

53rd Troop Scoop

SPRING 2011

VOL. # 2, ISSUE #2



**History Returns to Watervliet
with Help from the NYARNG PG. 5**



**501st Ordnance Battalion
< Smiles Live from Iraq PG. 10-11**

Brig. Gen. Michael C. Swezey
Commander, 53rd Troop Command

Capt. Alvin Phillips
PAO, 53rd Troop Command/
Commander, 138th PAD

Troop Scoop Staff:

Staff Sgt. Thomas W. Wheeler
Operations NCO/ Senior Editor

Staff Sgt. Dennis Gravelle
Editor/ Journalist, 369th Sus. Bde.

Spc.. Mary Hogle
Journalist

Spc. Trisha Pinczes
Journalist

Sgt. Michael E. Davis Jr.
Journalist, 369th Sus. Bde.

About the 53rd Troop Scoop

The 53rd Troop Scoop is published to the web quarterly as approved by the 53rd Troop Command, New York Army National Guard, and New York State Division of Military and Naval Affairs.

Views that appear in this publication are not necessarily those of the Department of Defense, the Army or the National Guard.

Submissions

Articles and photos are welcome. Please provide articles in Microsoft Word format along with high resolution digital (jpg.) photos by e-mail to thomas.w.wheeler@us.army.mil. Submission deadlines are as follows:

Winter Edition- March 15

Spring Edition- June 15

Summer Edition- September 15

Fall Edition- December 15

53rd Troop Scoop

SPRING 2011 VOL. # 2, ISSUE #2



Issue Highlights:

Message from the Leadership

3

Guard Families Face Change After Deployment

4

History Returns to Watervliet with Help from the NYARNG

5

Service member says bin Laden's death boosts morale

6

Around the 53rd

7

Changes at the Top

8

827th Engineers Honored for Afghan Service

9

501st Ordnance Battalion Smiles Live From Iraq

10

501st Ordnance Battalion FRG Recognized

12

Troops Pause in Midst of Premobilization Training

13

FRONT COVER (LEFT) CORTLANDT MANOR, N.Y.-- Sgt. Shawn Chapple of the Utica-based 107th Military Police Company, completes a medical task during the 2011 Region 1 National Guard Best Warrior Competition held May 10-12, 2011 at the Camp Smith Training Area in Cortlandt Manor, NY. Capple won the competition and will compete at the National level Aug. 2-8, 2011 at Fort Benning, GA.



BACK COVER (RIGHT) WATERVLIET, N.Y.-- Capt. John Klimes, commander, 1427th Transportation Company, assists his Soldiers in unloading inert 155mm rounds off a trailer at Watervliet Arsenal.





Brig. Gen. Mike Swezey
53rd Troop Command
“For The Soldier”

Greetings Fellow Soldiers,

By now the summer is in full swing and I'm sure you're enjoying picnics, swimming, riding bikes and motorcycles, barbecuing and more.

With the start of summer means the start of some new programs that I've mentioned

here before. The Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) training marks a new era for the Army by comprehensively equipping and training our Soldiers, family members and Army civilians to maximize their potential and face the physical and psychological challenges of sustained operations. We are committed to a true prevention model, aimed at the entire force, which will enhance resilience and coping skills enabling them to grow and thrive in today's Army. CSF will improve Soldier performance and readiness. It will help build Soldiers' confidence to lead, courage to stand up for one's beliefs and compassion to help others. It's also about maximizing one's potential. Each month will focus on a new topic that range from financial, physical, emotional, social, family, and spiritual well-being.

If you haven't conducted “DADT” training yet, you soon will. The training of the repeal of ‘Don't Ask, Don't Tell’ ensures each unit member fully understand what this new policy means for the New York Army National Guard and the U.S. military as a whole. I know each one of you will learn about these new policy changes with complete professionalism and military bearing that I've seen throughout the 53rd Troop Command.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the importance of safety especially during the summer months and of course all year long. As you get out on the road with family and friends, please be aware of your surroundings and always take the necessary precautions and be safe when you're out or even at home having a good time.

Lastly, let's not forget our fellow Soldiers in the 27 Brigade Combat Team who are working hard and training hard as they prepare to deploy to Afghanistan later this year. The Brigade is taking with them many of our friends and relatives from New York State. I ask that you keep them in your thoughts and prayers and remember those within our ranks who are currently deployed as well. The 501 Ordnance Battalion (EOD) is still serving in Iraq and the 105 Military Police Company recently arrived in Iraq. On a brighter note, we welcome back the 442 Military Police Company from Iraq. Thank you for all that you do and Happy Independence Day Soldiers. Hooah!

Brig. Gen. Mike Swezey
Commanding
“For the Soldier”

On 1 April 2011, I was given the opportunity and honored to assume the position of Command Sergeant Major for the 53rd Troop Command.

I am both humbled and happy to follow behind Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Wicks. Command Sgt. Maj. Wicks has been reassigned as the next State Command Sgt. Maj. replacing the retiring State Command Sgt. Maj., Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Van Pelt. Congratulations to both of them.

I have served as a member of the New York Army National Guard for 34 years. I have 27 years of field artillery experience and deployed with the 42nd ID Engineer Brigade for OIF III as the brigades Command Sgt. Maj.. Most recently I served as Command Sgt. Maj., 153rd Troop Command (BDE).

In saying that, a Command Sgt. Maj. is a Command Sgt. Maj. know matter what level they serve. We are the “eyes and ears” of our commanders.

We ensure the commander's intent is carried out. We enforce standards, training, and

safety. We ensure that our Soldiers and their Families are taken care of.

Some may think that as you move up the “chain” you lose touch with the Soldier at the lowest level. NOT ME! I will continue to circulate amongst our Soldiers and our units.

I have received the Commanding General's vision and intent. With your help, we can continue to maintain good order and discipline in our formations and remain mission focused.

I truly believe in the Noncommissioned Officer and our Creed. I charge every NCO to read the creed and make it part of your Noncommissioned Officer Developmental Program (NCO DP). Talk about it and it can revive you.

Our NCOs and Soldiers must be competent. We must not only be qualified in our jobs but also duty proficient. We must be both technically and tactically proficient. We must seek self-improvement; always learning. We are still a Nation at War.

In closing I am here for the Soldiers with whom I serve. I am thankful for the leadership

in which I have served and received as well as for my wife, Teresa, who has supported me and has been my driving force for many years. Teresa and I are both excited and happy to be members of the 53rd team.

“For the Soldier”



Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Louis Wilson
53rd Troop Command
“For The Soldier”

Guard Families Face Change After Deployment



Spec. Eloy Rodriguez and his wife Carol from Bronx, N.Y discuss program opportunities with Colleen Casey, New York National Guard Child & Youth Coordinator during the 442nd Military Police Company 30-day Yellow Ribbon Reintegration event, May 14 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, White Plains, NY.

Story by: Master Sgt. Corine Lombardo - Joint Force Headquarters

WHITE PLAINS, N.Y.— There have been a lot of changes in his house since New York Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Jason Diaz left for Iraq in 2010, but the thing that stands out the most is how independent his wife Nisha is now.

“She finished her degree and did a great job of taking care of our family while I was away,” said Diaz.

Nisha Diaz pretty much got used to doing it all on her own, which is a little tough on her husband.

“I’ve been home for a little over a month and the hardest part is finding a place where I belong” said Diaz.

Coping with changes like those in the Diaz household, and learning how to embrace them is what the New York National Guard’s Yellow Ribbon Program is about.

Diaz returned home in early April after spending nearly nine months

in Iraq with the New York Army National Guard’s 442nd Military Police Company, where his unit conducted more than 400 partnered missions with Iraqi law enforcement or security forces.

While he was on his mission, Nisha Diaz was on hers.

“I learned how important management skills are and how to juggle three kids, three dogs and being a full time student,” said Nisha.

“Things are much better now that he’s home, but we’re still getting used to him being there to help take care of the kids and take the burden off of me,” Nisha added.

Diaz along with roughly 150 Soldiers from his unit met up again for their 30-day Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program event, May 14.

The Soldiers from across the state and their families gathered for a two-day session during which they learned about problems and concerns that can crop up when National Guard Soldiers return from a combat zone to civilian life.

“Our Soldiers were motivated and did an excellent job advising and assisting Iraqi law enforcement, fine tuning operations using one-on-one mentorship,” said Captain Tara Dawe, 442nd MP Commander.

“The Soldiers of the 442 took care of their mission and it’s only right that we take care of them, said Col. Reginald Sanders, Commander of the 369th Sustainment Bde.

“This is a great program and our Soldiers and families deserve the best we have to offer.” The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program requires Soldiers to be present at approximately 30 and 60 days after their return from a combat zone, and invites families to attend as well.

The sessions are held in a non-threatening, non-military environment, to provide Soldiers and families a chance to share experiences and talk frankly with each other and counselors about their experiences.

Yellow Ribbon isn’t just about coping with changes at home, the program offers information providers in a variety of areas, including veterans benefits, education, insurance and employers looking to hire experienced military personnel.

Spec. Eloy Rodriguez, a signal support specialist from Bronx was excited that the Department of Labor was on hand to provide assistance.

“This is perfect timing for me, I’m looking for a career change and was really worried about finding a new job,” said Rodriguez. “My wife pretty much took care of everything else, she taught my youngest how to feed herself and walk while I was away.”

Rodriquez and his wife Carol brought their two little girls, Zyha-ra, 6 and Miracle, 18-months and were eager to learn about National Guard Youth program activities and camps available to their children. More than 3000 New York National Guard Soldiers have been through the program since its inception in 2008.

History Returns to Watervliet with Help from the NYARNG

Story by: Staff Sgt. Thomas Wheeler - 138th Public Affairs Detachment

WATERVLIET, N.Y.-- A piece of artillery history returned to the Watervliet Arsenal today with a little help from New York National Guard Soldiers from the Queensbury, NY 1427th Transportation Company, as a high-tech howitzer developed at the Arsenal came home.

The experimental lightweight 155mm howitzer had been sitting at the General Dynamics test range facility in Jericho, VT, since the conclusion of testing in the mid 1990's.

"It's like capturing the prize," said Bob Pfeil, curator for the Watervliet Arsenal Museum.

"It will make a great addition to the museum," he added. "It's not just part of a system, it's the whole system and that will give people a chance to see the whole piece and how it works."

Moving the one-of-a-kind gun was a good training experience for the 1427th Soldiers, said Staff Sgt. Richard Gorman, the unit training NCO.

"The challenge presented for transporting this type of cargo created a great training experience," Gorman explained.

"The techniques we used to load, secure, and transport the equipment during this mission will have a positive impact on unit readiness and future missions we are tasked with," he added.

According to arsenal staff, General Dynamics donated the experimental howitzer to the Watervliet Arsenal museum at no cost in hopes that it will help tell the



WATERVLIET, N.Y. -- Capt. John Klimes III and Staff Sgt. Richard Gorman, both of the New York National Guards 1427th Transportation Company from Queensbury, NY, secure this one-of-a-kind experimental lightweight howitzer to a fork lift in preparation for off loading at the howitzers new home at the Watervliet Arsenal Museum, Watervliet, NY, April 13, 2011. The experimental gun was designed and manufactured at the arsenal in 1995 during a collaboration between the Watervliet Arsenal and defense contractor General Dynamics. Although the piece was never fielded, many of the design elements it contains can be seen in today's lightweight artillery pieces.

story of artillery warfare.

"It's history," added Pfeil. "If it's destroyed that history is lost forever."

This is the last remaining howitzer stemming from a 1995 collaboration between defense contractors and the Watervliet Arsenal to design a replacement for the then standard 155mm howitzer.

Arsenal staff added that the project was as result of lessons learned from battlefield experiences against Iraqi forces in the early 1990s. Combat systems had to be lighter and more mobile so that U.S. forces could decrease the time it took to deploy to future combat zones.

Those responsible for the Army's acquisition of field artillery systems took note of the need

and turned to defense contractors, as well as to its sole Army-owned large caliber manufacturer, the Watervliet Arsenal, to design, test, and field a lighter artillery system. The result was a race by leading defense contractors, as well as the Watervliet Arsenal and co-inhabitant Benet Labs, to develop a lighter more mobile version of the standard of the day.

"At first they [Lockheed Martin] came to us and said they wanted to just make the tube," said design team member Stephen Van Dyke Restifo.

Restifo went on to say that eventually they came to the team said they wanted them to build the whole system.

"We were given full design authority for this design in August.

Five months later the first gun was manufactured, designed and delivered out the door. It was followed by a second prototype a month later. What's unique is that's one of the quickest designs we've ever entered into," added Restifo.

According to Watervliet Arsenal staff, the team designed, engineered, manufactured, and

tested the howitzer all within one year's time, a process that arsenal engineers say normally takes at least five years to accomplish.

They went on to say that only two prototype howitzers were tested by then Lockheed Martin Defense Systems in the deserts of Yuma Proving Ground, AZ, in 1996 and although this gun was nearly 50 percent lighter than

the 155mm towed howitzers that were in use by the U.S. military at that time, it was not selected by the Army for production and fielding.

The gun was acquired by General Dynamics when the Lockheed Martin operation was sold in 1997 and finally returned home April 13, 2011.

Local Servicemember Says bin Laden's Death Boosts Morale

Story Courtesy of Fox 23 News

Amy Bonnano was just out of college and working for the New York State Senate at the time of 9/11.

Images of the Twin Towers and the devastation left behind after the attacks motivated her to make a career change. She joined the Army National Guard.

"The whole sense of patriotism kicked in and put me into high gear," Bonnano says. "It was about nine months after that I enlisted."

In 2008, Bonnano was deployed to Afghanistan, where she helped train the Afghan National Army and police. The city she stayed in was Kandahar, known as the heart of Taliban country.

"They worked with Osama bin Laden to come over and attack America," Bonnano says. "So the fact that I was there on their stomping grounds, fighting for our cause made it all the more important."

Bonnano was watching the news Sunday night and learned of the death of Osama bin Laden at the hands of us forces.

She spoke to friends still serving in Afghanistan and says there's definitely been a boost in

morale.

"Everyone's just ecstatic over what happened and elated at the turn of events," Bonnano says.

Bonanno's husband, also in the National Guard, is scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan in November. With all the talk of retaliation, we asked her if she is now more worried for his safety. She bravely said it's not something she, or any of her fellow soldiers, let themselves think about.

"It's just what we do. It's the

call to duty that brings us forward and keeps us plugging away," Bonnano says. "It's just part of the mission. We have to see this through and see it to the end."



Brig. Gen Mike Swezey, commander, 53rd Troop Command, NYARNG, shows a copy of the front page of the Albany Times Union with the title 'DEAD,' referring to the death of Osama bin Laden in the early morning hours of May 2, 2011.



AROUND THE 53RD



TOP LEFT- COHOES N.Y. - Engineer Soldiers from Detachment 1, 1st Platoon, 1156th Engineer Company (Vertical) based in Kingston and some members of the 152nd Eng. Co. clear brush and debris from around Lock 15 on the outskirts of Cohoes on June 15.

The City of Cohoes requested the assistance of the N.Y. National Guard to assist in restoring and renovating this historic area in order to transform it into a bike and walking trail for the city residents. The area was once an extension of the Erie Canal. (Army Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Steven Petibone)

TOP RIGHT- BASRA, Iraq-- New York Army National Guard Specialist Jorge Alvarez, a member of the 501st Ordnance Battalion who lives in the Bronx, receives a coin from Sergeant Major of the Army Raymond Chandler during a visit to Contingency Operating Base Basrah on June 25. The Soldiers of the 501st Ordnance Battalion are overseeing Explosive Ordnance Disposal units in southern Iraq as part of Task Force Troy. The unit is based in Scotia, New York. (Army Photo by 1st Lt. John Harder)

BOTTOM CENTER- CAMP SMITH TRAINING SITE, N.Y. -- Maj. Gen. Patrick Murphy, the Adjutant General (left); Nan Hayworth, Congresswoman from the 19th District; Elizabeth Glazer, New York State Deputy Secretary of Public Safety; Brig. Gen. Michael Swezey, commander of the 53rd Troop Command; and Donald Bennett Jr., Deputy Mayor of Peekskill, NY, perform the ribbon cutting dedicating the new Camp Smith Readiness Center, Camp Smith, NY, April 21, 2011. A formal opening ceremony for the \$30 million Readiness Center at Camp Smith which will serve as the home for approximately 350 National Guard soldiers assigned to Headquarters, 53rd Troop Command; Company C, 1st Battalion 69th Infantry; the 42nd Infantry Division Band; the 727th Military Police Detachment and elements of the 1156th Engineer Company, as well as an Army National Guard recruiting office.

Changes at the Top



(ABOVE) BUFFALO-- New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. Jim Pabis (left) receives the colors of the 153rd Troop Command from Command Sgt. Major Joy O'Neil during a Change of Command Ceremony held at the Connecticut Street Armory on Saturday, April 2. Pabis takes over from Col. Reginald Sanders who is taking command of the 369th Sustainment Brigade in New York City. (Army Photo by Spc. Jeremy Bratt)



(ABOVE) NEW YORK-- New York Army National Guard Col. Reginald Sanders (left) accepts the colors of the 369th Sustainment Brigade during Change of Command Ceremonies on Sunday, April 10 at the Harlem Armory. Sanders, a North Country resident who also oversees the National Guard's Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site at Fort Drum, replaces Col. Stephanie Dawson who will now serve as deputy commander of the 53rd Troop Command.



CORTLANDT MANOR, N.Y.-- Command Sgt. Maj. Lou Wilson, a Rochester, NY, native, takes the 53rd Troop Command Colors from Brig. Gen. Mike Swezey, commander, 53rd Troop Command, NYARNG, during a recent change of responsibility ceremony. Command Sgt. Maj. Wilson replaces Command Sgt. Maj. Frank Wicks who recently replaced Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Van Pelt as the New York National Senior Enlisted Advisor.



827th Engineers Honored for Afghan Service



KERHONKSON, N.Y.-- 827th Engineer Company, Spec. Nancy Daniels from Endwell, receives Freedom Salute mementos from Command Sgt. Major James Meltz, 204th Engineer Battalion (far right), during her units Freedom Salute ceremony, May 22. Center of photo is Major General Patrick Murphy, New York Army National Guard Adjutant General.

Story and Picture by Master Sgt. Corine Lombardo - Joint Force Headquarters

KERHONKSON, N.Y. -- Nearly 160 Soldiers from the 827th Engineer Company, which includes Soldiers from Buffalo, Walton and Horseheads, N.Y. were recognized for their service during their Freedom Salute ceremony, here May 22.

The Soldiers received a flag and other mementos to commemorate their service in combat in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The children and spouses of Soldiers also received items.

"This is just one way the National Guard recognizes our Soldiers for their service and thanks their spouses, children and employers for the support they have shown throughout the deployment cycle," said New York State Command Sgt. Major Frank Wicks.

The Freedom Salute Campaign is one of the largest Army National Guard recognition endeavors in history and was launched nationwide in 2003 to recognize members of the Army National Guard for their service during Operations Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn.

Each Soldier received an encased American Flag, a lapel insignia, a commemorative coin and a certificate of appreciation from the Army National Guard. The Soldier's spouse/significant other received a lapel insignia while Soldiers with children received a Future Soldier Footlocker Kit. The kit included the Daring Eagle board game, Mission Command game, and Army National Guard trading cards.

The Soldiers returned from their deployment on Feb 16. While in eastern Afghanistan,

the 827th Engineers served with Task Force Red Dragon and the 1092nd Engineer Battalion providing engineer support and building and repairing roads at 25 locations throughout the country.

"I've been following the news since we've been home and it's clear that the infrastructure we built and the security we provided has had a direct impact on the success taking place in the specific areas our Soldiers worked," said Capt. Jeffrey Miles, Commander, 827th Engineer Company from Buffalo. "Soldiers in that area are able to get to and interact with the citizens of Afghanistan, we made a difference."

The Freedom Salute was conducted in conjunction with the New York Army National Guard Yellow Ribbon Reintegration program in which Soldiers and their families spent the weekend at the Hudson Valley Resort & Spa working through issues surrounding a return from combat.

The Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program requires Soldiers to be present at approximately 30 and 60 days after their return from a combat zone and invites families to attend as well.

The sessions are held in a non-threatening, non-military environment to provide Soldiers and families a chance to share experiences and talk frankly with each other and counselors about their experiences.

"The reintegration is a great event. Soldiers get to see each other again and families have a chance to bond. They have heard so much about each oth-

ers families, now they have a chance to meet and spend some quality time together," Miles said.

"The program isn't just about coping with changes at home, the program offers information providers in a variety of areas, including veterans benefits, education, insurance and employers looking to hire experienced military personnel," said Andrew DePalo, New York Army Na-

tional Guard Family Programs Director.

"Having employers here ready to hire Soldiers on the spot is huge," said Miles. Roughly 30% of his Soldiers are currently unemployed or looking to change employment. "Having folks here to help and provide guidance on how to search for jobs is a huge leg up," Miles added.

"The resiliency training they

provide is significant, it really hits home," Miles said.

"In many cases Soldiers don't realize or aren't able to admit they are experiencing negative behaviors. The information they receive helps them understand why they may be different now and provides tools and resources for dealing with it."

501st Ordnance Battalion Smiles Live from Iraq



ALBANY N.Y.-- Families of the 501st Ordnance Battalion Soldiers look up and wave as the Soldiers appear on the Times Union Center's jumbotron during an Albany Devils hockey game April 3.

Story and Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Raymond Drumsta - Joint Force Headquarters

ALBANY, N.Y. -- Amid cheers from hockey fans, Soldiers of the 501st Ordnance Battalion sent smiles from Iraq to their families here April 3.

Thanks to the unit's family readiness group, the Albany Devils hockey team and a satellite feed, ten Soldiers appeared on the Times Union Center's jumbotron during a break in the Devils' game against the Binghamsen Senators.

The families were elated to see their Soldiers, who deployed to Iraq with the unit in December.

"It was awesome," said Derek George, the father of Sgt. Nicholas George, of Troy, N.Y.

"It was a good feeling to see him, and see he was ok."

Carole Landy, wife of 1st Sgt. Joseph Landy, agreed.

"I loved it," said Landy, also a Troy resident. "It was amazing. It made me closer to him, almost as if he was at the game."

Reached by phone in Iraq, the Soldiers said they could only

hear their loved ones, but that alone seemed to be a boost.

He heard his daughter Victoria say she loved and missed him, 1st Sgt. Joseph Landy recalled.

"It made me feel good," he said. "I wish I could've seen her, but it brought my spirits up."

Her 12-year old daughter Marissa Martinez also said she missed her, said Sgt. 1st Class Melissa Harrell.

She and Marissa frequently speak over the phone, she added.

"I hear her voice, everyday, but this made me feel very good," Harrell said.

Seeing her husband Staff Sgt. Shawn Nethaway on the Jumbotron made her proud, said Amy Nethaway, of Latham, N.Y.

The applause increased her pride in her daughter, said Harrell's mother, Brenda Coleman.

"It wasn't a full house, but a lot of them stood up and clapped," recalled Coleman.

The cheers and the personal thanks he received from fans touched him, and affirmed that what his son is doing in Iraq is "respected and admired by everybody," George said.

"Everybody appreciates it," George said.

The unit's family readiness group (FRG) coordinated the event with the Albany Devils in March, said Gwyn Nagy, the FRG lead volunteer.

The satellite feed took place during the Devils' military appreciation night.

Albany Devils Vice President Chris Valente said they wanted to do something special for the families of military members.

His parents send care packages to troops in Iraq, one of his friends is an Iraqi war veteran, and one of their former staff members is an Iraqi war veteran as well, he said.

"It's near and dear to our hearts to recognize the military in any way possible," Valente said, adding that they reached out to a military contractor, a local television station and other organizations to make the satellite link.

The families also prize their links to each other via the FRG.

Not being able to consult her

husband on household matters is a hardship, and not knowing what's happening to him and the unit is frightening, but the FRG connections help, Carole Landy said.

"You can actually talk to them, because they're going through the same thing," she said.

The situation in Iraq seems quieter now, and increased phone contact, along with the experience of the previous deployment, has eased the strain of separation, George said.

Nonetheless, the FRG is a morale booster and a Godsend, allowing families to meet and talk with others who understand, he stressed.

"We're all different as human beings, but we all share a common situation -- having a Soldier in a combat zone," he said. His son also deployed to Iraq in 2004, and took part in many combat patrols, said George.

"That's when my hair turned

gray," George said. "That was a very long year."

The FRG is also a resource families can contact when problems arise, Coleman said.

This is the first time Harrell has deployed, and "I hope the last," she added.

"Me too!" Marissa chimed in.

The FRG needs to arrange more events, Carole Landy said.

Scheduling and individual tastes make planning FRG social events difficult, she explained.

The Army's Strong Bonds program - which organizes retreats for couples and families to strengthen their relationships - should be expanded to include FRGs while Soldiers are deployed, she added.

They expect to host more events like this, Valente said.

"We want to do more, and plan to do more next year," he explained.



ALBANY N.Y.-- Families of the new York Army National Guard's (NYARNG) 501st Ordnance Battalion Soldiers watch and wait for their chance to see and talk with their Soldiers currently deployed in support of Operation New Dawn at the Times Union Center during an Albany Devils hockey game April 3.

501st Ordnance Battalion FRG Recognized

Story by: Master Sgt. Corine Lombardo - Joint Force Headquarters

SCHENECTADY, N.Y. -- Kim Baker misses the little things with her husband Maj. Doug Baker, a New York Army National Guard Soldier deployed to Iraq. She misses watching TV with him or just relaxing and spending time as a family.

That's why the Retired Enlisted Association, Chapter 120 gave Baker and another deployed Soldiers' family gifts through their "Just For You" program on April 26. "Just for You" is designed to recognize family members of deployed Soldiers with gifts for a free night out for family members -- a fact not lost on Kim.

"We are really thankful that they recognize us for what we are going through, it's nice to know you are appreciated as well," said Baker, who lives in Saratoga Springs with their children Ben, 11, Rachel, 7, and Sam, 5.

The Schenectady-based organization celebrated the families with a cake and gave Baker, her children, and Staff Sgt. Shawn Nethaway's family gift certificates from local businesses and gift baskets filled with movie tickets, popcorn, toys, candy and more.

"It's really amazing that they did this for us, it means a lot," said Nethaway's wife Amy, who lives in Latham with their chil-



SCHENECTADY, N.Y.--The family of Staff Sgt. Shawn Nethaway, his wife Amy and sons Logan, age 8, and Noah, age 4; cut a cake during a "Just for You" recognition ceremony, April 26. The Retired Enlisted Association, Chapter 120 of Schenectady held the event to recognize families of deployed Soldiers assigned to the 501st Ordnance Battalion, Glenville, N.Y.

dren Logan, 8 and Noah, 4.

The Retired Enlisted Association Chapter 120 is a nonprofit organization made up of local retirees who foster patriotism and civic duty.

"We wanted to do something special for family members and thought a stress free night out for a spouse and children would be a nice break from their everyday issues," said Kathleen VanDerstyne, the chapter's project coordinator.

Their Soldiers are members of the New York Army National

Guard's 501st Ordnance Battalion, based in Glenville, N.Y.

About three dozen Soldiers from the 501st deployed to southern Iraq in late 2010.

"It's awesome that organizations like this recognize the struggles our families go through when a loved one is deployed, said Sgt. 1st Class Frank White, 501st Rear Detachment, Non-commissioned Officer in Charge. "It means a lot to our Soldiers and their families when they are remembered."

Troops Pause in Midst of Premobilization Training

Story and Photo by Spc. J.P. Lawrence, HQ, 42nd Infantry Division

FORT DRUM, N.Y. -- Silence broke out in the New York Army National Guard's 369th Sustainment Brigade's headquarters here this Memorial Day, as all work was suspended for a moment of reflection on warriors known and lost.

The minute of silence honored not only the Soldiers of the past, but for the Soldiers of the future, as Memorial Day this year came as troops of the 369th SB were busy supporting their fellow Soldiers of the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team prepare for a deployment to Afghanistan.

The silence stood in stark contrast to the sounds expressed just moments earlier, as the ceremony began with the singing of the Star Spangled Banner by Staff Sgt. Andrea Ingram, a Poughkeepsie, N.Y., native who



FORT DRUM, N.Y. - Soldiers of the NYARNG's 369th Sustainment Brigade share a prayer during a Memorial Day service at Fort Drum. Memorial Day stood poignant this year, as it fell as the 369th SB was busy supporting their brethren in the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team prepare for a deployment to Afghanistan. (U.S. Army Photo by Spc. J.P. Lawrence.)

works supply with the 369th SB, and 1st Lt. Steven Ho, an Antioch, Ca., native and a platoon leader in the

719th Transportation Company.

After an opening prayer by Chaplain (1st Lt.) Razi Amar, 369th Sus. Bde. commander, Col. Reginald D. Sanders, a Springfield, Mass., native, read aloud the names of the New York National Guard Soldiers who lost their lives since last Memorial Day, with three of those names

coming from the ranks of the 369th SB.

After another prayer, 369th Special Troops Battalion commander Lt. Col. Daniel E. Harris exhorted Soldiers to not only think and pay respects to Soldiers past, but also to the Soldiers all around them.

"Go ahead -- shake the hand of the Soldier next to you, and thank them for their service," the Pocono, Penn., native said.

From there, the ceremony closed, as Soldiers around the room emerged from silence to welcome and thank their fellow Soldiers, thank them, and pat them on the back.

"It's definitely an honor," said Ho, "to stand there with Soldiers who have actually deployed into theater and who have actually sacrificed."



FORT DRUM, N.Y.-- Staff Sgt. Andrea Ingram, and 1st Lt. Steven Ho, of the 719th Transportation Company, sing the national anthem to open a Memorial Day service. The two Soldiers, while at Fort Drum, support their brethren in the 27th Infantry Brigade Combat Team as they prepare for a deployment to Afghanistan. (U.S. Army Photo by Spc. J.p. Lawrence.)

