



FORGING THE

WARRIOR SPIRIT

THE JRTC & FORT POLK GUARDIAN

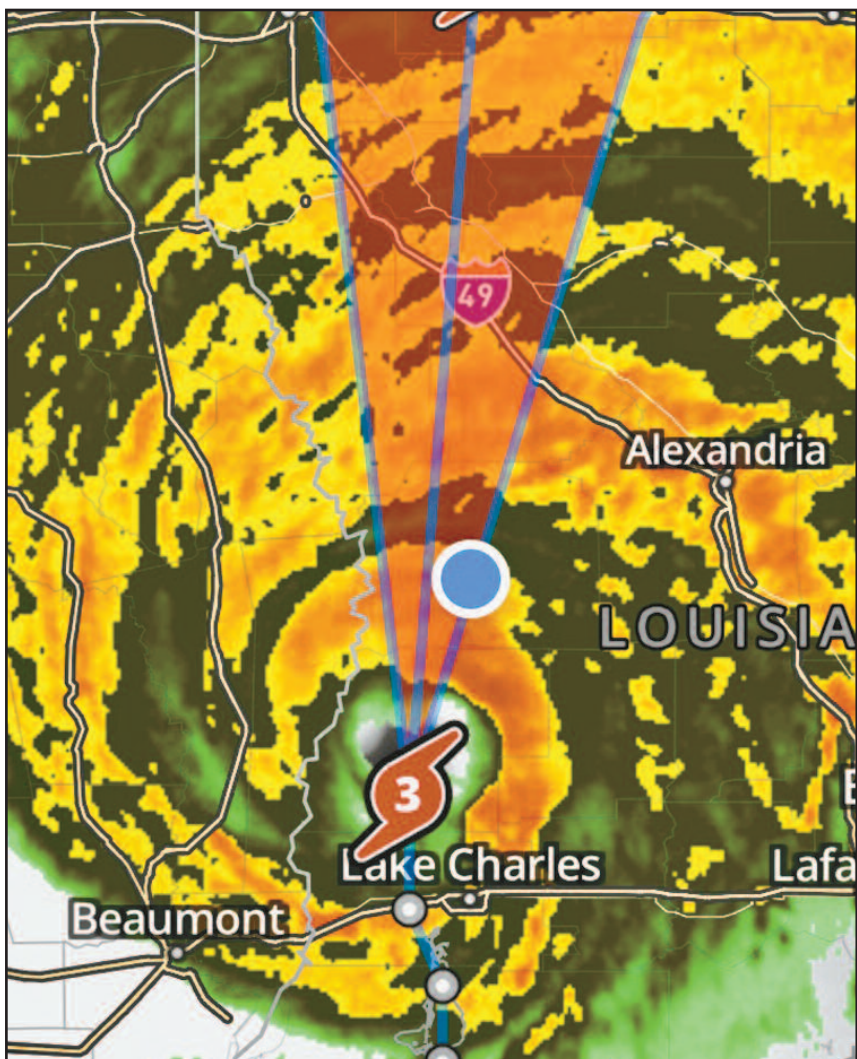
Vol. 47, No. 35

Home of Heroes @ Fort Polk, LA

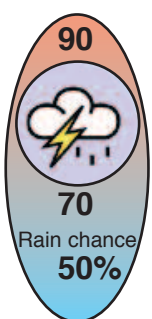
Sept. 4, 2020

Polk Strong, Resilient!

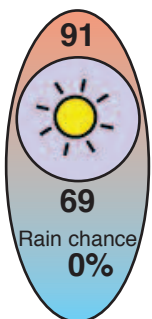
Fort Polk, community partners battle Hurricane Laura aftermath



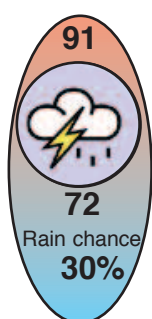
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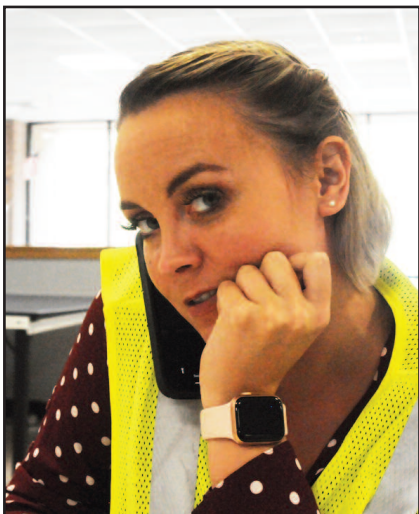
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Viewpoint

In our view

Guardian staff asked the JRTC and Fort Polk community,
"What about the hurricane concerned you most?"
Here are their responses:



Marie Shultz: "A lack of power with small children and limited resources in the area."



Pfc. James Oliver:
"Whether it would hit us or not as no storm had ever made it this far north as a hurricane."



Jordan Stoneking: "That the power wouldn't come back on when expected."



Kathryn Ricks: "That people were safe and uninjured. That they were able to wrap their arms around family and loved ones. It's been nice to see how everyone has come together after the hurricane as well."



JC Covington: "I was concerned about my family and son. My newborn was hurting from the heat and my wife has asthma."



Tara Ashley: "Wind damage and the power outage. We have a huge tree line behind the house. My daughter and I stayed in the closet."



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](http://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

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.

Hiring event

Fort Polk is hosting a Hiring and Law Enforcement event to help transitioning Soldiers, eligible spouses and Veterans within the Fort Polk community prepare and connect with employers and service providers.

Pre-workshops will be held on Sept. 15 from 1-4:30 p.m. The Hiring and Law Enforcement event will be Sept. 17 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

The workshops and the event will be located at 1321 Corps Road.

Contact Soldier for Life- Transition Assistance Program at 531-1591 for details.

Suicide prevention

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

The course 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 531-6187.

e-Guardian email list

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MAJ. ANDREA L. KELLY / 3RD BCT PAO

Culinary specialists with the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, feed fellow Soldiers and their Families following the devastation left by Hurricane Laura, which roared through the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk during the early morning hours of Aug. 27, packing 130 miles per hour winds.

3/10 Soldiers feed Families in Laura's wake

By Maj. ANDREA L. KELLY

3rd BCT PAO

FORT POLK, La. — In the aftermath of Hurricane Laura, culinary specialists and select Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, worked tirelessly to ensure Soldiers and Army Families received hot meals.

Power outages across the installation closed the Patriot Warrior Restaurant. This interruption posed no obstacle for the Patriot Brigade. Within 24 hours, Soldiers set up two containerized kitchens to begin serving meals.

"Everyone jumped into action immediately after the storm to get what the restaurant staff began calling 'Operation Feed the People' going," said Master Sgt. Julia A. Hales, brigade culinary management noncommissioned officer in charge.

A containerized kitchen is fully functional and equipped with onboard power generation, refrigerated storage and hot and cold running water. It also provides the option to roast, grill, boil, fry and bake.

These components offer cooks the equipment necessary to provide more than 800 meals to patrons daily.

"As Families walked through the kitchen to re-

ceive meals, the gratitude shown to our Soldiers warmed my heart," said Hales. "This experience has truly brought us together as a team as many of us have never experienced the impacts of a hurricane."

Hurricane Laura left Army families on and off the installation without the ability to enjoy freshly prepared and cooked meals. Command Sgt. Maj. Kenneth R. Franco, 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div senior enlisted Soldier, recognized the need to authorize feeding both Army Families and single Soldiers living in the barracks.

More than 2,900 meals have been served to Soldiers, Army Families and civilians since the establishment of the kitchens as of Aug. 28.

"With the impact of the hurricane being category four, we currently fall into a hurricane relief status which allows us to feed families in addition to the Soldiers," Franco explained. "I have seen many Families and their children cycling through during meal hours. Not having to worry about cooking a meal when you do not have power has been a very significant help."

Although power is being restored across the installation, the Patriot Inn will continue feeding Soldiers, Army Families and civilians at no charge until Monday.

Army revamps leave, pass regulation to make user friendly

By THOMAS BRADING

Army news service

WASHINGTON — The June 3 revision of Army Regulation 600-8-10, which covers leaves and passes, is part of the largest update to Army military leave policy in more than a decade, said Larry Lock, chief of Compensation and Entitlements for the Army's G-1 office.

"The new regulation encompasses recent changes in leave and passes, rearranges the sections to make it more user friendly, clarifies policy, and covers the new leave forms," he said. "It also aligns the terminology more closely with Defense Department Instruction 1327.06, or Leave and Liberty Policy and Procedures."

The result is a regulation that is more comprehensive and will reduce confusion, especially for Soldiers working in joint environments, he said.

The DoD Instruction covers leave and liberty procedures and sets a blueprint so the Army can be uniform with the other military services. Based on input from Soldiers, the Army took the opportunity to improve the Department of Army Form 31, or Request and Authority for Leave, and the DA Form 4179, or Leave Log.

"We're an all-volunteer force since 1973, and to sustain our force we want to take care of our people," Lock said. "One way to do that is to streamline the process for requesting leave, and enhance morale by encouraging Soldiers to take time off."

Updated leave forms

Last updated in 1993, the time to update the leave form had come, he said, especially with so many changes to the regulation.

"To be a more usable form given changes in the types of leave, the Army updated the DA Form 31 to make sure commanders and Soldiers clearly understand what type of leave was chargeable and what type was non-chargeable," Lock said. "Soldiers, Army leaders and commanders need to keep track of leave, for personnel reasons and for audit purposes."

In other words, depending on the types of absence Soldiers request, they can now more clearly distinguish it as chargeable or non-chargeable on the leave form. Soldier feedback resulted in larger Leave Address, Remarks and Organizational Address fields. While it is not required by regulation, Soldiers can now enter three or more addresses where they expect to stay while on leave.

"We now have an improved process, and that has improved the DA Form 31," Lock said.

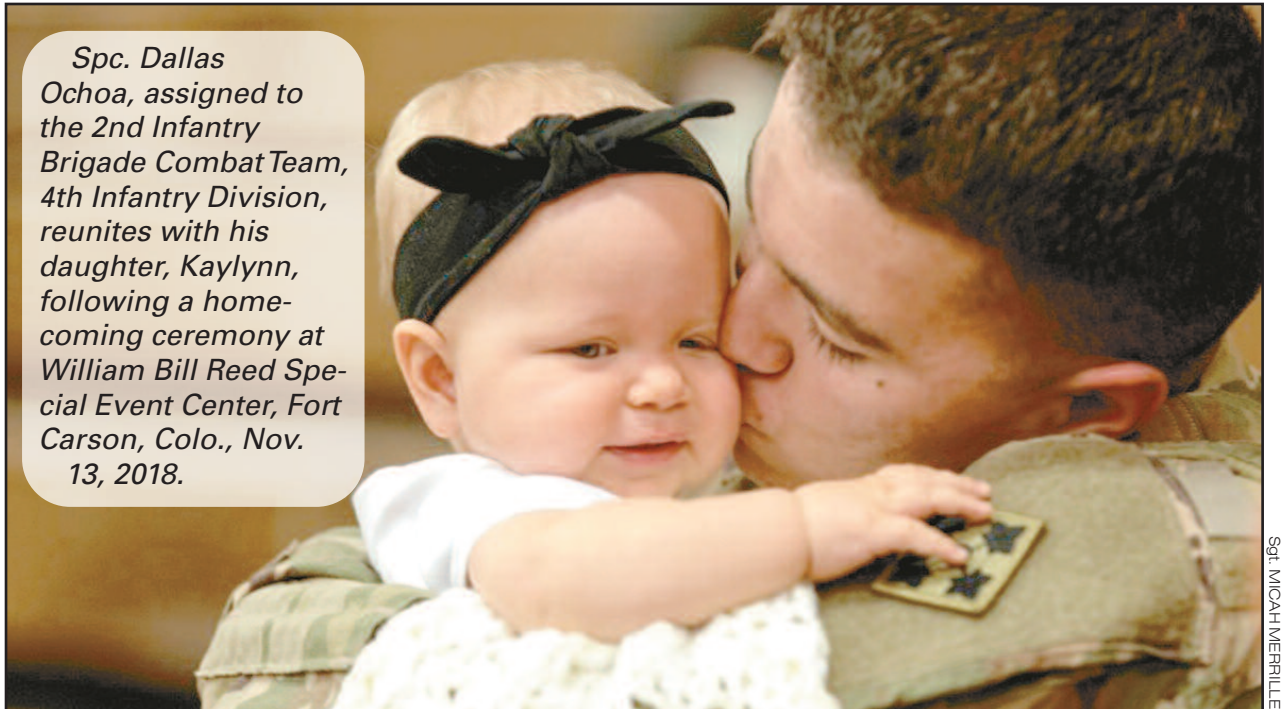
The DA Form 4179, Leave Log, was also updated to help personnel lists track the absences requested, approved or disapproved for Soldiers in their organizations.

Both the new DA Form 31 and the new DA Form 4179 are available on the Army Publishing Division website. Soldiers are encouraged to always download the latest versions of the forms as improvements will continue to be made.

Parental leave

While new parents have been able to take advantage of the military parental leave policy, or MPLP, since last year, the revised AR 600-8-10 in-

Spc. Dallas Ochoa, assigned to the 2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, reunites with his daughter, Kaylynn, following a homecoming ceremony at William Bill Reed Special Event Center, Fort Carson, Colo., Nov. 13, 2018.



Sgt. MICAH MERRILLE

cludes the MPLP, and further explains the policy. The leave policy associated with childbirth can be somewhat confusing, and the revised regulation helps Soldiers navigate through the different leaves, Lock said.

There are three different types of leave associated with the birth of a child: Maternity convalescent leave, primary care giver leave, and secondary care giver leave.

New birth parents are authorized 42 days of maternity convalescent leave upon release from the hospital or birthing center. As this is convalescent leave, it is non-chargeable.

The primary care giver, as designated by the Soldier, is authorized 42 days of non-chargeable primary care giver leave that must be taken within 12 months of qualifying birth events, but it does not all have to be taken in a continuous block.

The secondary care giver is authorized 21 days of non-chargeable secondary care giver leave, which also needs to be used within 12 months of the qualifying birth and is not required to be taken in a continuous block. The regulation has full details and covers exceptions to the normal leaves.

Much of the MPLP was already in place and has not changed since last year's policy, Lock said.

The Army is striving to help troops better understand their benefits, especially young Soldiers who make up the majority of new Army parents, he added.

Previously, a parental leave of only 10 non-chargeable days was available for non-birthparents, and had to be used within 45 days after the birth. Now, secondary care givers leave is a very significant leave change in support of family quality of life.

Other leave issues

Soldiers may request a non-chargeable absence to assist at major events for Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and similar groups. This was previously authorized by AR 600-8-10, but it now falls

under an umbrella category that supports participants in competitive sporting and other events.

"The military is pretty arduous duty. Soldiers earn 30 days of paid leave per year, beginning with their first year on the job. No other American industry out there comes close to that," Lock said. He suggests that all Soldiers should often check their leave balance.

"Every month Soldiers have the personal responsibility to verify the accuracy of their leave and earnings statements, which shows their balance, the amount of leave they used during the current fiscal year, and the number of leave days they will lose if they don't take it before the end of the fiscal year," he said.

For eligible Soldiers, the Remarks section, beginning on Oct. 31, will state the maximum leave they can carry over at the end of the fiscal year, and when the ability to carry more than 60 days will expire. This should be checked every month, because leave usage affects the carry-over amount. Soldiers should not rely on Special Leave Accrual, which is restricted to a very limited number of cases and review at the Department of the Army level.

One of the biggest leave problems, Lock said, is getting Soldiers to take their leave.

"Soldiers are very dedicated to their jobs, to the point that they are reluctant to take leave," he said. "It is good to know that they are really dedicated, but they also need to make their own well-being and their Families a priority. This will contribute to improved performance and increased motivation when back at work."

"At the end of the day, it's up to Soldiers to track their leave," he added. "It is a commander's role to grant time off, when possible, but it is still the responsibility of every Soldier to manage their own leave."

Commanders are responsible for having an effective annual leave program that provides Soldiers with the opportunity to take leave, to include an extended leave, during the year, operational requirements permitting.

Providing personal touch

Fort Polk leadership delivers support during walking tour

By **ANGIE THORNE**
Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — Hurricane Laura hit Fort Polk in the early hours of Aug. 27 creating a swath of intense destruction in the form of downed trees, loss of power in the midst of intense summer heat and damage — large and small — to homes and facilities.

As Fort Polk continues its ongoing recovery effort, an installation-wide neighborhood walking tour took place Sept. 2.

Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, said the purpose of the tour was to allow Fort Polk leadership to create a “boots on the ground” effort to see every street and house on the installation.

“The intent is to gain a resident's perspective in each neighborhood and determine the areas of focus over the next several weeks to restore quality of life within our Fort Polk community to pre-storm levels,” he said.

Groups walking the neighborhoods were composed of leadership from Fort Polk command and units. Each group had a mix of Soldiers and civilians representing key elements to Fort Polk's recovery process such as Corvias, Directorate of Emergency Services and Army Community Service.

Before the walking tour began, Frank told those walking the neighborhoods he was looking for information about debris, major or minor damage to homes, restoration of power and discussions with residents.

Frank's team focused their tour in the Palmetto Terrace neighborhood. As he walked down the streets filled with homes displaying a wide range of damage, he and his team took notes, talked to residents, righted trash cans and handed out pertinent information about resources and aid available to the Fort Polk community.

Frank stopped to talk to Spc. Swingly Shiro, 32nd Hospital Center. Shiro said he was surprised to see Frank walking through his neighborhood.

“I think it's great that he came out. It's nice to know he cares,” he said.

Sgt. Steven Heudopohl, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, spoke with Frank about his difficulties in the aftermath of the hurricane with a spouse who is recovering from surgery, and an 18-month-old and eight-month-old to care for.

“My wife had to have water to take baths and stay clean, as well as air conditioning to keep her cool,” he said.

Heudopohl said he has been through hurricanes before.

“I've never had electricity back on this fast before. It normally takes up to two weeks. My wife and I couldn't be happier with Fort Polk's response,” he said.

Jessica Ballard, Army Community Service Financial Readiness Program manager, participated in the walking tour with Frank's group. She handed out flyers with important numbers and resources for Fort Polk Families to take advantage of in the hurricane aftermath.

“It's important for me to be able to put the most important information available into the hands of the people who need it the most. The



Daniel Bartlett, Corvias Property Management facilities director, points out the next steps in the removal of a large tree stump to Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, and the rest of the members of his group as they walk the Palmetto Terrace neighborhood to make note of what still has to be done in the aftermath of Hurricane Laura Sept. 2.



Col. Ryan K. Roseberry, Fort Polk garrison commander, (center left) and Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher M. Ausbun, garrison command sergeant major, (center right) talk to a Maple Terrace resident about the recovery progress in the aftermath of Hurricane Laura Sept. 2. Capt. Michele A. Douty, garrison executive officer, (right) stands ready to note any issues that need to be taken care of during the tour.

ACS mission is to support the military community. This way, we know they have our number if they need to call us, regardless of the situation,” she said.

Ballard said leadership like Fort Polk's makes a big difference to Soldiers and Families.

“You can tell they care when they are engaged

in a one-on-one dialog with residents in the Fort Polk community. As a spouse, I know how important that can be to a successful assignment in the military,” she said.

As Frank moved further into Palmetto Terrace,

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Tour

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he talked to Nicole Morrison, a Fort Polk spouse.

Morrison said this was her first hurricane, but she knew things would be OK.

"I won't deny that I was nervous, but Fort Polk just gives you a sense of safety," she said.

Morrison said she has admired the way the Fort Polk team has come together to tackle everything in the aftermath of the hurricane from clearing trees and debris to getting the power back on.

"I'm just so proud of our Fort Polk Soldiers and leadership. You just don't see this kind of effort everywhere," she said.

Toward the end of the tour, Frank and his team spoke with Heather King, a Fort Polk spouse, and her son Liam, 7, walking in Palmetto Terrace.

King said she appreciates that leadership at Fort Polk is willing to get out in the Fort Polk neighborhoods to meet with residents.

"It's nice that they want to help when we have issues. We've been part of the Army Family for seven years now and this hurricane is the first disaster we've been through. I'm impressed with the effort it took to get everything back to normal as quickly as possible," she said.

Col. Ryan K. Roseberry, Fort Polk garrison commander, also took part in the walking tour. He led a team through the Maple Terrace neighborhood.

Roseberry said it's important that Soldiers and Family members see their leaders are engaged and understand what they are going through.

"That's why we're out here today, doing a walking town hall of our military housing areas, interacting with our Soldiers and Families, asking their concerns and offering what information we have as to how repairs are coming along," he said.

Frank encouraged residents to call Corvias and submit their work orders if they have any damage to their homes.

"Corvias is prioritizing their efforts — but we want to efficiently and effectively repair the damage to your home — so don't delay, let Corvias begin working on repairs to your residence immediately," he said.

Frank said work order numbers were listed at 160 on the last report prior to the hurricane. Now there are 1,050 homes with minor damage with the probability of multiple work orders inside each home.

Daniel Bartlett, Corvias Property Management facilities director, was a member of Frank's walking tour. Bartlett said there's no doubt the hurricane is posing challenges.

"As more residents return home to assess damages to their houses, I feel that there will be a second wave of work orders," he said. "It can be overwhelming, but we have numerous contractors that are helping us meet this challenge with everything from mold and water issues to repairing roofing and siding damage."

Bartlett said the Corvias team cares about Fort Polk's military Families.

"The need to complete work orders will continue to be our priority and we want the Fort Polk community to know we will do everything we can to finish them in a timely manner," he said.

If you have questions or need to report damage, call Corvias at (866) 436-2047 or (337) 537-5050.



Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, leads his team on the neighborhood walking tour Sept. 2 through a cul de sac in Palmetto Terrace that had homes with considerable roof damage.



Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher M. Ausbun, garrison command sergeant major, appraises the damage from a tree falling on a roof in Maple Terrace during the neighborhood walking tour Sept. 2.

Betty Beinkemper, Fort Polk Garrison housing manager, also walked the Palmetto Terrace neighborhood with Frank's group.

Beinkemper said there has been great progress in getting normalcy back to Fort Polk neighborhoods thanks to regular garbage pick up and power restoration to home repairs and restoration of mail delivery.

"This effort has been huge. Everyone has worked hard in a short amount of time to make

the progress we have. Fort Polk housing never shut down. We have been working with military Families who had housing issues since the hurricane passed," she said. "What we are working on now is getting emergency housing for Families that need it. That's our main priority."

If you need help, Beinkemper said don't hesitate to call 531-6000 or (337) 208-3229.

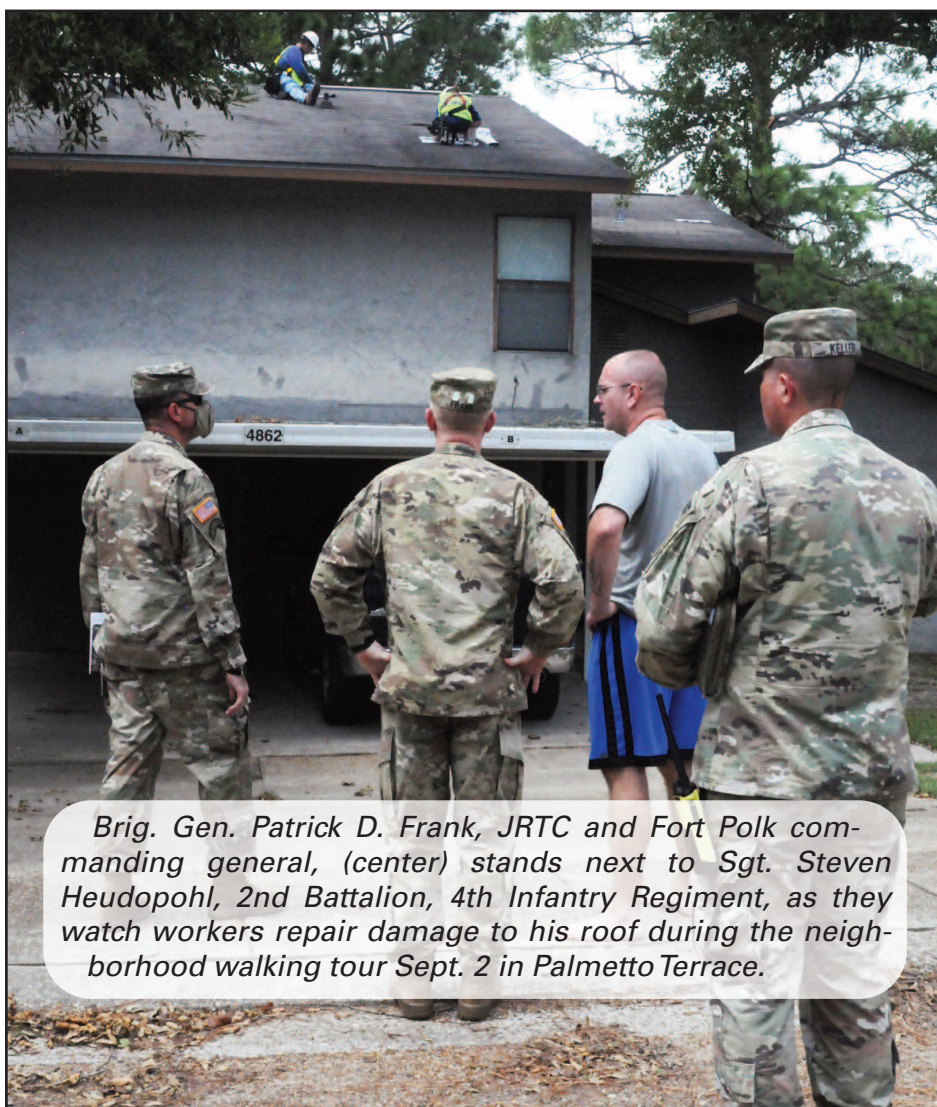
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Tour

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Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk commanding general, (center) and members of his team stop to talk to Heather King, a Fort Polk spouse, and her son, Liam, 7, about hurricane recovery progress during the neighborhood walking tour in Palmetto Terrace held Sept. 2.



Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, JRTC and Fort Polk commanding general, (center) stands next to Sgt. Steven Heudopohl, 2nd Battalion, 4th Infantry Regiment, as they watch workers repair damage to his roof during the neighborhood walking tour Sept. 2 in Palmetto Terrace.



Col. Jody Dugai, Bayne-Jones Army Community Hospital commander, (right) and a member of her Medical Department Activity team removed a large pine tree branch that had fallen across a fence and dragged it out of the way Sept. 2 in Palmetto Terrace during the neighborhood walking tour.



Brig. Gen. Patrick D. Frank, JRTC and Fort Polk commanding general, greets Spc. Swingly Shiro, 32nd Hospital Center, and asks him if he has everything he needs during the neighborhood walking tour Sept. 2 in Palmetto Terrace.



Col. Duane M. Patin, Fort Polk chief of staff, (right) and members of his team observe Soldiers from 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, as they clear debris from Dogwood Terrace during the neighborhood walking tour Sept. 2.

Hurricane Laura: Destruction, despair, triumph, teamwork

By **CHUCK CANNON**

Command information officer

FORT POLK, La. — Hurricane Laura.

The storm's name will forever recall a night of deadly destruction and despair.

In the early morning hours of Aug. 26, Hurricane Laura, an historically powerful category 4 storm packing winds of 150 miles per hour, slammed into the southwestern Louisiana Gulf Coast, devastating cities and towns from Cameron to Shreveport.

In its wake were demolished homes, businesses and lives. Trees were either ripped out of the

ground by the roots or snapped mid-trunk, criss-crossing the Louisiana landscape like some giant child's game of pick-up sticks.

Among the areas to feel Laura's wrath was the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk, located on U.S. Hwy 171 — the storm's chosen path — just outside of Leesville, Louisiana.

The installation, home to the Army's

proving ground for brigade combat teams honing their skills prior to deploying to fight the nation's wars, did not escape Laura's fury. Power was lost, homes were damaged and even the steeple on top of the Main Post Chapel was blown off.

To compound matters, as Hurricane Laura took aim at southwestern Louisiana, Soldiers with the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), were in the "box" — the JRTC training area where rotational units are put through an unrelenting crucible by JRTC's world renowned opposing forces: 1st Battalion (Airborne), 509th Infantry Regiment "Geronimos."

When you throw in that the training and Laura's recovery efforts were conducted under COVID-19 protocol and mitigation, you have an idea of what faced the Soldier and civilian team at Fort Polk.

In short order, 5,000 rotational Soldiers were moved from the wooded training areas to buildings designed to withstand hurricane winds.

Safe havens were established on the installation for both humans and pets to ride out the storm and her aftermath.

Clearing roads of debris was a priority as even

senior NCOs manned chainsaws to assist in the effort.

The Warrior Operations Center was staffed 24 hours a day to tackle any issue that reared its head or any question that needed answering.

Most importantly, the Families of rotational unit Soldiers from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, and Reserve units from 11 other states, along with permanent party OPFOR and observer, controller/trainers, were kept informed about the storm and steps taken to insure their Soldiers' safety. Facebook posts and all-users emails were routinely published, letting concerned Family

members know their Soldiers were receiving quality care.

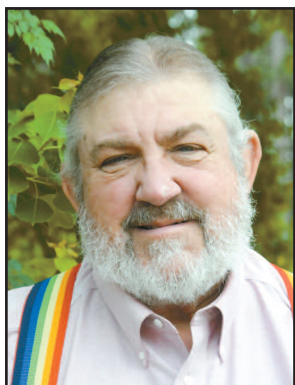
Was the response perfect? No, nothing ever is.

But what it did do was lay the groundwork and create a blueprint for others to emulate. From the specialist who sat on the floor of the kennel in

the Pet Safe Haven to comfort scared pups, to Garrison Command Sgt. Maj. Christopher Ausbun wielding his chainsaw like a six gun to help clear downed trees, the entire JRTC and Fort Polk team worked together to protect life, limb and

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Commentary



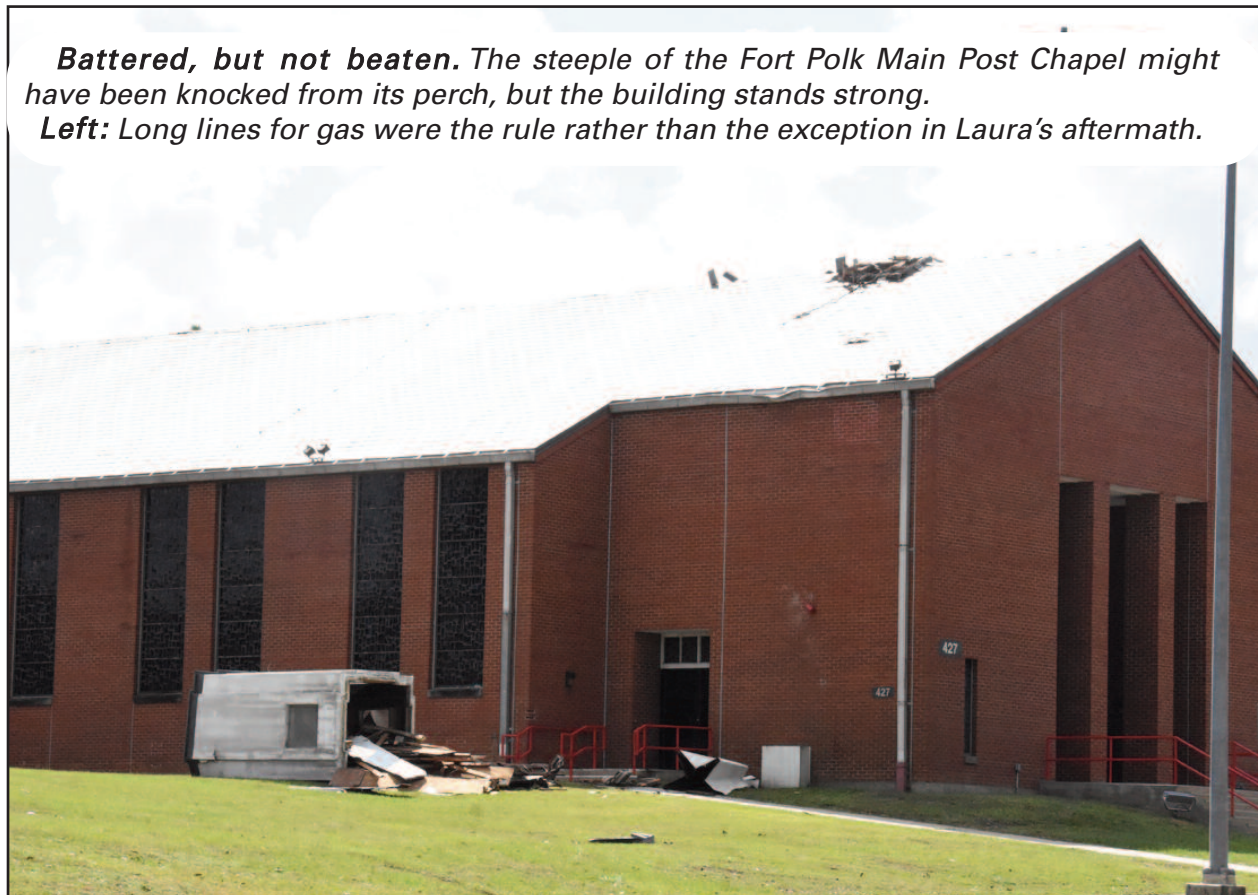
Cannon



Like a silent sentinel, the monument dedicated to the 1st Maneuver Enhancement Brigade protects Warrior Memorial Park from Hurricane Laura's wrath.

Battered, but not beaten. The steeple of the Fort Polk Main Post Chapel might have been knocked from its perch, but the building stands strong.

Left: Long lines for gas were the rule rather than the exception in Laura's aftermath.



CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Laura

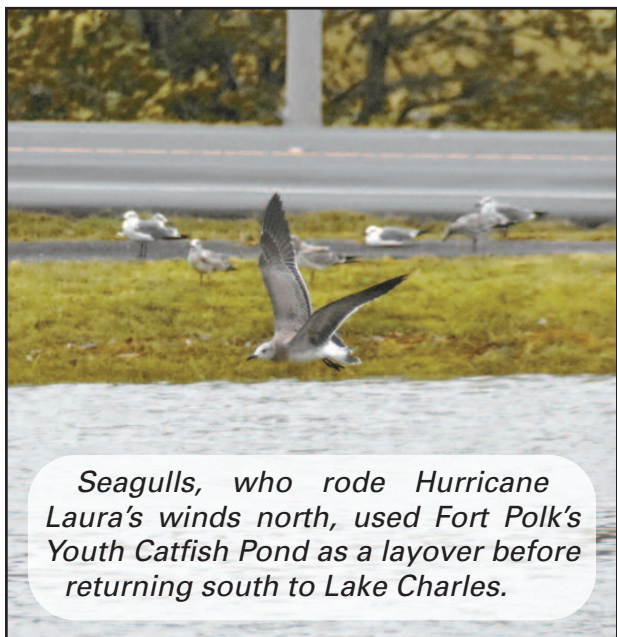
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property from Laura's wrath.

And once the damage is cleared and operations return to some semblance of order, after action reviews will be conducted and suggestions put in place to do even better when the next hurricane — or other catastrophic event — places the JRTC and Fort Polk in its sights.

Yes, destruction and despair will always be recalled when Hurricane Laura is mentioned. But add to those "triumph" and "teamwork" as once again the JRTC and Fort Polk team showed the Army and the rest of the nation that its title as "Home of Heroes" and "Best home town in the Army" are well-deserved and appropriately placed.

Please see **Laura**, page 10



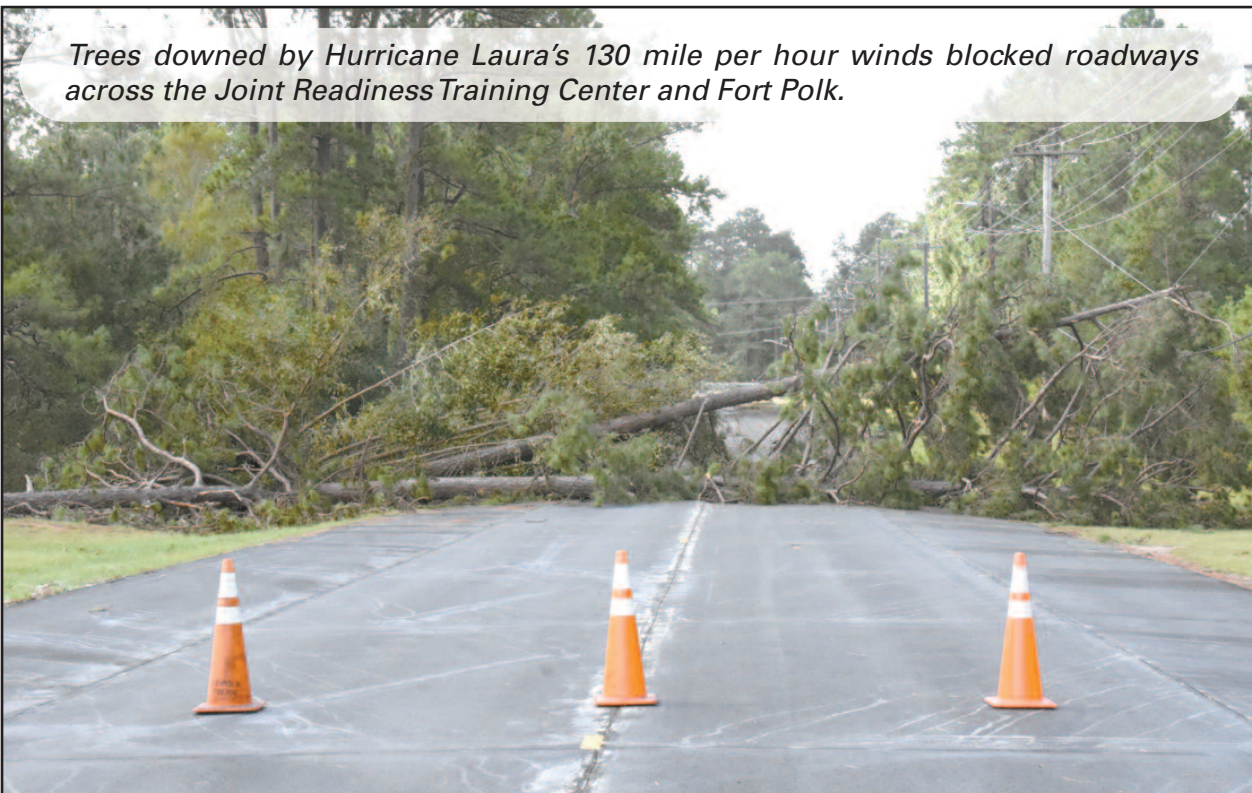
Seagulls, who rode Hurricane Laura's winds north, used Fort Polk's Youth Catfish Pond as a layover before returning south to Lake Charles.



Trees blown over or snapped by Hurricane Laura caused major damage to homes and buildings on Fort Polk.



A Soldier from the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, keeps company a couple of pups placed in the Fort Polk Veterinary Treatment Facility's Pet Safe Haven during Hurricane Laura recovery.



Trees downed by Hurricane Laura's 130 mile per hour winds blocked roadways across the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk.



In a perfect display of Army Family resiliency, this crew welcomed home their Soldier even while recovering from Hurricane Laura.

CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Laura

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CHUCK CANNON / GUARDIAN

Clockwise, from above: Fort Polk's Warrior Hills Golf Course lost several trees and the netting by the driving range to Hurricane Laura; linemen from several different states made the trip to Louisiana and Fort Polk and worked to restore power in Hurricane Laura's wake, replacing damaged or broken poles and repairing lines; a common sight following Hurricane Laura's destructive path through the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk was shingles dotting the landscape and roof damage to buildings.



Installation staff, CAT work 24/7 during Hurricane Laura

By JEAN CLAVETTE GRAVES

Public affairs specialist

FORT POLK, La. — For those of us who live in states adjacent to the Gulf of Mexico, we know hurricane season occurs annually between June and November. Residents of Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas are aware that summer brings the possibility of a major storm hitting their shores and disrupting lives.

I remember being stationed at Fort Riley, Kansas when Hurricane Katrina hit eastern Louisiana in August 2005. As I watched the devastation unfold on television, my heart went out to the people who refused to evacuate their home and found themselves stranded on rooftops and bridges. Then less than one month later Hurricane Rita hit the state on its western border. I thought to myself, why are people living there? What makes them want to continue facing the destruction and devastation Mother Nature throws at them? Fast-forward 15 years and I am a proud resident of the state of Louisiana.

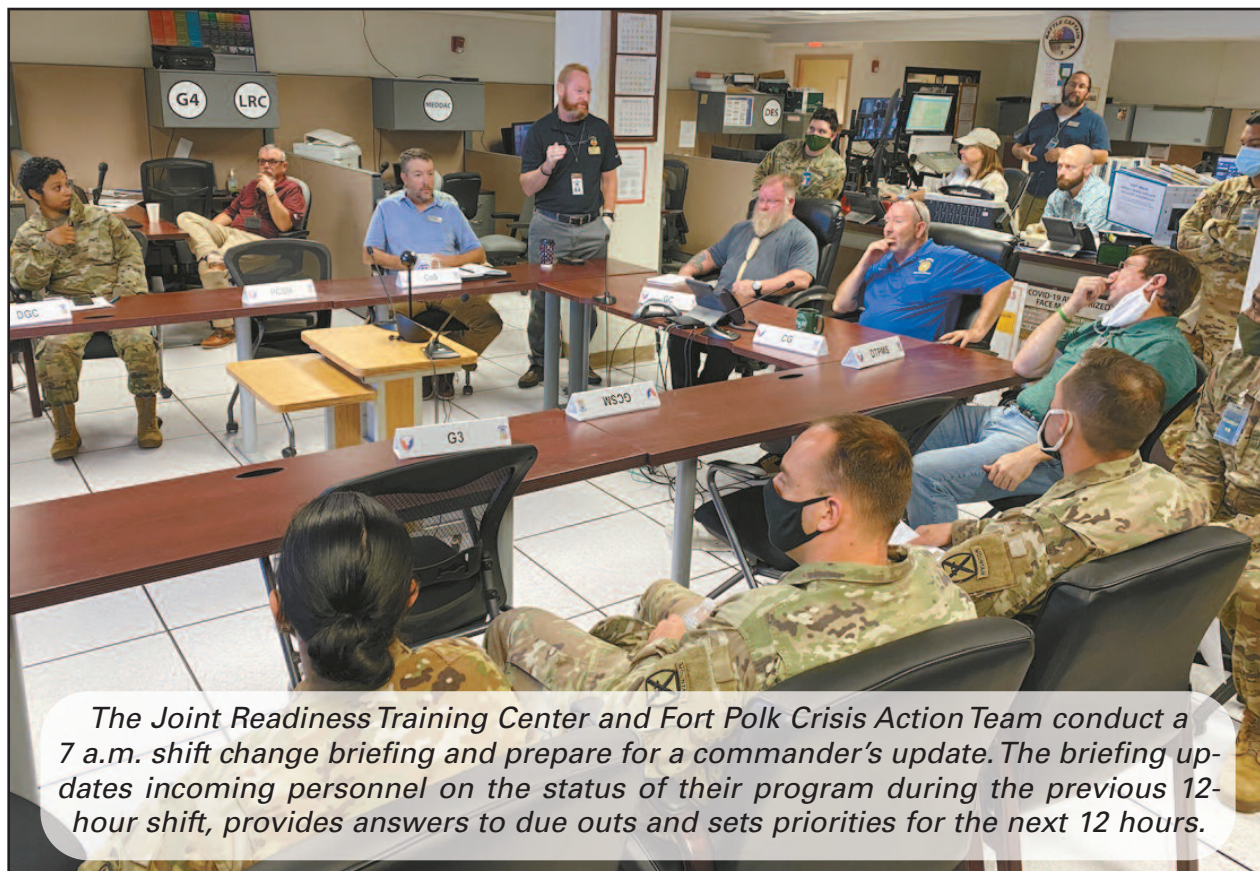
After Fort Riley, we moved to Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, Fort Carson, Colorado, and in 2012, we landed at Fort Polk. My Family loved the people, culture and climate so much we decided to stay in the Fort Polk area when my husband retired and we have no intention of leaving any time soon.

Based on what we already knew about hurricanes, once we began to settle in, one of the first things we did was start to take heed of weather patterns in the gulf and try to prepare for potential storms by keeping extra water, canned food, filled gas tanks, a generator and propane in the event of lost power or water. But after experiencing my first hurricane last week, I now know you can never truly be prepared for that level of chaos.

I work at the Fort Polk Public Affairs Office as a public affairs specialist. One aspect of my job is crisis communication and over the years I've participated in several full-scale exercises and a few real-world incidents that require me to work as a member of the crisis action team in the Warrior Operations Center.

Last Wednesday, Aug. 26, started like most days. My husband, who also works at Fort Polk in emergency services, left for work at 7:30 a.m. and because of an approaching hurricane the crisis action team began 24-hour operations. I was scheduled to begin my shift at midnight. My son and I decided to pick up a few supplies to add to our storm preparation kit when my husband called and asked me to pack a bag for him. He said the way things were looking, he wasn't sure if he'd be able to come home for a few days. This worried me because we were all holding out hope the storm would weaken and the path would change, but with each passing hour it was evident that Hurricane Laura was bearing down on our location and strengthening as it approached the shores of Cameron Parish.

I'll admit I started to freak out a little. My husband, as a cop, was running around Fort Polk making the necessary preparations to help keep the post safe, and probably wouldn't be home that night. I was supposed to work at midnight and my son, at almost 17 years old, refused to



The Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk Crisis Action Team conduct a 7 a.m. shift change briefing and prepare for a commander's update. The briefing updates incoming personnel on the status of their program during the previous 12-hour shift, provides answers to due outs and sets priorities for the next 12 hours.

come to work with me or to go to a friend's house. He said he needed to stay home to take care of the pets and protect our home. Worried as I was about leaving him alone, I didn't have the patience or the energy to argue with him. By noon, Vernon Parish had already put out a 10 p.m. curfew and by 5 p.m. the electricity went out temporarily as the first storm bands began to batter the area.

By Wednesday afternoon the commanding general issued a restricted movement order to all Fort Polk residents and it was determined that to safely change shifts I would need to arrive at 9 p.m. and sit tight at the emergency operations center until the hurricane ended. I stayed until 2 p.m.

Upon arriving for my shift, the place was buzzing with nervous energy and focused tension. Briefings were being conducted and the installation was as prepared as possible for what was expected to be a record-breaking storm.

An inventory of generators, fuel and a variety of other supplies was taken. Crisis action team members were anxiously discussing the potential outcomes for the installation and everyone was worried about the Soldiers and Families living on post, not to mention the rotational unit that had been transported to solid structure buildings to ride out the storm. I tried not to think about my kid at home alone and my husband running around post as the storm crept its way north to Vernon Parish.

The crisis action team is composed of individuals from all installation directorates and units. Our jobs are to work together to anticipate and solve problems that arise when there is a crisis. As a public affairs specialist, it's my job to communicate to the public before, during and after the situation to prevent panic and to keep people informed and safe. Phones rang through the night as Families called looking for a safe haven

for themselves and their pets, to report downed trees, power lines and damage to their homes.

At one point I ran outside, during a brief moment of calm, which I later learned was when the eye of the storm passed overhead. The commanding general was outside and yelled, "Jean where are you going?" As I began to say, "to check on my car, sir," Reveille sounded and I went to the position of attention. Brig. Gen. Frank said, "the flags not up, hurry, check on your car and get back inside, the storm isn't over yet."

During that brief exchange and my short trip to see my car in the still dark pre-dawn hours, I saw downed trees and branches all over the parking lot and surrounding the headquarters building where the Warrior Operations Center is housed. I realized then if I was running around outside, others might be tempted to do so as well, so I drafted this message to help keep our Soldiers and Families safe:

"Fort Polk residents, as the sun rises you may be tempted to go outside and assess your property and potential damages. Please remember we are on a restricted movement order until 2 p.m. this afternoon. Stay off the roads to allow our first responders and public works maintenance crews to get around to assist those in need. If you leave your residence please note we are still under weather advisories (wind, flash flood, hurricane warnings), there are downed power-lines, trees and flooded areas. If you find a problem that needs to be addressed please contact the STORM-HOTLINE phone number at 531-7157 so our damage assessment teams and Corvias can provide assistance."

After the sun came up and throughout the rest of my shift the phones rang and the crisis action team began gathering information about damages and figuring out what to do next. Fortunately, many resources were pre-staged and ready to be deployed where needed. A plan had been de-

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veloped and teams got busy implementing those plans to get the installation up and running as quickly as possible.

The past week has been a blur, my first shift was 14 hours and there were members of the team who worked longer than that. Call center staffers worked close to 48 hours straight in the days leading up to and immediately following the storm. As I write this recap, I'm working another 12-hour shift and until power has been restored completely we will continue to operate in the Warrior Operations Center to support the community during this emergency.

Throughout the past week as a need was identified, members of the crisis action team developed solutions. Unit liaison officers would coordinate for Soldier support and the team worked together on behalf of the safety and welfare of those who live and work on Fort Polk. Soldiers from the 519th Military Police Battalion responded to emergencies, manned access control points and directed traffic at the fuel pumps. The 46th Engineers conducted road clearance and debris disposal. Pilots and crews of the 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment provided aerial support for damage assessment and medical evacuation. Operations Group delivered ice and helped with clean-up efforts. Third Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, provided logistical support with transportation of people and equipment, and dining facility operations. During the storm they managed the safe haven for residents and their pets.

I think we were very lucky here at the Joint Readiness Training Center and Fort Polk. During the wee hours as Hurricane Laura approached, many feared the destruction would be much worse than it ended up being. Thankfully there were no deaths or injuries to any of the Soldiers, civilians or Family members who were on the installation when Laura hit. The electricity went out for an extended period of time, but due to the forethought of the command, energy crews were staged and started restoration efforts immediately following the storm and within a week most of the electrical grid had been restored.

I had worried all night about my son home alone and later learned he slept through the whole thing. Our house is off post and sustained only minor damage from wind, and my family is safe and survived the harrowing ordeal.

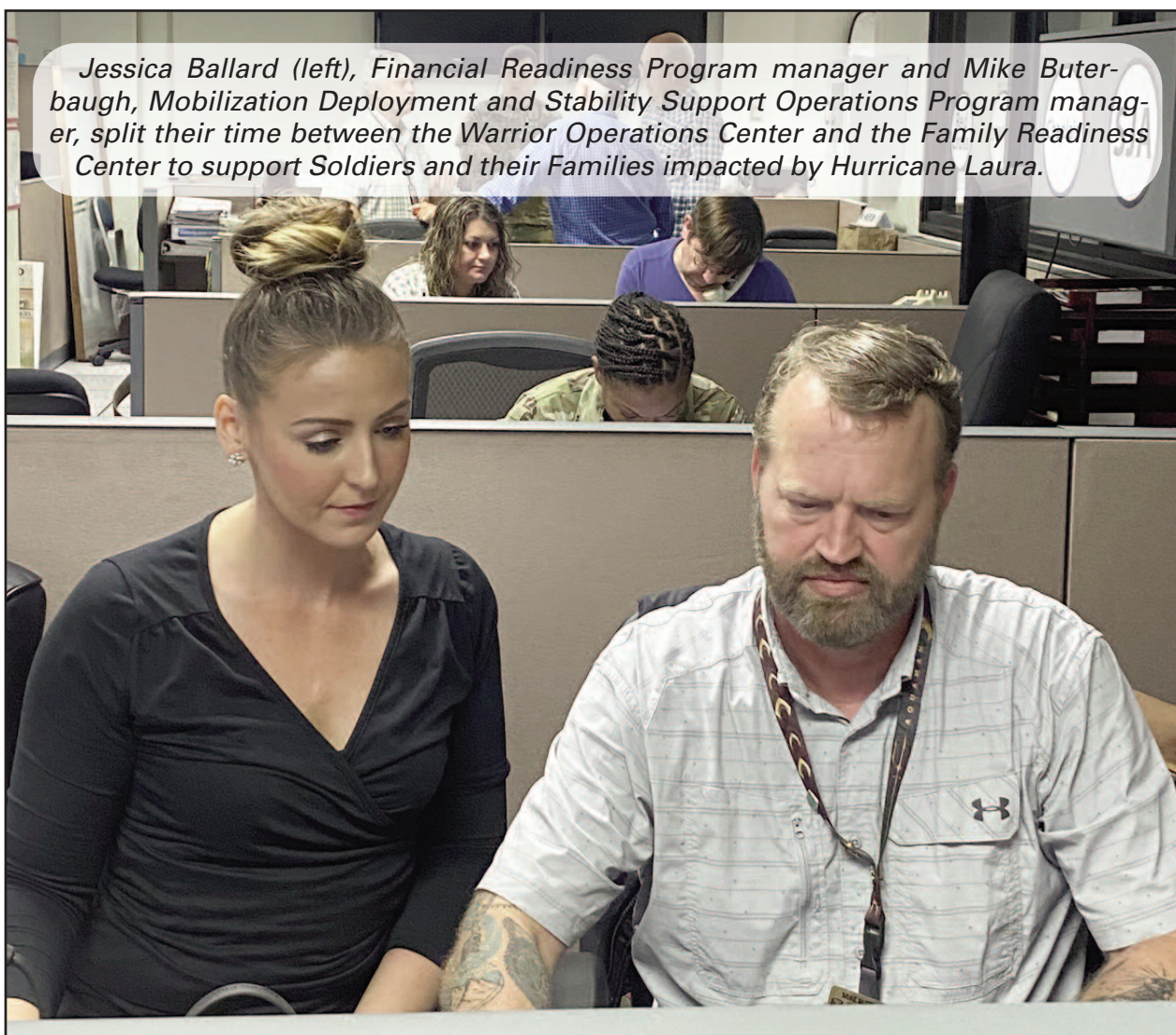
Leading up to and in the aftermath of Hurricane Laura I witnessed many things that made me even more proud of the military community. As the storm bore down, the Fort Polk police were out patrolling the area until wind speeds exceeded 60 miles per hour. The JRTC and Fort Polk commanding general was on patrol with the 519th Military Police commander before and after the storm to assess the situation. The installation staff put their own Families, homes and property on hold to serve on the crisis action team and continue to do so days later.

As I look around the installation a week after the storm, I'm amazed and grateful for the hard work our Soldiers have done to clean up Fort Polk. We are not out of the woods yet, not by a long shot. Our friends and neighbors in the surrounding communities are still struggling without power, water and infrastructure. Some of our Soldiers and civilian employees have destroyed homes and continue to suffer through the heat.

I have seen an amazing outpouring of gen-



From left: Staff Sgt. Casey Bartness, Headquarter and Headquarters Company; 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division; 2nd Lt. Hollis Shoptaw, 46th Engineer Battalion; 2nd Lt. Aaron Blume, 519th Military Police Battalion; Staff Sgt. Giordan Herrington, JRTC Operations Group; and Chief Warrant Officer 2 Marisa Maher, A Company, 1st Battalion, 5th Aviation Regiment, served as unit liaison officers embedded with the crisis action team working around the clock in support of Hurricane Laura preparedness and recovery efforts.



Jessica Ballard (left), Financial Readiness Program manager and Mike Buterbaugh, Mobilization Deployment and Stability Support Operations Program manager, split their time between the Warrior Operations Center and the Family Readiness Center to support Soldiers and their Families impacted by Hurricane Laura.

erosity and support for one another throughout the community from people who continue to work to support our Soldiers and Families despite their own hardships. Neighbors helping neighbors, volunteers helping the National Guard distribute water, food and ice to those in

need. Linemen and electricians from across the country have descended on our little corner of the world to help. Despite the tragedy surrounding the storm, the goodness of the people in Vernon and Beauregard parishes makes me proud to now call Louisiana home.

Celebrating Women's Equality: Climbing ranks in medical field

By Maj. ANDREA L. KELLY
3rd BCT Public Affairs Officer

FORT POLK, La. — The 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, was celebrated Aug. 26. Since then, women have made great strides for equality.

Capt. Janshay E. Polk has served in the Army since 2003. Polk began her career as an operating room technician before being accepted into the Army Enlisted Commissioning Program. Upon completion of the program, she earned her bachelor's degree in nursing at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Polk began her nursing career as a medical surgical nurse at the San Antonio Military Medical Center.

Army leaders continue to shape policies to ensure women have equal opportunity in the workplace. Women play vital roles in today's Army, as Soldiers and Army civilians are critical members of the Army team. Polk is an integral member of the Patriot Brigade Army Medical team.

"As women are integrated into these forces, we bring a different perspective to the culture," she said. "This is not something that will occur overnight but over time. As we are seen as counterparts, we will become that important aspect of the force."

The armed forces continue to develop diversity initiatives and fully integrate women into all military positions, allowing them to become more inclusive by leveling the playing field.



Capt. Janshay E. Polk

"There are many more opportunities for young women in the Army," Polk said. "Do not let one person's 'no' stop you from achieving the military career you seek."

On Nov. 2, 1920, more than eight million women across the United States voted for the first time. When asked about voting, Polk explained the uniqueness of her voting experience throughout the years due to her enlisting shortly

after graduating high school.

"I have only voted by mail-in ballots," said Polk. "I am contributing my opinion in the shape of the government so I always look for the absentee ballots so that my voice is heard."

Polk now holds a master's in nursing administration/leadership. She serves as the 3rd BCT, 10th Mtn Div brigade nurse and acting brigade surgeon.

JRTC, Fort Polk Installation Voting Assistance Office highlights general election deadline, voting options

INSTALLATION VOTING OFFICE

FORT POLK, La. — There are only 60 days before the Nov. 3 elections. Many state primary election deadlines have passed, but voters can still visit www.fvap.gov for more information on the general election.

The states' primary election dates for September are listed below:

New Hampshire state primary — Tuesday

Rhode Island state primary — Tuesday

Delaware state primary — Sept. 15

Voters still have time to register, request and return ballots for the general elec-

tion until Nov. 3. This may be difficult depending on each state's process for accepting Federal Post Card Applications, Absentee Ballot requests and official ballots. Some states allow individuals to complete everything online and others still require mail-in ballots.

Visit www.fvap.gov to review the latest information for each state. Keep in mind that it's best to register, request and submit ballots for the General Election by Oct. 15.

Please contact the Fort Polk Installation Voting Assistance Officer, 1st Lt. Joella Ross, with any questions at (337) 353-5649 or joella.j.ross.mil@mail.mil.

