

CALIFORNIA

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The California Army National Guard is the Nation's largest and most frequently deployed Guard force, with nearly 17,000 Soldiers and more than 100 armories. Whether fighting wildfires at home or fighting enemies abroad, the Soldiers of CalGuard are always ready, always there when needed by their community, State or Nation.



California Army National Guard Soldier 'Queen of Battle' Paves the Way

BY SGT Brianne Roudebush, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD

Women have a long history of serving on the battlefield. They followed their husbands during the Revolutionary War as nurses, cooks and seamstresses. They were officially allowed to enlist during World War I and, in 2016, the Pentagon lifted restrictions on women serving in combat roles. Throughout the years, notable women continued to break down barriers and make history: Loretta Walsh was the first female to enlist in the military, SGT Leigh Ann Hester was the first female awarded the Silver Star for combat action in 2005, and CPT Kristen Griest and 1LT Shaye Haver were the first females to graduate from Ranger School.

On April 14, 2017, SSG Cyndi Pearl Baltezare also made history by becoming the first female in the California Army National Guard (CAARNG) to join the ranks of the infantry.

SSG Baltezare said she hopes her accomplishments honor the women who came before her and help pave the way for future females in the military.

She decided to become an infantryman after attending the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States conference last year. The conference was held not long after the announcement was made that all combat arms positions would be open to females. SSG Baltezare, who had been with the military police her entire career, said she was excited to see that kind of progress and hailed the integration of women into combat. During the conference, she asked a panel of senior enlisted NCOs how they felt about the integration, and one sergeant major's opinion was that women do not belong in the infantry whatsoever.

"It just clicked for me," SSG Baltezare said. "Why not join the



SSG Baltezare executes a platoon raid during the final FTX of the Infantry Transition Course.

infantry? And not just to prove that sergeant major wrong, but to also show other women that it's not impossible. If you have the right mindset and the right attitude and that intestinal fortitude to do it, then why not?"

It wasn't until she started talking to LTC Forest Horan, the operations officer at the 1-185th Infantry Battalion at the time, that she realized she was actually going to be the first female infantryman in California.

"At first, I was just like, 'I want to join the infantry, that sounds like a good fit for me,'" SSG Baltezare explained. "When I found out that I was going to be the first, it really hit me: holy crap, this is a big responsibility."

She knows all eyes are on her: leadership monitoring how the integration unfolds, skeptics waiting to see if she succeeds or fails and other female Guard Soldiers wanting to follow her lead.

"I'm just at the right place at the right time," she said. "I didn't have to be the first, but I'm going to be and I'm really humbled that I have this opportunity – to be the first one to climb the ladder and open that flood gate so that all these other females who have been wanting to join the infantry finally can."

SSG Baltezare joined the New Mexico National Guard in 2003. Two years later, she transferred to California and became a familiar

face around the state. She deployed twice – first to Afghanistan in 2009 and then to Iraq in 2010. She then went on to work with the Homeland Response Force and the Counterdrug Task Force.

"She has done everything and has succeeded because she has this driving force to learn and to get better to become a better Soldier," 1SG Ian Bones said. 1SG Bones has known SSG Baltezare for three years; he was the first sergeant of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 49th Military Police Brigade when she was in the unit and now works with her at the Counterdrug Task Force. "I know she will be successful in anything she wants to do because that's the way she is. She's the type of person that, if you tell her she can't do something, she's going to tighten up her bootstraps and prove you wrong."

She transferred to Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1-185th Infantry Battalion (Stryker Brigade Combat Team) in January and attended the Infantry Transition Course at the Umatilla Army Depot in Oregon, April 1-14.

The infantry, often referred to as the 'Queen of Battle' and known for having a 'boys-club' culture, hasn't necessarily welcomed female integration with open arms. However, SSG Baltezare said she has not experienced any negativity, adversity or antagonism from the men in her unit or from any of the male students at infantry school.

"I felt like everyone treated me as a Soldier and expected me to lead as a staff sergeant," she said. "The leadership is really supportive of me and I'm a hard charger – if something needs to get done, I get it done. As long as you're pulling your weight, I don't think there should be a problem."

Two other females, SSG Melanie Galletti with the Idaho National Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team, and SGT Dakota Demers with the Colorado National Guard's 1-157th Infantry Regiment, A Company, also completed the Infantry Transition Course alongside SSG Baltezare. They, too, are the first infantry females in their states.

"They were amazing; I love those girls," SSG Baltezare said. "We motivated each other. If one of us was struggling on something, we really pushed the other. We knew we were going to get through it together and we were going to graduate together."

She said the course – which included a 12-mile, 70-pound ruck march, a 35-meter grenade toss and a physically demanding obstacle course – was challenging for everyone, males and females alike.

"We all experienced the same suck and we all went through it just the same. No standards were lowered," she said. "And I know my male classmates loved having us there – we brought a different perspective and we didn't pose any of the challenges they kind of assumed would happen. If nothing else, there was a lot of underestimation; they didn't think we were going to make it, but we did. We did exactly what they did."

SSG Baltezare said she is extremely honored to be part of the infantry.

"It's one of the most humbling feelings of my career, and I've been through a lot of different things," she said. "I almost feel like my own hero. It's hard to believe that I doubted myself on a couple of those days because it was mentally tough and physically draining, but I just pushed on. And if you keep pushing, you're going to make it."

Her goal is to encourage more California National Guard females to join the infantry.

THE “LEADERS FIRST” STRATEGY

The National Guard Bureau has developed a “Leaders First” policy on integrating women into combat units; before junior enlisted Soldiers can be recruited into combat arms positions, the unit must have at least two female leaders – either officers or NCOs – of the same field in place first.

SSG Baltezare said that after going through the course with two other females, she understands the importance of having female leadership in place first.

“I kind of forgot what it feels like to be that minority because there are so many women in the MPs,” she said. “But now I realize that it’s better to have that leadership to help guide you through whatever difficulty you might face as a woman in a male-dominated world.”

For the past several months, SSG Baltezare has been reaching out to the MP units and other colleagues, encouraging female leaders to join her.

In an email she sent out in May, she wrote, “I know of several junior enlisted Soldiers that want to be in the infantry, but cannot because of this policy. We are looking for strong, tenacious leaders that can pave the way.”

She went on to acknowledge the hard road ahead and the naysayers who will try to deter them, but said, “The reward of making a difference, fostering positive change and finally being formally recognized as combat fighters, is worth all the trouble.”

SGT Susana Bran has answered her call. SGT Bran had always been interested in the infantry, but when she enlisted in 2011, it was not yet open to females.

She transferred to the 1-184th Infantry Regiment, C Company, in April and is awaiting a school date.

Although she is nervous to make such a significant career change, she said SSG Baltezare has inspired her.

“She was just super motivating in the way she talks about it,” SGT Bran said. “So I’m going to do this, and I’m going to put my heart and mind into it.”

LTC Horan, the former operations officer of the 1-185th Infantry Battalion who is now the Recruiting and Retention Battalion commander, said the policy makes female integration a slow process. Despite the fact that SGT Bran will be the second female leader within the CAARNG infantry, she and SSG Baltezare are in different units, so both will need at least one more leader in their units before lower enlisted females can be recruited.

“The Recruiting and Retention Battalion is committed to bringing female Soldiers into the infantry,” LTC Horan said. “Since we have the Leaders First policy, we need all female leaders in the California Army National Guard, who have an interest in joining the infantry, to step forward so lower enlisted female Soldiers can join after them. We have applications from hundreds of [lower enlisted] females that I believe would want to join the infantry, but currently cannot.”

He said the first step for female leaders interested in joining is to take the Occupational Physical Assessment Test, a gender-neutral assessment of a Soldier’s fitness level. The Readiness Review Board can administer this test at its eight sites around the state.

FEMALES IN OTHER COMBAT ARMS FIELDS

The infantry is not the only, or even the first, combat arms field in the California National Guard to begin integrating women. SSG Alexandra Trivison was the first female to join combat arms in the CAARNG when she graduated from Fire Control Specialist school, a branch of field artillery, in February 2017.

After serving as a personnel specialist since she enlisted in 2004, SSG Trivison transferred to Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 1-143rd Field Artillery Regiment in March 2016. She held a full-time position in the logistics section until she was able to get a school date. Now that she is a fully qualified field artillery Soldier, she is a fire direction control chief and the unit’s training NCO.

“I’ve always been a strong advocate of trying something new and doing things that might be out of my comfort zone,” SSG Trivison said. “Field artillery was always off-limits to females before, so it was kind of interesting to me. And shooting the big guns is pretty cool.”

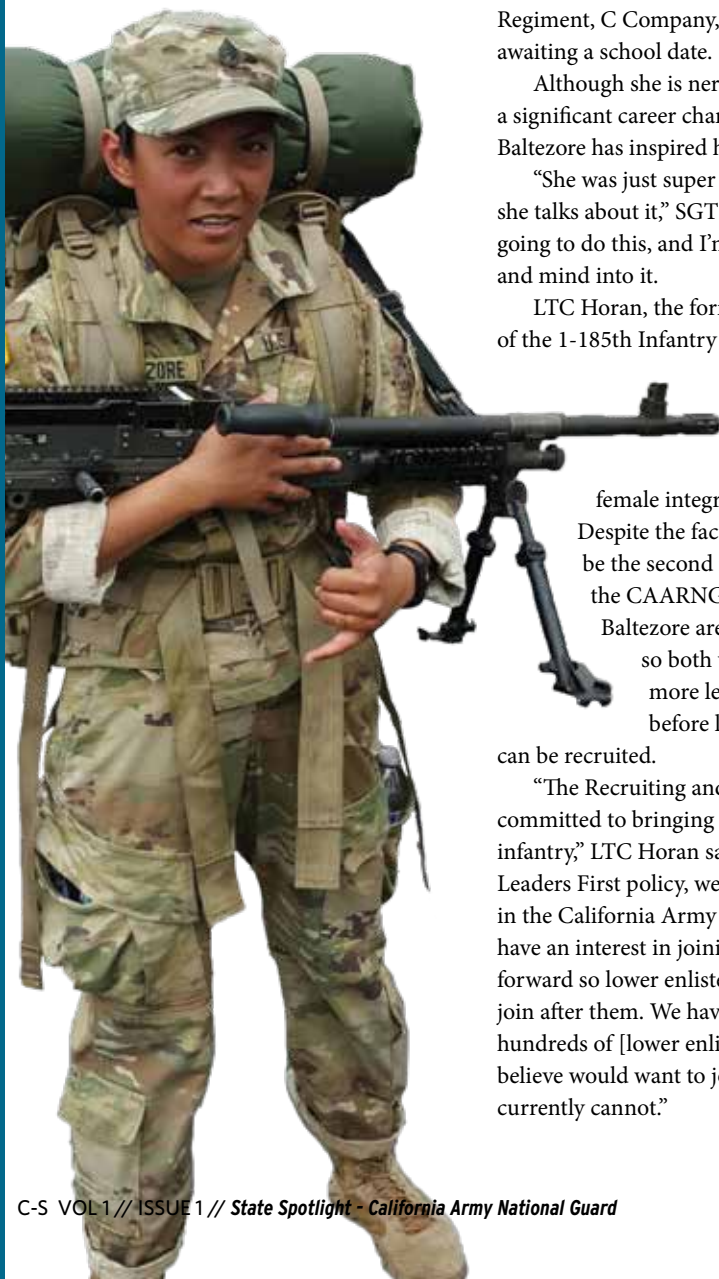
SSG Trivison believes combat arms units only stand to benefit from female integration. She said women can bring a different outlook, a different thought process and new ideas.

Her supervisor, SFC Michael Moverley, an assistant operations NCO with 1-143rd Field Artillery Regiment, said he has always believed that women should be integrated into combat roles.

“I don’t think gender should have any effect on somebody’s ability to go into combat,” he said. “I believe that as long as you have the intelligence to accomplish whatever your job is, then it shouldn’t matter.”

SSG Trivison said she joined field artillery with the mindset that she was going to learn, grow and lead to the best of her ability regardless of what anyone else might think about women in combat.

“Inherently, you go into it with preconceived notions on how you might be treated based on your gender,” SSG Trivison





SSG Baltezare graduates from the Infantry Transition Course at the Umatilla Army Depot, Oregon, making her the first female infantry Soldier in the California Guard.



SSG Galletti, of the Idaho Guard, and SSG Baltezare at traffic control checkpoint training at the 11B Infantry Transition Course.

said. "But from my experience, the Soldiers that I've had the opportunity to work with have all been extremely professional and very receptive to having a female in their unit. I think that speaks a lot about the California National Guard and the type of leaders we have in place in those combat arms units. It makes me proud to be part of the organization."

SFC Moverley said he has encouraged SSG Travison to embrace her role as the first female in combat arms in the CAARNG.

"I believe that her place in history is set, and she can actually make some large changes in the California National Guard,"

he said. "That's one of the reasons I told her not to shy away from the fact that she is the first. She didn't like the spotlight, but I told her that there are probably a lot of females out there that want to do combat arms and that she has proven it's doable and that she is accepted."

SFC Moverley said that he hopes Travison's seamless transition into the unit sets the example for other commands to integrate

females as well.

For her part, SSG Travison sees nothing but opportunity for the future of women in combat arms.

"It's a challenging road, obviously," she said. "Certain jobs are more physically demanding and others are more mentally challenging, but I believe if a Soldier is physically able and mentally capable of fulfilling the duties and responsibilities required of that position and the needs of the unit and the California Army National Guard, then man, have at it! Go for it! Don't let anything hold you back." ●



SSG Galletti of the Idaho Guard's Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 116th Cavalry Brigade Combat Team; SSG Baltezare of the California Army National Guard's HHC, 1-185th Infantry Battalion (Stryker Brigade Combat Team); and SGT Demers of the Colorado National Guard's 1-157th Infantry Regiment, A Company, graduate from the Infantry Transition Course.



CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD EDUCATION ASSISTANCE AWARD PROGRAM

The **California National Guard Education Assistance Award Program** (CNG EAAP) issues financial awards to qualifying members of the California Army or Air National Guard and State Military Reserve. The grant can pay up to 100 percent of fees at the University of California, California State University, California Community Colleges and eligible California non-public institutions.

Eligibility:

- Must be an active member of, and have served two years in, the California National Guard (CNG) or the State Military Reserve (SMR)
- Must agree to remain an active member in the CNG or the SMR throughout the participation period in the CNG EAAP
- Must agree to use the award to obtain a certificate, degree or diploma that is not currently held
- Must be accepted by, registered at or enrolled in a qualifying institution
- Must maintain enrollment in at least three (3) academic units per term
- Must maintain at least a 2.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) annually
- Must be a resident of California as determined by the institution (based on resident and non-resident tuition)
- Must not be receiving a CAL Grant award check for the same academic year

Applications are now being accepted for the 2017-2018 academic year. The 2017-2018 academic year ends June 30, 2018.

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A California Guard Soldier chops a log during CAL FIRE hand crew training at Camp Roberts.

California Guard Troops Train Up and Head Out to Fight Raging Wildfires

BY CPT Jason Sweeney, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD

As a dozen large wildfires raged across California, the California Office of Emergency Services reached out for support from the California National Guard.

The call went out two days before the start of the Labor Day weekend. That Friday, about 350 California Guard Soldiers reported to their armories to join the fight against the fires.

Called Task Force 144th Field Artillery, their mission was to work as hand crews

alongside firefighters from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE).

On Sept. 7, after a week of training at Camp Roberts, the task force headed out to the Salmon-August Complex Fire that was threatening the town of Etna, Calif., and to the Mission Fire near Oakhurst, Calif. The troops are expected to remain activated through the month of September and will be sent wherever needed.

Most of the troops in the task force are

from 1st Battalion, 144th Field Artillery Regiment, but also from the 250th Military Intelligence Battalion, the 315th Engineer Vertical Construction Company and the 216th Mobility Augmentation Company (MAC), as well as augmentees from other California Guard units.

While at Camp Roberts, the troops received classroom instruction on several subjects, including the organization of their teams and basic safety skills. On Sept. 6, they marched up the camp's baking hot hills in



California National Guard Soldiers are trained to use fire shelters during hand crew training at Camp Roberts.



California Guard Soldiers cut a fire line during CAL FIRE hand crew training at Camp Roberts.



full firefighting gear, including thick boots, flame-retardant suits, helmets and gloves.

The Soldiers were divided into 12 hand crews led by about 50 experienced CAL FIRE firefighters who ran them through six training stations where they practiced everything from using fire shelters to digging trenches, chopping logs and cutting fire lines – using tools such as the Pulaski axe, McLeod rake and specialized shovels.

CAL FIRE firefighter Wade Vierra was one of the instructors working with the troops.

“It’s fun teaching them, getting them going, and bonding with them,” he said. “It’s a good thing.”

“They’re doing good,” added 1LT Carlos Martinez, a 216th MAC platoon leader who ran through the stations with the troops. “They’re Soldiers so they’re used to working in tough conditions. They’re excited to get out there.”

PFC Christian Noriega, from the 1-144th Field Artillery, said he was learning how to cut fire lines and use the various tools, and was

ready to head out and fight the fires.

“We bring a little bit of discipline to the fight, maybe more than your average citizen volunteer,” he said.

“I’m 50 percent excited, 50 percent cautious,” he said about heading out to the fires, adding that a month was a long time to be away from home but his girlfriend is proud that he’s doing something for the community. ●



CW3 Brandon Lynch, California National Guard pilot.

California Guard Black Hawk Diverts from Flood Surveillance to Save A Life

SUBMITTED BY Joint Force Headquarters, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD

“Always Ready – Always There” is more than just the National Guard slogan to 81-year-old Rodger McMurtry. The Taylorsville, Calif., resident’s life was endangered as he was swept from his car into the rushing water at the intersection of Highway 9 and Arlington Road in Plumas County, Calif.

California Guard’s Company C/2-135 MEDEVAC was assisting the Plumas County Sheriff’s Department with an aerial reconnaissance due to flooding in Greenville, Calif., when they were diverted to assist McMurtry.

CW3 Brandon Lynch, the pilot in command of the HH-60L Black Hawk, said, “It was vital the Plumas OES [Office of Emergency Services] Director and Sheriff’s Search and Rescue Coordinator were on board to relay the 9-1-1 dispatch call and assist our crew in direct navigation to the victim.” This timeliness ensured the quick recovery of McMurtry via hoist when he was caught in over 6 feet of turbulent water.

“I applaud the crew’s quick and decisive actions, which resulted in the saving of a life,” said MG David Baldwin, the adjutant general for the California Guard. “Our partnership with city and county agencies will always ensure our communities are safe.” ●



California National Guard

This is Why We Serve

CALIFORNIA



Camren Roebuck, a 9-year-old Angels Camp resident, holds a poster thanking California Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to the Butte Fire in Calaveras County, Calif.

PHOTO BY SSG Edward Siguenza



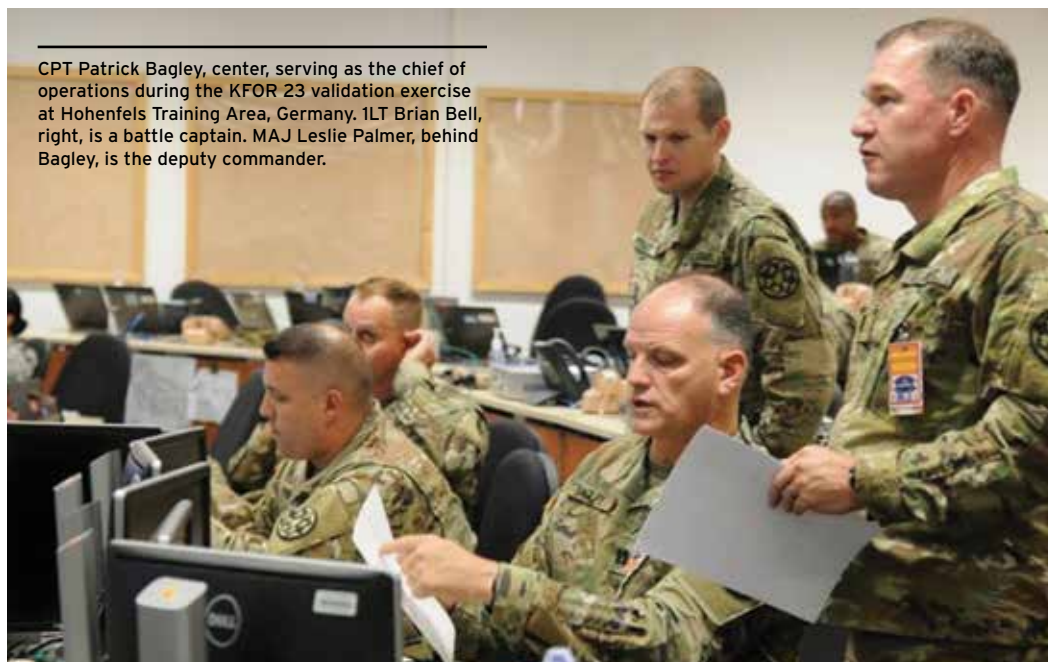
Paratroopers jump and wave their shields to extinguish fire on their equipment during Fire Phobia training for a Kosovo Force mission rehearsal exercise at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany.

California National Guard Soldiers Help Prepare Colleagues for Duty in Kosovo

BY CPT Jason Sweeney, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD

Kosovo Force, or KFOR, has been conducting a peace and security mission in Kosovo since 1999. The California National Guard has been part of the peacekeeping effort in Kosovo for over a decade now.

For three weeks in June and July, 34 Soldiers from the California Army National Guard's 115th Regional Support Group (RSG) were at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center at Hohenfels Training Area, Germany, to help train the Arkansas Army National Guard's 39th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT), which is conducting a validation exercise before deploying to Kosovo for a 9-month KFOR 23 rotation. The 115th is assuming the role of KFOR higher command (HICON) during the exercise.



CPT Patrick Bagley, center, serving as the chief of operations during the KFOR 23 validation exercise at Hohenfels Training Area, Germany. 1LT Brian Bell, right, is a battle captain. MAJ Leslie Palmer, behind Bagley, is the deputy commander.

For the exercise, COL Bruce Balzano, commander of the 115th RSG, is in the role of KFOR HICON commander. "The 115th's battle staff is comprised of veterans from Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation New Dawn and rotations in the Balkans," COL Balzano said. "We provide an experienced and capable mission command platform to ensure realistic command and control during the 39th IBCT's final validation exercise."

CSM Scott Witt said his Soldiers at the 115th bring a wealth of experience to the training. "For the short train-up time, they hit the ground running," CSM Witt said. "We've got everything from logisticians, operations, human resources and combat arms experience,

as well as Soldiers with a wealth of deployment experience. Their adaptability helped show their true professional abilities."

Kosovo, which has an Albanian majority, was a province of Serbia when ethnic tensions between the Albanian majority and Serbian minority escalated to violence in 1999. KFOR, a multinational NATO peacekeeping force, was formed to bring safety and stability to the province, which declared independence from Serbia in 2008. The peacekeeping mission has been successful, and the KFOR mission continues indefinitely to ensure the peace continues.

The Army National Guard has been a major contributor of troops to the ongoing KFOR mission. The California

Army National Guard's presence in the Balkans dates back to the Bosnian War in the early 1990s and through the present KFOR mission.

In preparation for its deployment, the 39th IBCT has been conducting realistic training simulating crowd and riot control, situational awareness patrol training, liaison monitoring team training, active shooter incidents, press conferences and other scenarios the troops may encounter in Kosovo. Once the training in Germany is complete, the 39th will deploy to Kosovo and assume control of KFOR's Multinational Battle Group-East (MNGB-E).

"The MNGB-E is conducting training that focuses staff and Soldiers on cultural awareness, as well as a strong understanding of the political and economic considerations we should be aware of in NATO," 39th IBCT Commander COL Michael Spraggins said. "We are conducting training with our NATO allies to increase interoperability while conducting peacekeeping operations. Overall, we have enjoyed tremendous success preparing ourselves for the mission in KFOR."

SPC Sarah Bates is a human resource specialist at the 115th. The exercise at Hohenfels is her first experience overseas. During the exercise, SPC Bates and her fellow Soldiers at the 115th got a chance to see some of the country on cultural days.

"Germany is beautiful," SPC Bates said. "I feel like I'm getting good training here and experiencing a new culture." ●



CPT John Heringer, 115th S2, briefs the 39th IBCT on the latest intel from Kosovo.

LEFT: SGT Willie Holmes, a member of the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force ground tactical team, treats a wound during the practical exercise portion of the Combat Lifesaver course in Sacramento.

22 Counterdrug Task Force Members Complete Combat Lifesaver Course

BY SGT Brianne Roudebush, CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD

Twenty-two members of the California National Guard Counterdrug Task Force (CDTF) completed a two-day Combat Lifesaver (CLS) course held Jan. 24-25 in Sacramento.

The course, which was taught by Army Medic and CLS Instructor SSG Devin Long, consisted of classroom instruction on controlling hemorrhages, opening and maintaining an airway, treating wounds and respiratory distress and recognizing symptoms of shock.

The training culminated in a hands-on practical exercise using mannequins and moulage kits that simulated situations the task force members could encounter in the field.

"The mannequins actually made it more realistic," SGT Kathy Tanson, a member of the ground tactical team, said. "It's good training. I feel confident that I would be able to stabilize people if they got injured."

SSG Long said CLS training is important because Soldiers and Airmen who go on mission "put their life in potential danger" so they need to have the skills to treat life threatening injuries.

"We do operate in some pretty robust terrain and some pretty dangerous areas," SSG Long said. "So we need to have people who are trained in trauma and combat first aid."

The ground tactical team conducts the majority of its missions in remote, mountainous and densely wooded areas.

"It could be several minutes to an hour or two before we can get personnel to a civilian hospital, so it's good to have that medical intervention in the interim," SSgt Cari Snyder, an Air Force medic and CDTF case support analyst, said.

Given that most of the Soldiers and Airmen have taken the CLS classes before, SSG Long said this was an accelerated course. He noted, "CLS is a perishable skill, so continually practicing and using it is how we get better." ●



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WFW began when, in February 2012, the adjutant general of the California National Guard MG David S. Baldwin, worked with his staff and the speaker of the Assembly, John A. Perez, to tackle the California National Guard unemployment rate. To date, WFW has helped place over 5,000 service members, veterans and spouses into gainful employment. Additionally, WFW has over 350 business partners throughout the State.

Businesses that want to hire experienced service members can contact a WFW resource manager, who serves as the single point of contact for their employment needs.

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3. WFW will critique and develop candidates' resumes.
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The California National Guard Military Family Relief Fund was established to provide short-term financial assistance in the form of grants to eligible members of the California National Guard who are California residents and who have been called to active duty.

Members of the California National Guard may be eligible for financial aid based on the following criteria:

- Current member in good standing of the California National Guard
- Current California resident
- Deployment to active duty for at least 60 consecutive days

For more information or to apply for assistance visit www.CalGuard.ca.gov.