

53rd Troop Scoop

WINTER 2010-11

VOL. # 2, ISSUE #1



**NEW YORK EOD SOLDIERS
RETURN FROM WAR ZONE PG. 4 >**



**< AFGANISTAN WAR VET ASSUMES
COMMAND OF THE STATES SOLE
ENGINEER BATTALION PG. 7**

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About the 53rd Troop Scoop

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Submissions

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FRONT COVER (LEFT) CAMP RAMADI, IRAQ-- Soldiers from the New York Army National Guard's 442nd Military Police Company, based at the Jamaica, Queens Armory, train in stretcher bearing skills on February 16. The company has been assigned to the 4th Advise and Assist Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division while deployed. The company is expected to return to the United States in early April.



BACK COVER (RIGHT) FORT DRUM, NY--Soldiers from the 1427th participate in Humvee Egress Awareness Training (HEAT) March 5, 2010 at Fort Drum, NY. HEAT involves a simulated combat situation and Humvee roll-over.





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

The training year, which began in October, is now more than half over. The “heavy lifting” part of the year is now upon us. All units are busy – the 369th STB is supporting the 27th Brigade’s train-

up at Ft Drum, the 101 Signal is getting ready for its deployment next year, the 104th MP’s and it’s CERF-P are involved with exercises. The 102nd MP’s have just put one company out the door (the 105th) and is readying another to follow (the 107th), the 204th Engineers have a new commander, and the 501st EOD Bn is still deployed. This is a very busy year. I ask all involved with the preparation and conduct of this training is train to standard ... and to be safe.

On top of all this we are asking more. First of all – you will be hearing more about the resilience training that we will be incorporating into our schedules soon. After a decade of persistent conflict our Soldiers, and our families, are tired. Look upon this training as one additional tool in your “kit bag” to make you stronger both as a Soldier, and as a person. Also, we will be rolling out training related to the repeal of the “Don’t Ask Don’t Tell” (DADT) legislation. I ask all of you to approach this requirement with the same professional-

ism that you approach all your tasks. In my opinion, this legislation falls under one of the Army Values that we hold so highly and that value is “Respect”.

We have just started to receive some of the Troop Command surveys that we asked you all to fill out in March related to the Operational Reserve issue. I promise you that in the next Troop Scoop we will provide detailed results from the survey. Thank you for the time you put in to make your opinions known. The staff here at Troop Command is also proud to welcome our new Command Sergeant Major – CSM Lou Wilson who is coming to us from the 153rd Troop Command. CSM Wilson is a combat veteran who deployed to Iraq as the CSM for the 42d Engineer Brigade in 2005. He is an outstanding NCO who is devoted to taking care of Soldiers. I am sure that many of you will see a lot of him in the coming months. I also want to wish our outgoing Command Sergeant Major well. CSM Frank Wicks is moving ‘upstairs’ to assume duties (vice CSM Bob Van Pelt who is retiring) as the senior NCO leader of the NYARNG. Frank – job well done ... and best wishes for continued future success.

Effective 1 April 2011, CSM Lou Wilson assumes the position of 53rd Troop Command, Command Sergeant Major. CSM Wilson comes to the 53rd from the 153rd Troop Command. Prior to that he served as 42nd ID Engineer Brigade CSM during the 42nd Division’s successful deployment to Iraq. CSM Wilson will make an outstanding MA-COM Command Sergeant Major and I am pleased to see him take over these duties.

I will be reassigned as the NY State Senior Enlisted Leader/State Command Sergeant Major. I will be transferred out of my position in Troop Command effective 1 April and will begin a transition with CSM Van Pelt, culminating with a Change of Responsibility on 6 May 2011, to be held at Joint Forces Headquarters. As I prepare for this transition one item I place a high priority on is to thank each Soldier assigned or attached to the Troop Command and their family members for your service – thank you!

Serving as the Troop Command, Command Sergeant Major has been one of the greatest

honors bestowed on me by the Army. The chance to deal with Soldiers from across the state has been something I will long remember. When I think back over my time in the Troop Command, I am extremely proud of what we have accomplished. We have deployed multiple units, and numerous individuals to support the War on Terrorism. The Soldiers of the 53rd Troop Command have always made me proud and have been identified as “among the best” from every element they have served with. Our Soldiers have risen to the challenges presented, while serving as members of Task Force Empire Shield, to deploying overseas to Afghanistan, and in Iraq, or assisting in preparing our Soldiers for duty.

In closing, I cannot be more proud of what we have accomplished. Each of you has helped make my tour in the Troop Command a great success. As the Troop Command units prepare for the challenges ahead I know you will be successful. This success will be a direct result of the hard work, dedication, and

professionalism of the great Soldiers of the Troop Command. It has been a distinct honor to work with you. Keep supporting our great State and Country, tell your family members that we appreciate their sacrifices, and stick with the 53rd Troop Command. Good luck!



Cmd. Sgt. Maj. Frank Wicks
53rd Troop Command
“For The Soldier”

New York EOD Soldiers Honored For Wartime Service

Story by Staff Sgt. Dennis Gravelle, 369th Sus Bde

SARATOGA SPRINGS, NY -- Fifteen soldiers from the New York Army National Guard explosives ordnance disposal company, based in Scotia, participated in the first phase of the Guard's Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program Saturday, Jan 22 in Saratoga Springs.

Soldiers assigned to the 1108th Ordnance Company (Explosives Ordnance Disposal) received support through the Yellow Ribbon Program after returning Dec. 4, 2010 from serving 10 months in Kuwait.

The program was created to help Soldiers and their family members cope with the stress of returning to civilian life after deployment and to reintegrate troops with families, employers and the community. Some of the stress that Soldiers deal with, both during and after the deployment, can stem from financial, mental health, physical health and marital issues, among others.

"The purpose is to take the Soldier who is just coming out of the combat environment, the deployed environment, who may not have a job anymore, who may have financial difficulties, who may have family difficulties, this is the place to hook him up with people who can help him," said Sgt. 1st Class Michael Horner, the readiness NCO for the 1108th. "Even if he doesn't have problems, it exposes him to people like the VFW, the department of labor and people he may not of thought about who can help

him in some way."

One of the ideas behind the Yellow Ribbon Program is simply to get Soldiers talking. By putting them in an environment that is non-threatening, non-military and conducive to discussion, both Soldiers and family members have a chance to share experiences and talk openly with each other as well as counselors who can provide assistance.

"It's like anything else," said Stephanie Duell, senior family readiness support assistant for the New York family programs. "If you bring it to them, or to me, I'm more apt to reach out for help."

While returning home from an overseas mission didn't always mean being met by as much support the 1108th received from the Yellow Ribbon program, it has become an important and valuable resource to both the Soldiers and their families. More than 3,000 members of the New York Army National Guard have participated in the program since 2008.

"This is a big thing for the army and the Soldiers themselves," said Staff Sgt. Wayne Brown, a team leader with the 1108th from Atlanta who volunteered for the



Soldiers assigned to the NYARNGs 1108th Explosive Ordnance Detachment gather at the Saratoga Springs January 22 to participate in the NYARNGs Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. The program was created to help Soldiers and their family members cope with the stress of returning to civilian life after deployment. (Photo by Spc. Mary Hogle)

deployment. "Before, we never had this much assistance in getting back. We would just get one or two briefings to say here, these are your benefits, this is what you can do and if you need help, go here. That was it. This time they are really taking a step forward in doing a 30-day, 60-day and a 90-day program to make sure that the Soldiers are getting the information and using the information as it's supposed to be used."

Throughout the deployment the 1108th performed the supervision of EOD response teams, EOD emergency response missions, demolition operations, support missions for visiting dignitaries including two for the vice president and personnel recovery missions. The unit also gave munitions safety classes to American service members and contractors and were in charge of overseeing the safe destruction of over 150,000 tons of explosive materials.

Buffalo MP's Deploy in Support of New Dawn

Story and Photos by Lt. Col. Paul Fanning, New York Army National Guard and Staff Sgt. Peter Dean, New York Air National Guard

NIAGARAFALLSAIRRESERVE STATION, NY-- More than 700 family members, friends and officials turned out to say goodbye to the Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard's 105th Military Police Company here on Wednesday, March 9.

The Buffalo unit was the first New York Army National Guard unit deployed to Iraq in 2003 and as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom and is now going back as part of Operation New Dawn.

Ten Soldiers are returning with the unit for this second mission. Staff Sgt. Douglas Mattingly, an employee with the Veterans Administration in Buffalo, was one of those Soldiers who deployed with the 105th in 2003.

It was a very difficult mission but

the unit accomplished a lot, Mattingly said about his first deployment. This new team of 105th MP Soldiers is going to perform very well too, he predicted.

The 105th led the way in the first round of New York Army National Guard (NYNG) call-ups, and is leading the way again as the NYNG prepares to deploy almost 4,000 Soldiers over the next year-and-a-half, said Major General Patrick Murphy, the Adjutant General of New York.

The 105th's mission is to continue America's transition of security responsibilities to the Iraqi Security Forces as the United States draws down its forces there.

Unlike its first mission in 2003 the 105th will be focused on training and mentoring police in Northern Iraq, said Capt. John VanLaningham, the company commander.

"I am the last person in the chain of command from New York that

validates and certifies the training that Soldiers are ready to move on to the next phase," said General Murphy. "I do it with confidence for the 105th," he said.

"We have been preparing for this mission for the last 18 months," said VanLanin-

ham, a former active duty sailor, and a New York State trooper from Syracuse.

He's proud to command a company that saw service in Bosnia in 1999-2000, at the World Trade Center in New York City following the terrorist attacks of 2001, and in Iraq in 2003-4 in Operation Iraqi Freedom, VanLaningham said. "This unit was one of the first to deploy and it will be among the last, he added.

"For a lot of them it is a first-time deployment," said VanLaningham. "This is their chance to use the training that they signed on to do," he added.

"Our families are our life but unfortunately they are the ones who struggle the most with our absence," VanLaningham said.

His mother, sisters and niece all traveled from Colorado to attend the ceremony.

"My wife (Lisa) broke down a couple times but she is staying strong for the kids," said Staff Sgt. John Anstey, a squad leader from Holley, NY.

"That's probably the hardest part, leaving the kids; leaving the kids behind." Melissa Albanese wife of Spc. Michael Albanese said. "I'm not prepared for it," she added.

"It's going to be tough without him," the Williamsville, NY resident added.

Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station, is home to the Air Force Reserve's 914th Wing and the New York Air National Guard's 107th Air Wing. It's also where the 105th returned home in 2004 after its first deployment.



NIAGARA FALLS AIR RESERVE STATION, NY-- Staff Sgt. John Anstey, a squad leader in the New York Army National Guard's 105th Military Police Company says goodbye to his son Jason during deployment ceremonies here on March 9. The 105th MP Company is deploying to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn.

53RD FORWARD DEPLOYED!



TOP LEFT- CAMP RAMADI, IRAQ-- Soldiers from the New York Army National Guard's 442nd Military Police Company, based at the Jamaica, Queens Armory, train in stretcher bearing skills on February 16. The company has been assigned to the 4th Advise and Assist Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division while deployed. The company is expected to return to the United States in early April. (Photo Courtesy DVIDS HUB)

TOP RIGHT- BASRA, IRAQ- Members of the New York Army National Guard's 501st Ordnance Battalion (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) get together with members of the Texas Army National Guard's 36th Division to celebrate St. Patrick's Day at Contingency Operating Base Basra. The 501st is serving as the headquarters for Task Force Troy-South, with a mission of clearing improvised explosive devices from critical routes and infrastructure. (Photo Courtesy 501st EOD)

BOTTOM LEFT- BASRA, Iraq-- Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard's 501st Ordnance Battalion (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) help Texas Army National Guard Major General Eddy Spurgin, the commander of the 36 Division and Task Force Troy, don the suit EOD technicians wear when they are on a mission. The general was visiting the battalion, which provides support for his task force, on Feb. 3. (Photo Courtesy 501st Ordnance Battalion (EOD))

BOTTOM RIGHT- U.S. soldiers assigned to 442nd Military Police Company, New York National Guard, 4th Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division practice evacuating a casualty in Camp Ramadi, Iraq, Feb. 16. Deployed U.S. soldiers with 442nd MP Company trained to keep their tactical skills sharp. (Photo Courtesy DVIDS HUB)

Afghanistan War Vet Takes Command of 204th ENGs

Story by Staff Sgt. Dennis Gravelle 369th Sus Bde

Binghamton, N.Y. -- A seasoned veteran of the Afghanistan War assumed command of the 204th Engineer Battalion during a Change of Command ceremony held at New York State Armory March 6.

After exchanging colors, signifying the change of command to the Soldiers of the battalion Lt. Col. James Freehart took control of the battalion from outgoing commander Maj. Andrew Hutz.

"As commander it's important to me to take care of Soldiers," said Freehart. "We are in a business that is only about people, people are our engine and it is the individual working as team members that make us a success."

Freehart served in Afghanistan as a member of the Training

Advisor Group, training the Afghan Army in 2008, and now commands the only Engineer Battalion in the New York National Guard and plays a key role in the NY National Guard's plans in responding to emergencies at the direction of the Governor.

The Change of Command Ceremony dates back to the days in which a military unit's flag marked its position in the line of battle. The colors were always near the commander, so troops knew where to rally on the battlefield. Today, the transfer of



BINGHAMTON, N.Y. -- New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. James Freehart, left, a veteran of Afghanistan, receives the unit colors from Lt. Col. Jim Pabis to take command of the 204th Engineer battalion here March 5. He replaces Major Andrew Hutz who has been serving as commander. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Tom Wheeler)

the colors marks a change in the unit and gives the Soldier's their first opportunity to see and hear their new leader.

"They made the best decision they could have made for the next commander of the 204th Engineer's," stated Lt. Col. James Pabis, commander for the 153rd Troop Command and presiding officer for the ceremony. "I challenge you to focus on standards and discipline, leader development, process improvement and fiscal management as a way of life as you go forward".

Pabis added that we operate in a complex environment but knows this great team of the battalion will meet and succeed all challenges.

"Take care of each other and always be for the Soldiers," said Pabis. "I look forward to working with you and your team".



BINGHAMTON, N.Y. -- New York Army National Guard Lt. Col. James Freehart, left, a veteran of Afghanistan, presents the 204th Engineer Battalion to Lt. Col. Jim Pabis, commander, 153rd Troop Command, for the first time as the units commander. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Tom Wheeler, 138th PAD)

Man on a Mission, A Mission of Tribute

Story by Staff Sgt. Dennis Gravelle, 369th Sus Bde

LATHAM, N.Y. – A personal loss has sent one man on a mission to recognize and honor United States Service members that have paid the ultimate sacrifice serving their country.

Phil Taylor, artist and founder of the American Fallen Soldiers Project paints portraits of Soldiers that have lost their lives while serving, fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

“A personal loss was parlayed into an effort to recognize and to try and restore a sense of these heroes that gave all for their country”, stated Taylor. “I think over time it has become an effort to connect personally with the families, learn their stories, the state of grief they are in and how we can position ourselves through the portrait to help them anyway he can”.

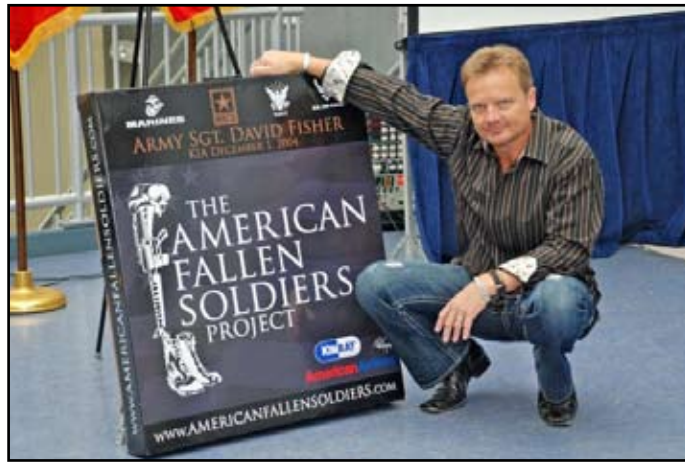
According to Taylor the project started with the loss of a personal friend, Capt. Blake Russell, who was killed in Iraq on July 22, 2006, and it is his life that is the cornerstone of what the project is all about.

“He is personally invested in each Soldier’s story that I paint today, so its all about Blake, that’s how it started,” said Taylor.

According to the American Fallen Soldiers Project website their mission is to honor, respect and forever memorialize those who have sacrificed their lives protecting our freedom while serving in the Armed Forces. The organization provides at no cost to family members, an exquisitely framed original portrait of their fallen loved one that fully captures their appearance and personality. Each por-

trait is then unveiled to family members at a presentation ceremony.

“I think the experience is a myriad of things, with a sense of anxiousness, nervousness and also the expectation, you know the painting, what quality it’s at and how its gonna affect the family at the presentation,” he said. “It puts you in a position where you don’t want to make any mistake



LATHAM, NY-- Artist Phil Taylor of the “American Fallen Soldiers Project” poses for pictures after a presentation of a painted portrait honoring an area fallen Servicemember. (Photo courtesy of JFHQ)

because you don’t know who in the front row, if that guy with the Soldier and if he was there that day when he lost his life”.

Taylor added that he is real cognizant to be sensitive in the room, who is present in the room and to represent that hero in a very genuine way that will extend much love to those who are present.

Even though family members receives the portrait at no cost, there are still expenses that come along with getting Taylor to the places he needs to be, to personally present the portrait to the families. With the help of corporate sponsors Taylor is able to concentrate on painting the portraits and the sponsors assist him in getting to his destination. Corporate

sponsors can be seen on the American Fallen Soldiers Website.

“The cost is really a relative answer because some of the presentations are very large in scale, have a large audience, a large venue, and a long time or organize and can cost in excess of \$25,000,” stated Taylor. “Sponsoring a portrait is as really as small as \$1000, and what that does

is put someones name next to the Soldier on the website and then we raise additional funds to supplement and support things we are doing for the family”.

According to their website, no donation is to small, and it would be impossible to support and sustain the growing demands of our effort to comfort those who mourn without your help. We consider it our duty to extend our deep appreciation to the families who have sacrificed so much by paying tribute and memorializing their brave men and

women who have given their lives for our great nation. All contributions go directly to costs related to the production of these portraits.

So, if your considering sending a small donation, please visit the American Fallen Soldiers Project Website and see how you can help.

“It feels good to present these portraits, so frankly speaking its very fulfilling and its giving my life certainly and those associated with the project a sense of purpose, and know that we gave back to those who gave all in a lifetime”, he said. “We are leaving something positive behind and I feel very gratified”.

Trading Wrenches for Trucks, Det. 1, 1427th



A Staff Sergeant with Det. 1, 1427th Transportation Company takes an LMTV on a test run March 5 at the MATES building on Fort Drum. (Photo by Spc. Mary Hogle)

Story By Spc Trisha Pinczes, 138th PAD, NYARNG

FORT DRUM, NY-- Change is one of the few things that is constant in the Army. It is no different in the Army National Guard. No one knows this better than the Soldiers assigned to what was formerly known as the Fort Drum based 102nd Maintenance Company, recently reorganized into Detachment 1, 1427th Transportation Company and Bravo Company, 427th Brigade Support Battalion.

“Due to force structure changes the 102nd Maintenance Company left the NYARNG,” said Capt. John Klimes III, commander of the 1427th Transportation Company, headquartered in Queensbury, NY. “For this reason the decision was made to reorganize the 102nd into a transportation detachment of the 1427th and B Co of the 427th BSB.”

Klimes, a Clifton Park native, acknowledged that challenges like getting Soldiers qualified in their new Military Occupational

Specialties (MOS) presented themselves with the reorganization of the 102nd.

“The class required for MOS qualification lasts about four weeks and many of the Soldiers are currently scheduled

to attend school,” said Klimes. “We have worked aggressively to monitor the availability of school seats and with the 106th Regional Training Institute at Camp Smith to get our Soldiers qualified. In the meantime we use those Soldiers in the unit who have already completed the school to help prepare and train those waiting to get a school seat.”

“We show whoever hasn’t been trained what to expect so that everyone is prepared,” said Spc. Ricky Shettleton, a recent graduate of the Motor Transport Operators School.

Although there are many challenges in making the change from maintenance technician to motor transport operator, the change also has its perks.

“The establishment of the Det. at Fort Drum ensured the technicians that work at the Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES) located at Fort Drum have a unit within reasonable commute from their homes and

workplaces resulting in a sense of ownership and investment by the full time technicians who maintain the 1427th equipment stored there,” added Klimes.

Beside convenience, another perk resulting from the change is the creation of well rounded, fully capable operator-maintainers.

“After being a mechanic, the additional training as a driver gives me an advantage,” said Shettleton. “If my equipment breaks, I don’t have to take it to someone else to fix, I can fix it myself.”

With a change of mission these new transporters know better than most that just because your mission changes that doesn’t mean normal unit training stops.

“Soldier skills are key,” said Staff Sgt. Craig Bartlett, a Non-Commissioned Officer with Det. 1. “Transportation Soldiers don’t work inside the wire. They go from working inside the compound to working in what is considered to be the second most dangerous job when deployed,” added Bartlett.

For this reason alongside the unit places continued focus on weapons training as well as recent training conducted on Fort Drums Humvee Egress Assistance Trainer (HEAT).

“As a transportation company we support whoever is in need of our services. This means everyone must be trained and ready to work with other units regardless of their mission or location. They have to know what they are doing and do it well,” added Bartlett.

101 SIG Soldiers Train Up on \$100 Million WIN-T Equip.

*Story by Spc. Trisha Pinczes
138th PAD, NYARNG*

FORT DRUM, NY-- Soldiers of the New York Army National Guard's Yonkers-based 101st Signal Battalion recently conducted Warfighter Information Network-Tactical training, also known as WIN-T, at the Fort Drum Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site (MATES).

"WIN-T is the primary state of the art, satellite based, communication equipment used by units and commanders on the battlefield," said Lt. Col. Greg W. Dreisbach, Battalion Commander, 101st Signal Battalion, NYARNG.

"The equipment provides that secure and non-secure voice, internet, and data communication link that units require in order to communicate with one another throughout the battlespace," added Dreisbach.

With more than \$100 million worth of brand new WIN-T equipment, the 101st Soldiers receive in depth, hands-on training on equipment that the unit will use during its scheduled 2012 deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"With a change of equipment, we are essentially starting from scratch," said Spc. Nathan Marshall, a signal Soldier with the 101st.

"We have to learn how to set up the equipment, process the information, and fix any problems we encounter," added Marshall.

WIN-T training at the Fort Drum MATES is comprised of two parts, one-third classroom and more importantly, two-thirds hands-on instruction.



Soldiers from the 101st train to use state of the art Satellite Transportable Terminals at Fort Drum, NY, March 16, 2011. The 101st is participating in the Warfighter Information Network- Tactical (WIN-T) program, which will prepare them to set up, operate and maintain the new communications equipment in a deployed environment. (Photo by Spc Mary Hogle)

"The hands-on training is what we get excited about," Marshall said. "It's very encouraging being motivated to practice what we will do overseas," he added.

When the 101st deploys next year, they will most likely find themselves separated into individual communication centers throughout their assigned battlespace. It is this possibility that makes the reality-based, hands on training they are receiving here at MATES all the more important.

"The Soldiers train on all of the equipment using live satellite access," said Capt. Justin Staubach, a systems engineer assigned to the 101st Signal Battalion.

"Using the equipment as we will in the field is essential to preparing for the deployment. Once they are in the field, they might not have someone there to help

them out," he added.

The realistic training concept at the Fort Drum MATES facility allows the Soldiers to also train and communicate with all the components of WIN-T.

"Seeing the systems work together gives them the actual experience of what they will do in the field," said Staff Sgt. Tyrene Lesane, the Readiness Non-Commissioned Officer for the 101st Signal Battalion.

"We see the big picture of what we are really doing out there; our communications is what will help keep Soldiers on the ground safe," added Lesane.

53RD ON THE EDGE!



TOP LEFT- Soldiers from the 1427th Transportation Detachment, Fort Drum, NY, train on the HMMWV Egress Assistance Trainer or HEAT for short, during a recent Drill at Fort Drum, NY. (Photo by Spc. Mary Hogle, 138th PAD)

TOP RIGHT- 53rd Troop Command Soldiers conduct a mock spill drill during a recent Unit Environmental Conservation Officer Training Course held at the Division of Military and Naval Affairs Complex, Latham, NY. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Dennis Gravelle, 369th Sus. Bde.)

BOTTOM CENTER Soldiers of the NYARNGs 101st Signal Battalion based in Yonkers, NY, train up on the Warfighter Information Network- Tactical (WIN-T) at the Fort Drum Maneuver Area Training Equipment Site prior to being issued the satellite based communication systems. (Photo by Spc. Mary Hogle, 138th PAD)

