feelings and the pressures she felt at home. Knight assured her friend that she could turn to her.

"I just was able to express to her what I hadn't been able to express to my mentor, which is like you're alive and you're cared for, and I'm here, and I will always be here if you need me," Knight said.

Rising from despair

The day after the clinic discharged her from inpatient care, Porterfield called a meeting with her platoon. For the first time in her career, she decided to open up about her struggles to her Soldiers. She told them that she had been hurting for a long time and did not completely understand why. She said she sought treatment, and they could still talk to her the same way as before.

"I didn't want to walk on egg shells," she said. "I didn't want the atmosphere to be thick — I didn't want any of that."

Porterfield credited her unit for treating her with the same respect. When they had questions about her

struggles, she willingly answered. To her surprise, other Soldiers shared that family members and friends had similar thoughts to harm themselves and asked where to seek help. The conversation set the foundation for her transition back to work three months later.

Her therapy sessions taught her about self-awareness; how to identify feelings that could lead to suicidal thoughts. She also received training on cognitive behavioral therapy and how to cope with harmful feelings.

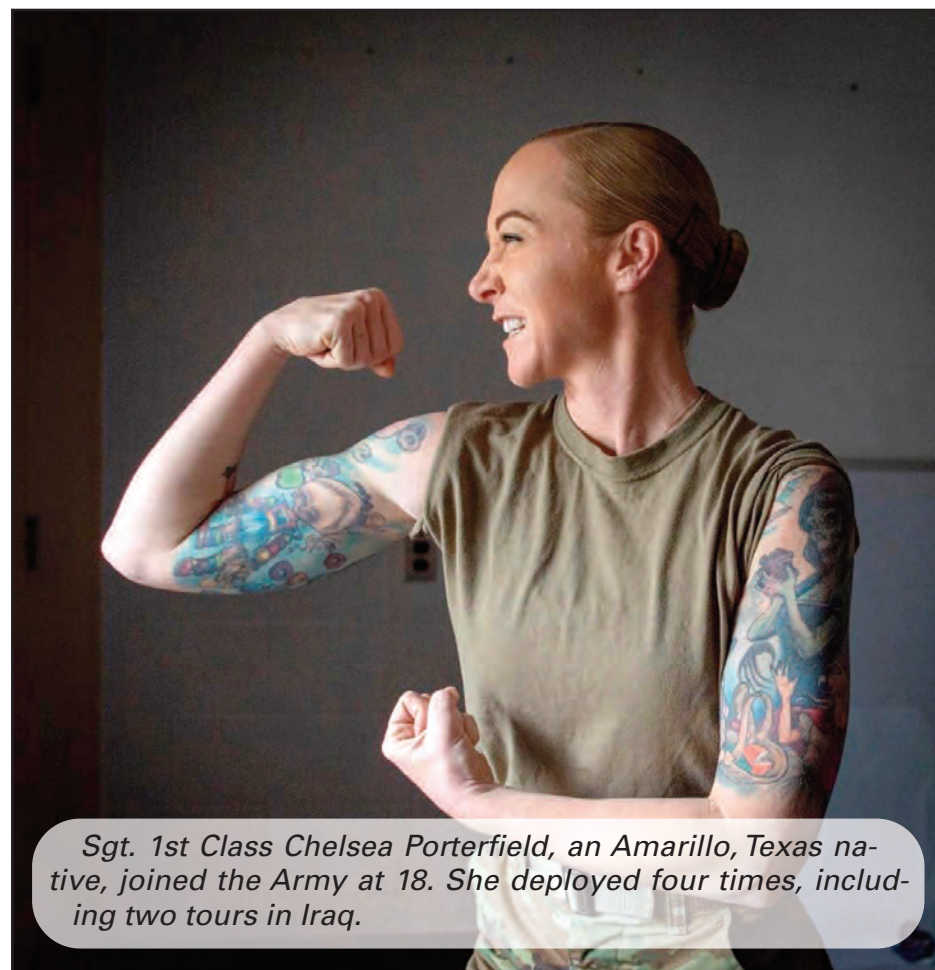
Today Porterfield remains open about her bout with suicide. She has become a spokesperson for a veteran suicide survivor group, letting other veterans know there are places to seek help. Veterans battling suicide can contact the Veterans Crisis Line, available 24/7, by calling (800) 273-8255 and pressing 1; texting to 838255, or chatting online.

Once Porterfield completes sentinel training, she will be the sixth female to earn the Guard, Tomb of the Unknown Soldier Identification Badge. Her husband retired last November after 20 years in the Army.

In her hardest days that fall and winter, she remembered how her platoon and her commanders at The Old Guard accepted her without malice or judgement.

"I was worried about being treated differently or judged by my command team and my Soldiers," Porterfield said. "Luckily, none of that happened."

Porterfield's greatest weapon



Sgt. 1st Class Chelsea Porterfield, an Amarillo, Texas native, joined the Army at 18. She deployed four times, including two tours in Iraq.

ARMY NEWS SERVICE

against suicide lies at home.

Hunter, now nearly 4 years old, already has an expansive vocabulary and enjoys running around outdoors like his mother did as a child. She shudders when she thinks that she could have ever left him.

Porterfield looks at her son, and his curly blond locks whenever she needs to remind herself why she

must go on. And she has finally found even ground between duty and family, assuring that she spends time with her son and her husband.

"He's smart," Porterfield said of Hunter. "What did he say? Yesterday, I was FaceTiming with him. He's like, 'Mommy, do you have balance?'"

"I was like, 'yes, I do have balance.'"

'Community' takes on new meaning for local resident

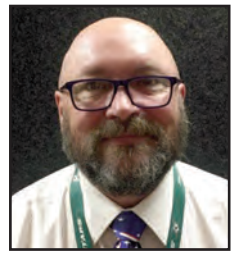
By T.C. BRADFORD

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — As Hurricane Laura strengthened in the Gulf of Mexico, part of my job was to update the JRTC and Fort Polk website (home.army.mil/polk) with the latest tracking map and forecast from the Weather Channel to keep the community as informed as possible of the events about to unfold.

I continued working until the power went out and then spent the rest of the night praying that my home, family, friends and pets would survive the direct hit barreling up La. Hwy 171. It was a long, scary night and there were times the wind blew so hard, the roof creaked, and I was afraid we were going to lose our porch.

I finally was able to get a quick power nap about 5 a.m. Thursday morning when my wife woke up and took over-watch duties. When I woke, it had passed and was heading north still as a category 1 hurricane. I grabbed my son and went out to survey the damage.



Bradford

You know this part. There were trees down and debris was scattered throughout the neighborhood. Luckily, there was no tree damage to the house. Several trees had come down at just the right angle to miss the house, but the wind had damaged the roof.

We were also trapped. Looking down the road in both directions, I could see trees blocking the road both ways — but not for long. A group of neighbors with chain saws, tractors, bobcats and other equipment got after it and the road was cleared within hours. Neighbors were checking on each other and willing to lend a hand where needed ... and boy, were they needed.

The Sunday after the hurricane, I was tasked to man the Warrior Operations Center for the Public Affairs Office at the JRTC and Fort Polk headquarters building. Every directorate had someone staffing and representing their respective organizations, 24/7, until power restoration. These are people with their own problems and damage that needed to be taken care of, but they put that aside to provide the greatest disaster response I have personally seen.

Fort Polk's command teams, headed by Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, JRTC and Fort Polk commander, and Col. Ryan K. Roseberry, commander, U.S. Army Garrison, Fort Polk, were ever present, collecting information and developing a plan for the installation to recover from the massive damage taken during the storm. The main priority was to care for Soldiers, including those here on rotation, and the Families, retirees and Department of the Army civilian workforce.

Within hours, units had been mobilized to help clean trees and debris from the housing areas, restoring access for repair crews and setting the stage for the return of power on the installation. The latest information on the recovery and plans for what was to come next were ubiquitous. If you were able to keep up with Facebook, all users emails and the Digital Garrison app, you had the latest information at your fingertips.

The progress made was phenomenal. Streets were cleared, ice and fuel were available, and the commissary was open and fully stocked. All of



KEITH HOUIN / GUARDIAN

Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk volunteers man a Red Cross distribution point at the installation's Siegfried Youth Activity Center, handing out supplies to help those affected by Hurricane Laura.



Michel E. Buterbaugh, Mobilization Program manager (left), visits with Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, commander, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, at a Red Cross distribution point at the installation's Siegfried Youth Activity Center. Buterbaugh was one of a host of volunteers who manned the point.

that took the community pulling together. Stories were told of commanders and command sergeants major out in the heat with the Soldiers they lead manning chainsaws and helping clear debris. That is what I call leading from the front.

A walking town hall of the housing areas through every neighborhood on the installation was performed with command teams talking to residents, making sure damage was noted for future repairs, listening to challenges residents were facing and ensuring they knew command was aware and working their problems.

As I walked with my assigned team taking pictures and documenting the event for historical

and news purposes, I saw Soldiers getting after it, but there were also residents pitching in and helping. They were picking up debris, raking and checking on each other to help get Fort Polk back to normal. At one stop, I saw a resident spouse and her daughter handing out cookies and ice water to Soldiers working her neighborhood. Community.

As I traveled throughout the area, I saw neighbors working at fire stations handing out ice, water and meals to those in need. I drove through neighborhoods in our surrounding communities and was stunned by the damage the storm left,

Please see **Community**, page 10

Community

Continued from page 9

but everywhere I looked, neighbors were helping neighbors. Local stores were open and providing needed items like ice and food.

On Sept. 4, a Resiliency Center was established at Siegfried Youth Activity Center offering access to free WiFi, air conditioning, shower facilities and ice for Soldiers, Families and DA civilian employees who live off the installation.

On Sunday, Sept. 6, I went to the commissary to pick up a few items.

Like everyone else, we lost all the meat in our freezers and needed to make a supply run.

As I passed Siegfried, I saw the distribution point set up by the Red Cross. It was staffed with volunteers. A co-worker was on hand directing traffic and when I went through the line, I saw the garrison commander's wife, Rhonda Roseberry, filling boxes for volunteers to give out. When I got to the head of the line, who did I see but Col. Jody Dugai, commander of Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital, pitching in.

The Red Cross kits included shovels, rakes, tarps, gloves, flashlights and cleaning supplies, including hand-held scrub brushes, scrub brooms, a squeegee, garbage bags, masks and hand sanitizer. In total,

the Red Cross handed out 302 full kits and 17 partial kits.

Fifteen volunteers manned the bulwarks, along with a retinue of Red Cross employees, and Col. Roseberry was there all day, pitching in and ensuring folks had the supplies they needed to help them through the disaster.

My family is lucky. We can cook a hot meal; we have a generator and fans. We have access to ice and,

while we were without electricity in the house until Sept. 8, my shop next door had power and a working refrigerator.

The damage we took, while significant, could have been a lot worse.

But the greatest blessing I will take from this event: Knowing I live in a community that cares about its people. Community used to be a just where I lived, but it has a different meaning to me now. Community is a team of folks pitching in to solve problems and help those in need.

I've never been prouder to belong to this team, this community, and I will shout it from the rooftops every chance I get. Thank you all for stepping up and getting after it. Thank you all — especially those who may never hear it — for being there for the rest of us.

Commentary

Hurricane Laura's winds ripped siding and shingles from Fort Polk housing, offices and unit buildings.



GUARDIAN STAFF



Downed trees and power lines dotted the Fort Polk landscape following Hurricane Laura.



Volunteers pitched in to remove debris left in Hurricane Laura's wake on Fort Polk.



Crews worked round-the-clock to restore power and communications to the installation and surrounding area.

9-11 remembered

Spouse: 'You know, our son is going to war'

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — Sept. 11, 2001, began like most every day for my spouse, Susan, and me — getting ready to go to work.

As was my custom, I had a quick breakfast, took care of personal hygiene, and then began getting dressed for my job as a reporter at The News-Star, a daily newspaper in Monroe, La.

While getting dressed each morning, I typically turned the TV to CNN and watched Robin Meade give the morning news stories. That morning, when I tuned in shortly after 7:45 a.m. Central Time, it was a scene of mass hysteria as footage showed a jet crashing into the North Tower of the World Trade Center in New York.



Cannon

Reporters were at a loss as to how a commercial jet could have flown that far off track. I remember calling out to Susan to come look at the carnage being broadcast around the world. As we watched in disbelief, the unthinkable happened: A second commercial aircraft plowed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center. I remember thinking: This is no accident.

Susan had the same thought as she turned to me and said, "You know, our son is going to war."

Our son, Justin, was in Jump School at Fort Benning, Georgia, when the Twin Towers were attacked. He had joined the Army earlier that year and had completed Basic and Advanced Infantry training before beginning airborne training.

After Jump School, he was hustled off to the Army's Ranger Indoctrination Program — also at Fort Benning — before being assigned to the 1st Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment at Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia. And, proving his mother's prophetic comment, two weeks later he was headed to Afghanistan to participate in Operation Enduring Freedom.

Susan spent eight years in the Army, and I spent a career, but we never had anything close to combat. The only assignment we had where we were even issued field gear or a weapon was at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. The rest of our assignments — U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command Field Stations in Okinawa, Japan, San Antonio, Texas, and Augsburg, Germany — were either shift work or 9-to-5. Sure, we had PT (when it was convenient) and qualified with the M16 (using borrowed weapons at Marine Corps or U.S. Air Force ranges), but for the most part, we were sheltered from what combat arms Soldiers faced.

While at Fort Bragg, the Panama invasion took place, but we were not involved, and in Augs-

burg, the first Gulf War occurred, but again, the only impact we had was increased security entering the kasernes or PX parking lot.

But this was different. True, Susan and I weren't deploying, but our son was. While he was in Afghanistan, we rarely heard from him due to operation security concerns. We received enough information to learn he was still alive and fairly healthy, but that was about it.

We met him at Hunter Army Airfield when his unit returned from Afghanistan and all was well again — for a season. When he injured his back and was reassigned to the 3rd Infantry Division, Fort Stewart, Georgia, he was on his way to Kuwait, where his unit was in the vanguard that crossed into Iraq March 20, 2003, as President George W. Bush officially launched Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Once again, Susan and I experienced the same situation faced by the families of those who have gone to war for millennia — was our loved one safe? We were fortunate; we learned early on that David Bloom, a reporter from MSNBC, was em-

bedded with Justin's unit, and we were able to follow his track daily. As his unit was not reporting any casualties, we were fairly certain that Justin was OK.

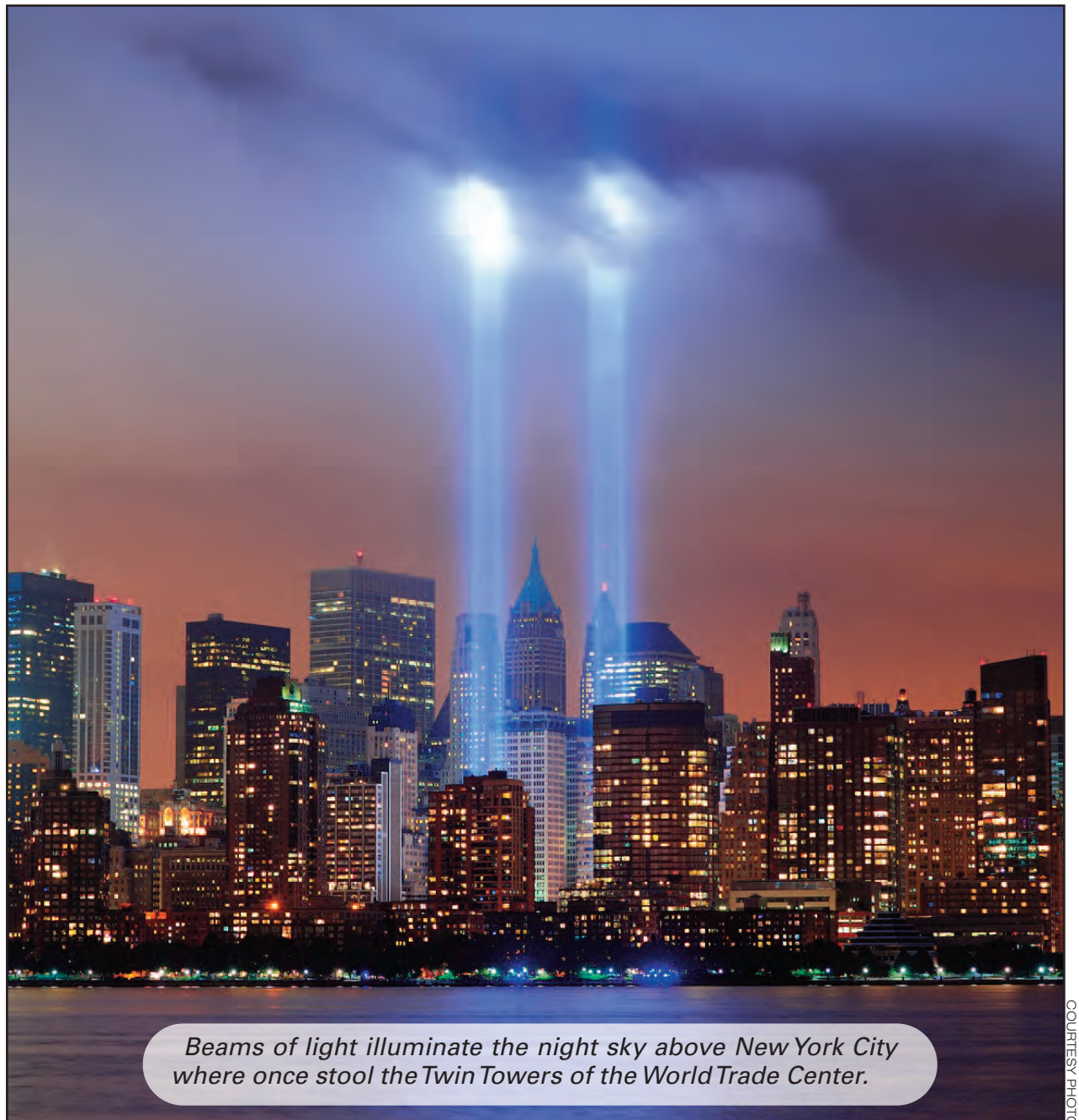
Then on April 6, 2003, Bloom died from a blood clot that moved from his leg to his lung, resulting in a pulmonary embolism. Not only did we lose the link to our son, the nation also lost a hero who kept so many parents, spouses and other Family members informed on their Soldier's whereabouts.

I'm happy to report that Justin survived both conflicts and is now married to a wonderful lady and father to a beautiful little girl. They live up north and we visit by Facetime weekly and in person as often as COVID-19 will allow.

But Sept. 11, 2001, will always stick in my memory as my generation's Day of Infamy. It's one of those events that if you were old enough to remember, you'll not only never forget, but you'll even recall what you were doing at the time.

I know I'll never forget Susan turning to me as the second plane crashed into the World Trade Center at 8:03 a.m., her lips trembling, and saying, "You know, our son is going to war."

Commentary



Beams of light illuminate the night sky above New York City where once stood the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center.

COURTESY PHOTO

Dubik considers morals of war in book targeted to senior leaders

By Retired Lt. Col. MARK LESLIE
Chief, Plans and Operations, DPTMS

FORT POLK, La. — If you want to ponder the morals involved in waging war, read “JUST WAR: Reconsidered, Strategy, Ethics and Theory.” It superbly reveals the morality of executing strategies not capable of meeting a war’s aims.

To be honest, I was surprised at how much this book made me think, and reminded me — again — how much I don’t know. But this is not a book I would recommend for everyone: It was written by a senior leader, for senior leaders — military and political — alike.

Retired Lt. Gen. James M. Dubik has done exhaustive research to support this book, and it’s evident as you read his work, even more personal reflection and thought on the current conflict.

I dog-eared a lot of pages in this book to come back to and capture for this review, and also to think over and absorb. One of the first pages was the author’s discussion on war in total and the proposition that the conduct of war involves more than fighting. Dubik talks of the two dimensions of warfare (in the context of this book): The tactical, which involves fighting a war, and the strategic, which involves waging a war. This sets the foundation for the entire book and made me appreciate where it was going.

Every Soldier knows the Army invests considerable time to ensure that those fighting a war fight it “justly,” with the tools and framework used to enforce that execution. Tools like the laws of land warfare, the code of conduct, the rules of engagement and so forth are invaluable to leaders and Soldiers in armed conflict to remain morally and ethically responsible on the behalf of the nation. They are the moral standards expected of an American military.

The next dog-eared page I highlighted was when the author talked about the differences between fighting a war — which is what I, and probably most readers, have always done, and waging a war.

Waging war focuses on the civil-military aspect of warfare and infuses political goals into the war-fighting dimension at the senior levels of country leadership. Waging war is not strictly a military or political act; they are inseparable. The author asserts that senior political and military leaders have a moral responsibility in the conduct of waging a war. Dubik asserts that while leaders cannot be



held legally liable, they should be held morally liable for war that is waged unjustly or with ill-defined objectives.

This was an eye-opening statement for me, as I have never considered the term and have been struggling with a way to capture the moral responsibilities of senior leaders in what seems like perpetual conflict. Dubik does so remarkably well with what is basically a “just war framework.” I will let the reader read Dubik’s work and make their own judgment on where we stand in our current state of conflict.

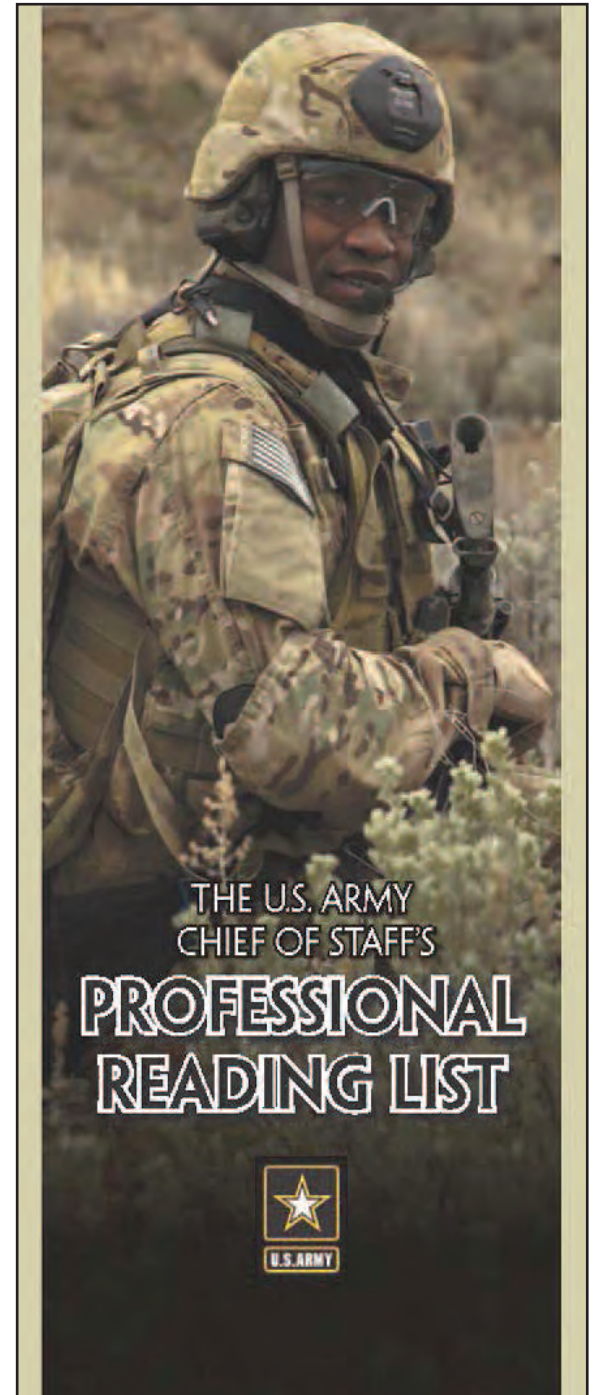
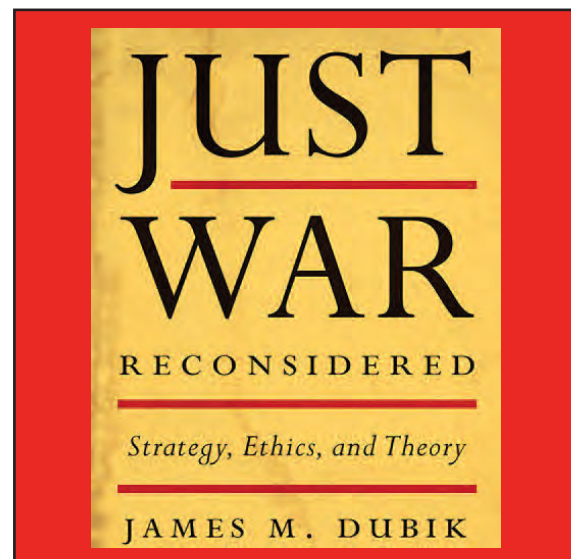
The author uses history as a vehicle to make his point, referring to the Civil War, World War II, Vietnam extensively and the (intellectually courageous I think) current conflicts our country is involved in around the globe. This is valuable in presenting real-world historical events where leaders and the country either succeeded or failed in their war-waging moral responsibilities.

War fighting and war waging are both dirty, tragic and deadly, not to mention complex endeavors. No two wars are alike and no two ever

will be, but there is a precedent and historical lessons that one can rely on for guidance in waging morally just wars. The author has splendidly laid out the obligations of senior and political leaders in waging a war. I chose the word “obligation” carefully. Those fighting a war are obligated to fight it in accordance with the framework laid out for them do so justly; why should senior leaders not be



Leslie



held morally responsible as the author asserts?

This work should be required reading for every senior leader in the U.S. military as well as every member of Congress and appointed senior political leaders. The connection between those fighting a war and those waging a war — and the obligations of both — are inseparable. Civilian responsibility and contributions to a winning strategy are critical in war and the author makes clear that in order to win, war must be a military-civilian endeavor.

This book has a target audience and will make some leaders at the senior level uncomfortable, as it should. This excellent work justly earns four and a half anvils out of five on the JRTC and Fort Polk rating scale.

Title: JUST WAR Reconsidered, Strategy, Ethics and Theory

Author: Retired Lt. Gen. James M. Dubik
Allen Memorial Library CALL Number: MS PRL 172.42 DUB

Community

Fort Polk Family hosts barbecue for Soldiers as thanks for hurricane cleanup

By **ANGIE THORNE**
Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. —Hurricane Laura tore through Fort Polk Aug. 27, leaving havoc in its wake. After the Fort Polk community emerged from their homes that day, they immediately began to assess the damage and mend the destruction caused by winds of more than 100 miles per hour.

Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Weinberg, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division platoon sergeant, and his spouse, Chelsie, who live in Fort Polk's Palmetto Terrace neighborhood, had been through hurricanes before, but Chelsie said this was one the worst.

"My feet hit the floor at 3:08 a.m. as the first gusts of wind hit my windows. It was an intense storm for a while there," she said.

After it was over Chelsie said the debris and trees down in her neighborhood and all over Fort Polk were overwhelming.

"You almost didn't know what to do first. I just began picking up branches. The people on our street worked together to start cleaning up the debris," she said.

Since that day, much has happened to get Fort Polk back to normal. There are untold stories, large and small, that personify the resiliency and spirit of the Soldiers and Families of Fort Polk.

Weinberg said his platoon was selected to start post cleanup Aug. 30 and one of the places they ended up working was in his neighborhood — Palmetto Terrace.

Chelsie said the Soldiers worked for days clearing debris and cutting downed trees in Palmetto Terrace.

Sgt. 1st Class Jerry McMillian, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk R2 Performance Center program manager, lives in the same neighborhood as the Weinbergs. He said in the aftermath of the hurricane JRTC and Fort Polk was down, but not out.

"I have never seen so many individuals pull

together to help each other with food, fuel, generator power and more. But when you talk about going above and beyond resilience and Forging the Warrior Spirit, I give thanks to the Weinbergs and the Soldiers of 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division," he said. "They worked hard to clean up our neighborhood and were a vital part of an expedited recovery to our installation. It was a job well done."

When Soldiers work together they make things happen, said Chelsie.

"Soldiers are used to getting things done and it shows in the progress you can see across Fort Polk in just one week. It's incredible," she said.

Chelsie said she had been bringing the Soldiers cold water and sports drinks all week to keep them hydrated, but she and her husband thought it would be nice to give them a barbecue to thank them for a job well done.

Weinberg said his platoon put in a lot of hard work during the week of post-Hurricane Laura clean up and he knew his Soldiers were going back to a barracks room or house with no power, mainly eating meals ready-to-eat and not having access to things like Wi-Fi.

"I felt it was only right to feed them a good meal and get their mind off of the boredom they were experiencing outside of work," he said.

Chelsie said she bought hot dogs, burgers, cold drinks and all the fixings.

"We just wanted to thank them for working so hard by giving them a small morale boost," she said.

Weinberg said his Soldiers' reaction to the barbecue was a little nervous at first due to the fact that this was their first time at the platoon sergeant's house.

"It didn't take long for them to relax and start joking and laughing, which made me feel like I made the right choice in opening our home to them," he said.

McMillian said Weinberg and his spouse motivated his Soldiers through humid days and hot weather.

"Feeding the Soldiers was a great idea. While



they ate, I also took a moment to thank the Soldiers because I wanted to ensure that our JRTC and Fort Polk Family knows that regardless of the obstacle, we will always find a way to be resilient, resulting in positivity, optimism, hope in others through kindness, generosity and compassion," he said.

Though the recovery process continues, Chelsie said it has been awesome to see how everyone came together to make the clean up and recovery happen.

"It was impressive. Everybody has had a hand in the recovery process and it took us all to get this done," she said.

Weinberg said he thinks it was important to have his Soldiers take part in the recovery process.

"I was able to use post-Hurricane Laura clean up as an example to show my Soldiers how one unit depends on another to accomplish the same mission," he said. "I am extremely proud of my Soldiers. Not only did they keep a positive attitude the whole time, but they worked their hardest to not only help themselves but to help everyone who works and lives on post."

Take action, it's not too late to register to vote

FORT POLK VOTING ASSISTANCE OFFICE

FORT POLK, La. — It is now 53 days before the Nov. 3 general election.

Although state primary elections deadlines have passed, you still have time to register, request and return your ballot for the general election.

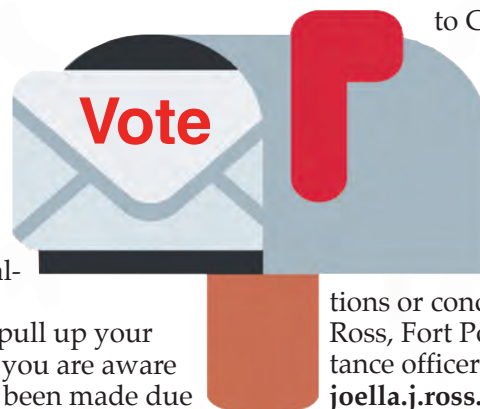
States are giving the deadline of Nov. 3 to register, request and return your ballot.

This will be difficult depending on how your state accepts federal post card applications, absentee ballot requests and your of-

ficial ballot.

Some states allow individuals to complete everything online and receive their ballot online or through email, while other states require you to mail in your ballot.

Visit fvap.gov and pull up your state's information so you are aware of what changes have been made due



to COVID-19.

It is best to register, request and turn in your ballot for the general election no later than Oct. 15.

Remember: Your vote is one of your greatest weapons.

If you have any questions or concerns, contact the 1st Lt. Joella Ross, Fort Polk Installation Voting Assistance officer at (337) 353-5649 or joella.j.ross.mil@mail.mil.

Study Hatch Act guidelines before becoming politically active

By Capt. PAULA FINLEY

3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div

FORT POLK, La. — With election season in full swing, it's time to review what is — or isn't — allowed for Soldiers and federal employees when it comes to political activities.

When questions arise about what is permissible and prohibited in regard to a political activity, the Hatch Act is the sole source of information.

Ignorance of the law does not excuse an employee's violation of the Hatch Act.

The political activity of government employees has been a concern of since the earliest days of the republic. Thomas Jefferson, the nation's third president, was among the first to express concern about this issue.

In response to his concern, the heads of the executive departments issued an order stating, while it is "the right of any officer (federal employee) to give his vote at elections as a qualified citizen ... it is expected that he will not attempt to influence the votes of others nor take part in the business of electioneering, that being deemed inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution."

Despite Jefferson's concerns, almost a century and a half elapsed before Congress began enacting a comprehensive law regarding the political activities of government employees.

The Hatch Act, a federal law passed in 1939, limits certain political activities of federal employees, as well as some state, D.C., and local government employees who work in connection with federally funded programs. The law ensures federal programs are administered in a nonpartisan fashion, and limits active partisan political activities or actions that could appear to imply Department of Defense sponsorship, approval or endorsement of a political campaign.

Military member guidance

U.S. military service members are limited when it comes to political activities. Some restrictions are based in federal law, others in military regulations. The purpose for these restrictions is to avoid the implication or inference that military members represent some official point of view.

The major military prohibition is against any type of partisan activities. A partisan activity is defined as "activity directed toward the success or failure of a (particular) political party or candidate for a partisan political office or group."

A military member may:

- Register, vote and express personal opinions.
- Encourage other military members to exercise voting rights.
- Join a political club and attend political meetings and rallies as a spectator when not in uniform.
- Make monetary contributions to a political organization.
- Sign petitions for specific legislative action or place a candidate's name on the ballot.
- Write letters to the editor expressing personal views (so long as not part of organized letter writing campaign).
- Place bumper stickers on private vehicles.
- Participate in local nonpartisan political activities, so long as not in uniform and no use of government property or resources, no interference with duty and no implied government position or involvement.

A military member may not:

- Use official authority to influence or interfere.
 - Be a candidate for, hold or exercise functions of a civil office.
 - Participate in partisan political campaigns, speeches, articles, TV or radio discussions.
 - Serve in official capacity or sponsor a partisan political club.
 - Conduct political opinion surveys.
 - Use contemptuous words against certain civilian leaders (10 U.S.C. 888), which applies to commissioned officers only.
 - March or ride in partisan parades.
 - Participate in organized efforts to transport voters to polls.
 - Promote or sell tickets for partisan political dinners or similar fundraising events.
 - Attend partisan events as official representative of the armed forces.
 - Display large signs, banners or posters on private vehicles.
 - Display a partisan political sign, poster or banner visible to the public at one's residence on a military installation, even if that residence is part of a privatized housing development.
- ## Permitted activities for federal employees:
- May be candidates for public office in non-partisan elections.
 - May register and vote as they choose.
 - May assist in voter registration drives.

- May express opinions about candidates and issues.
- May contribute money to political organizations.
- May attend political fundraising functions.
- May attend and be active at political rallies and meetings.
- May join and be an active member of a political party or club.
- May sign nominating petitions.
- May campaign for or against referendum questions, Constitutional amendments and municipal ordinances.
- May campaign for or against candidates in partisan elections.
- May make campaign speeches for candidates in partisan elections.
- May distribute campaign literature in partisan elections.
- May hold office in political clubs or parties, including serving as a delegate to a convention.

Prohibited activities for federal employees:

- May not use official authority or influence to interfere with an election.
- May not solicit, accept or receive political contributions unless both individuals are members of the same federal labor organization or employee organization and the one solicited is not a subordinate employee.
- May not knowingly solicit or discourage the political activity of any person who has business before the agency.
- May not engage in political activity while on duty or in any government office.
- May not engage in political activity while wearing an official uniform.
- May not engage in political activity while using a government vehicle.
- May not be candidates for public office in partisan elections.
- May not wear political buttons on duty.

To find out more, visit these sites:

- www.oge.gov/Topics/Outside-Employment-and-Activities/Political-Activities/
- www.osc.gov/Pages/HatchAct.aspx
- www.osc.gov/resources/ha_fed.pdf

Consult Department of Defense Directive 1344.10 Feb 2008, Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces. You may also contact the Administrative Law Division, Office of Staff Judge Advocate, at 531-2754/2155.

Punishment, extra duty meted out for disciplinary actions

OSJA

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

The preamble to the Manual for Courts-Martial spells out the purpose of military law is to promote justice, assist in maintaining good order and discipline in the armed forces, promote efficiency and effectiveness in the military establishment, thereby strengthening the national security of the United States.

Across Fort Polk, the following disciplinary issues continue to be prevalent: Violating General Order No. 1; driving under the influence of alcohol; wrongful use or possession of controlled substances; fraternization; sexual assault; and domestic abuse. Below are recent examples of adverse legal actions for units within the Fort Polk jurisdiction.

• A specialist, assigned to 519th Military Police Battalion, was punished under Article 15 for wrongfully using Tetrahydrocannabinol, a Schedule 1 controlled substance, in violation of Article 112a, Uniform Code of Military Justice. The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-3; forfeiture of \$1,085 pay for one month, suspended for 3 months; and extra-duty for 30 days.

• A private first class, assigned to 317th Engineer Battalion, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), was punished under Article 15 for violating General Order No. 1 by exceeding the mileage radius, in violation of Article 92, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-1; forfeiture of \$866 pay for one month, suspended for 6 months; extra-duty for 30 days; and restriction for 30 days.

• A private first class, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div (LI), was separated under Chapter 14-12c (Commission of a Serious Offense) for driving

while under the influence of alcohol and failure to report. The Soldier was issued a General Under Honorable Conditions characterization of service. Generally, this characterization of service results in the loss of a service member's educational benefits.

• A private first class, assigned to 41st Transportation Company, 519th Military Police Battalion, was punished under Article 15 for wrongfully using Tetrahydrocannabinol, a Schedule 1 controlled substance, in violation of Article 112a, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to a reduction to E-2; forfeiture of \$971 pay for one month, suspended for 3 months; and extra-duty for 30 days.

• A private, assigned to 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment, Operations Group, was punished under Article 15 for providing an official false statement to a noncommissioned officer, in violation of Article 107, UCMJ. The Soldier was sentenced to 14 days of extra-duty and 14 days of restriction.

AAFES announces two new programs for Soldiers, vets

AAFES

FORT POLK, La. — The Army and Air Force Exchange Service offers two new programs for eligible shoppers.

Clothing plan increase

Soldiers at Fort Polk can purchase up to \$1,000 in qualifying merchandise on their Military Star Military Clothing Plan interest free, doubling the plan's original credit limit of \$500.

The Military Clothing Plan is a special line of zero-interest credit for uniform purchases available to all active-duty Soldiers, airmen and Marines, as well as Guard and Reserve members. The limit increase, the first of its kind since 1979, will also extend the plan's payment duration from eight to 12 months.

"Raising the Military Clothing Plan's credit limit strengthens the Military Star card's ability to help service members responsibly build credit while giving them greater flexibility to pay for their required uniforms," said Ronald McDuffie, Fort Polk Exchange general manager. "The Military Star card offers this benefit as a service to the services, reflecting the Exchange Credit Program's commitment to ensuring the readiness and resiliency of warfighters across the globe."

The increase comes as the Exchange rolls out the new Army Green Service Uniform, expected to be available in most stateside Army Military Clothing stores by December and at overseas lo-

cations by March 2021.

About 474,000 Soldiers, airmen and Marines worldwide have a Military Star clothing line of credit. Purchases that qualify for the Military Clothing Plan include:

- Defense Logistics and Troop Support (DLAT)-procured issue military clothing items and footwear.
- DLAT organizational clothing and individual equipment items.
- The Army Green Service Uniform, which is procured directly by the Exchange
- Exchange commercial uniform clothing, undergarments, insignia and footwear to be worn with the uniform.

Soldiers, airmen and Marines qualify for the Military Clothing Plan. Sailors and Coast Guard members are offered a promotional 0% plan for uniform purchases under the Military Star card's standard retail credit line.

Holiday shopping

Military shoppers looking to get a head start on holiday shopping while avoiding crowds can turn to AAFES 12 Weeks of Savings.

Through Nov. 25, shoppers will find Black Friday prices in-store and on **ShopMyExchange.com** on electronics, clothing, jewelry, sporting goods and more. New deals and specials will roll out each Friday for 12 weeks.

The 12 Weeks of Savings campaign moves up the traditional holiday shopping period, running

through Black Friday weekend — Nov. 27-29.

Shoppers can enjoy weekly Black Friday prices in store and online without waiting until November and can also avoid traditional holiday shopping crowds by taking advantage of buy online, pick up in store and curbside pickup contactless options.

"The Exchange understands this holiday shopping will look different during the COVID-19 pandemic," said McDuffie. "Soldiers and military shoppers expect the value the Exchange is known to provide as well as safe, secure, sanitized environments."

Military shoppers can find these weekly deals by picking up the sales flier at their local Exchange or by visiting ShopMyExchange.com and clicking on Weekly Ad.

Veterans using their Exchange benefit can take advantage of 12 Weeks of Savings too. The 2020 holiday shopping season will mark the first for in-person shopping for veterans with service-connected disabilities. Additionally, all honorably discharged veterans will find tax-free shopping and military exclusive pricing at **ShopMyExchange.com**.

Veterans can find out more about their shopping benefits at Exchange's community Hub page at <https://bit.ly/Vets4Life>.

The Military Star card is accepted at all military exchanges and commissaries. For more information, visit MyECP.com.

Information links earbuds to issues such as infections, hearing loss

By SHEILA ANTHONY

BJACH Department of Public Health

FORT POLK, La. — A recent blog from Whittier Hospital Medical Center, Whittier, California, brings up some important questions about earbuds.

Listening to music and making hands-free calls are just some of the reasons why people use earbuds. Whether they admit it or not, there are times that earbuds are being worn for long periods of time. Some wear them as a status symbol or because it's considered fashionable even when not in use. Some doctors warn against this and suggest headphone usage instead. But are earbuds really that bad for the ears?

Most earbuds were designed to increase the quality of the sound. Unfortunately, the designers forgot to consider ear health. Earbuds have been linked to a number of ear infections and incidents of hearing loss.

There are many reasons why people choose earbuds over headphones. For one, high-quality earbuds are cheaper than premium headphones. Some earbuds come free with new cell phones and music players. In addition, earbuds are easier to carry than bulky headphones. Some people prefer earbuds because they deliver a more isolating sound on the go.

Despite these benefits, when it comes to health, earbuds are not always the best option.

- Earbuds carry dirt and bacteria. Since earbuds are compact, it's easy to leave them lying around. Unless you sanitize them, earbuds can accumulate dirt and bacteria. The moment you use them, they can introduce dirt and bacteria into your ears. This can cause allergic reactions, rashes or infections.

- Earbuds increase the risk of ear infections.

Aside from carrying dirt and bacteria, earbuds can increase earwax build-up. Since ears are designed to clean themselves, wearing earbuds can trap earwax that is supposed to move through the ear canal on its own. Excessive wax build-up leads to impacted earwax that can affect your hearing.

- Earbuds can rupture your eardrums. Earbuds blast music directly into your ear canal. When you turn up the volume, the vibration of sound goes straight to your eardrums. This practice may cause your eardrums to rupture and lead to complete hearing loss.

Replacing your earbuds with traditional headphones is probably the easiest solution to minimize damage to your ears. But if you feel like you can never part ways with your earbuds, you may try some of these steps:

- Reduce the time you wear your earbuds. You may want to switch to headphones or speakers when you're at home.
- Make sure your earbuds are clean every time you wear them. A simple wipe or gentle cleaning solution should do the trick. To prevent irritation

wipe with a clean damp cloth.

- Be mindful of the volume. Avoid turning it them up full blast for prolonged durations of time.

You can minimize the damage that earbuds cause as long as you make sure your ears are taken care of. Keep in mind your ears are delicate and need constant attention. In some cases, it may simply be better to opt for quality headphones.



Writer thanks Corvias, neighbor for relief from heat

Sending out a huge thanks to where it is due and that would be Corvias! When our power was back up but not our AC, we put in a work order and were amazed and truly grateful for their rapid response.

Today we have a much cooler house. Thank you Ms. Dee Dee and your awesome crew!

We would like to give thanks to our neighbor also, Sgt. Benjamin Vasquez, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, for looking after his neighbors during the power outage. Because of your generosity we were able to beat the heat.

Rodriguez Family

Letter

Fort Polk Fire Safety Awareness

- Fort Polk Fire Department **STRONGLY** recommends no use of candles/open flames.
- Check smoke detectors & fire extinguisher monthly!
- Keep barbecue grills 10ft away from homes, use proper cooking equipment, and use lighter fluid **ONLY**.



NEAR MISS SAFETY ALERT



OPERATIONS GROUP SAFETY GRAM Grill/House Fire



Mishap Summary:

At 2100hrs, 03 SEP 2020 Directorate of Emergency Services was notified of a fire within a housing area. The caller reported that her back yard was "on fire". Her husband, a SSG, was cooking on their grill when flames reached a nearby fuel can that was leaning against the housing unit. With the additional accelerant the fire melted the vinyl siding of the home and traveled to the second floor where it continued burning the upstairs blinds. The FPLA Fire Department soon arrived and extinguished the flames. There were no injuries associated with the mishap and damages are estimated to be approximately between \$1500 to \$2000.

Seven out of every 10 adults in the U.S. have a grill or smoker*, which translates to a lot of tasty meals. But it also means there's an increased risk of home fires.

Facts:

- In 2014-2018, fire departments went to an annual average of 8,900 home fires involving grills, hibachis or barbecues per year.
- July is the peak month for grill fires (18%), including both structure, outdoor or unclassified fires, followed by June (15%), May (13%) and August (12%).
- In 2014-2018, an average of 19,700 patients per year went to emergency rooms because of injuries involving grills.
- Children under five accounted for an average of 2,000 or 39% of the contact-type burns per year. These burns typically occurred when someone, often a child, bumped into, touched or fell on the grill, grill part or hot coals.
- Gas grills were involved in an average of 8,900 home fires per year, including 3,900 structure fires and 4,900 outdoor fires annually. Leaks or breaks were primarily a problem with gas grills.
- Charcoal or other solid-fueled grills were involved in 1,300 home fires per year, including 600 structure fires and 600 outside fires annually.

Recommendations:

- Only use grills outdoors, away from the siding, deck railings, out from under the eaves of your home and overhanging branches.
- Clean grills often and remove grease or fat buildup.
- Make sure your gas grill lid is open before lighting.
- Have a 3-foot safe-zone around grills and campfires. Keep kids and pets away from the area.
- Dispose of coals in a metal can after they have cooled.
- Never leave grills, fire pits and patio torches unattended.



Training, discipline and standards are the bedrock of our Army, and as Soldiers, you've been taught what right looks like. As Soldiers you have a duty and a responsibility to maintain standards both on and off duty. You also have an obligation to yourself to manage risk and take action to correct problems. In our fight against accidental injuries and fatalities, knowledge is the weapon of choice.

SAFETY ALERT

SAFETY ALERT

Cooking Safety

Cooking brings family and friends together, provides an outlet for creativity and can be relaxing. But did you know that cooking fires are the number one cause of home fires and home injuries? By following a few safety tips you can prevent these fires.

"COOK WITH CAUTION"

- Be on alert! If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol don't use the stove or stovetop.
- Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- If you are simmering, baking, roasting, or boiling food, check it regularly, remain in the home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Keep anything that can catch fire — oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains — away from your stovetop.

If you have a small (grease) cooking fire and decide to fight the fire...

- On the stovetop, smother the flames by sliding a lid over the pan and turning off the burner. Leave the pan covered until it is completely cooled.
- For an oven fire, turn off the heat and keep the door closed.

If you have any doubt about fighting a small fire...

- Just get out! When you leave, close the door behind you to help contain the fire.
- Call 9-1-1 or the local emergency number from outside the home.



Cooking and Kids

Have a "kid-free zone" of at least 3 feet around the stove and areas where hot food or drink is prepared or carried.

FACTS

- The leading cause of fires in the kitchen is unattended cooking.
- Most cooking fires in the home involve the kitchen stove.



Fort Polk Fire Department

1881 Louisiana Ave.

Grilling Safety

There's nothing like outdoor grilling. It's one of the most popular ways to cook food. But, a grill placed too close to anything that can burn is a fire hazard. They can be very hot, causing burn injuries. Follow these simple tips and you will be on the way to safe grilling.

SAFETY TIPS

- Propane and charcoal BBQ grills should only be used outdoors.
- The grill should be placed well away from the home, deck railings and out from under eaves and overhanging branches.
- Keep children and pets at least three feet away from the grill area.
- Keep your grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and in trays below the grill.
- Never leave your grill unattended.
- Always make sure your gas grill lid is open before lighting it.

CHARCOAL GRILLS

- There are several ways to get the charcoal ready to use. Charcoal chimney starters allow you to start the charcoal using newspaper as a fuel.
- If you use a starter fluid, use only charcoal starter fluid. Never add charcoal fluid or any other flammable liquids to the fire.
- Keep charcoal fluid out of the reach of children and away from heat sources.
- There are also electric charcoal starters, which do not use fire. Be sure to use an extension cord for outdoor use.
- When you are finished grilling, let the coals completely cool before disposing in a metal container.

PROPANE Grills

Check the gas tank hose for leaks before using it for the first time each year. Apply a light soap and water solution to the hose. A propane leak will release bubbles. If your grill has a gas leak, by smell or the soapy bubble test, and there is no flame, turn off both the gas tank and the grill. If the leak stops, get the grill serviced by a professional before using it again. If the leak does not stop, call the fire department. **If you smell gas while cooking, immediately get away from the grill and call the fire department. Do not move the grill.**

If the flame goes out, turn the grill and gas off and wait at least 5 minutes before re-lighting it.

FACTS

- July is the peak month for grill fires.
- Roughly half of the injuries involving grills are thermal burns.



Your Source for SAFETY Information
NFPA Public Education Division • 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169