



Family Deployment Supplement to the Connecticut Guardian

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Connecticut's Guardian Angels: Always there for the family and the servicemember

SPEC. CLAUDE HIBBERT
65TH PCH

In December alone, the Connecticut National Guard Family Program received more than 2300 phone calls from military families requesting information and emergency aid.

Many dependent family members were dealing with deployment for the first time. The difference between a soldier's civilian and military pay is often substantial. Families need counseling, benefit information and critical financial assistance. In response, the Program answered questions, made referrals and provided relief.

Family Program Specialists collected and distributed thousands of dollars worth of donations such as food, phone cards, gift cards and toys to families across the state.

Twelve hundred members of the Connecticut Air and Army National Guard are deployed around the globe. Some are as close as the Bradley Air Guard Base and other units patrol war-torn regions of Afghanistan. These deployments have strained the emotional and financial reserves of these service members and their families.

Many dependent spouses are dealing with the military for the first time and are unfamiliar with the military compensation and benefits system. It is the mission of the Connecticut National Guard Family Program is to assist those families by providing critical guidance and information.

The Army ensures military and personal preparedness through the Family and Soldier Readiness System. The program, through proactive education and support, promotes self-reliance and enhances family well-being. When a military family member or care provider has a question, they should

call their nearest Family Assistance Center first. These centers are located at National Guard Armories and other locations throughout the State and administrated by Family Program Specialists.

The Family Program team is comprised of National Guard Service Members, civilian

“Due to a temporary increase in funding, we've been able to stand up ten satellite Support Centers to full-time status at air bases and armories across the state.” said Hoffman.

In 2003, fifteen Support Specialists were hired under to support the 5000 military

medical, financial, residential, transportation and legal issues. The checklist reminds Soldiers and Airmen to determine such issues as the disposition of immunization records for dependent children and the location of utility boxes.

While Family Program Specialists are not professional counselors, they are there to listen and provide strategies for families to deal with the challenges of deployment. If necessary, they can make a referral to a qualified counselor.

According to Mrs. Hoffman, it takes an average of four months for families to adjust to the absence of a loved one. However, it takes even longer for families to adjust to life after the member returns. Many things can change over the course of eighteen months and Family Program Specialists try to educate families as to the predictable yet avoidable pitfalls. For example, family members are advised not to make major interior design changes to the home. This is because the Soldier envisions the home exactly the way they left it and subconsciously expects it be same when they return.

Events like the Breakfast with the Easter Bunny and Operation ELF help to make childhood holiday experiences memorable. During November and December of 2003, the Family Program worked in conjunction with Lt. Governor M. Jodi Rell's office to facilitate Operation ELF.

Operation ELF solicited donations of care package items for our deployed troops and their family members. Care packages for the troops included holiday cards, local newspapers, letters recorded on audio tape, movie or television program DVDs, magazines, puzzle books, prepaid calling



Two Family Support Group volunteers lend each other a helping hand while wrapping Christmas gifts for the children of deployed Connecticut National Guardsmen. (Photo by Spec. Jesse J. Stanley, 65th PCH)

workers and volunteers. That core of knowledge includes backgrounds in nursing, social work, counseling, fundraising, teaching, database administration, advertising and marketing.

The Connecticut National Guard Family Program Coordinator, Kim Hoffman, has been affiliated with the Guard for 18 years. She has the responsibility of recruiting, training and managing the Family Program Specialists, the Family Assistance Centers and the Family Program.

families in Connecticut.

The Connecticut National Guard Family Program assists families through every stage of the mobilization process. It is important to note that Soldiers and Airmen who are not deploying can also seek assistance through the centers. Family Program Specialists provide a pre-deployment checklist to service members that cover questions like, “Will I have money immediately available to me during my sponsor's absence?” The checklist covers

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Warning Order

The 10th Annual Meeting of the
National Guard Association of
Connecticut

Saturday, March 20, 2004
Foxwoods Resort and Casino

A dinner dance will follow that
evening with live music and DJ for
continuous dancing throughout the
evening

Watch for the flyers coming soon

Handyperson Hotline for families and volunteers

Calling all soldiers and airmen, retirees or spouses. This is your opportunity to stop being a spectator and start doing something to help the Connecticut Army and Air National Guard during these unprecedented times.

Volunteer to donate some of your time and expertise to the CTNG Family Program's Handyperson Center. If you are a tradesman or an all around handyperson or a laborer, the Handyperson Center is looking for you!

E-mail your name, phone number skill, status (active, retired, spouse) and hometown to Sgt. Maj. Toby Cormier at toby.cormier@ct.ngb.army.mil or call (860) 209-0770.

The Handyperson Hotline is designed to reduce the stressors on the families of deployed soldiers and airmen by having everyday household problems diagnosed and repaired or referred to competent businesses at no cost for labor.

The program is also designed to get seasonal chores such as window air conditioners installed/removed, pools

opened/closed, leaves removed, items brought to the dump and so on.

All of this can be performed by fellow Guardsmen, retirees or spouses of Guardsmen who are willing to donate their time and expertise to this program.

Here's how the program works:

A deployed family member calls the Handyperson Hotline with a clogged drain.

The Hotline manager contacts a plumber from the Handyperson Database who will contact the family member and attempt to walk the person through correcting the problem (if possible.)

If not corrected, the Hotline will dispatch a qualified person (fellow Guardsman) to the house to correct the problem.

It is designed to give the deployed family somewhere to turn to keep the home operating smoothly without having to pay to get things done around the house that were normally done by the deployed soldier or airman.

To volunteer or for more information, call (860) 209-0770 today.

Iraq, Afghanistan rotation plan to provide right mix of forces

SGT. 1ST CLASS DOUG SAMPLE
AMERICAN FORCE PRESS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, Jan. 16, 2004 — Possibly the largest rotation of military forces in United States history is about to take place, as thousands of troops prepare to relieve units that have been in Iraq and Afghanistan for as long as a year, the director of operations for the Joint Staff said here today.

Air Force Lt. Gen. Norton Schwartz said the rotation will involve all varieties of active duty and reserve combat and support forces.

He said the goal of the rotation will be to satisfy the needs of ground commanders for the right kinds of forces — especially civil affairs, military police and intelligence units.

"Clearly, before May 1, (2003), when we were still involved in major combat operations, you had forces configured for that purpose," he said.

"As we have moved into a stability and support operations phase — that is, to provide a secure and stable environment from which the promise of the Iraqi people can actually be manifested — what we've done is sort of optimized the forces for that mission."

Schwartz said units heading for the theater will be "a little less heavy" than they were before the war, and "a little more mobile, more 'infantry-centric.'"

Meanwhile, Schwartz said, a few units will have to remain in the theater a bit longer before returning home.

He said the Defense Department recently approved the extension of selected Army units past their 12-month rotation period.

Schwartz said the extension probably will be no longer than 60 days, and that the number of troops affected would be a relatively small.

He said about 1,600 troops from 12 units would have to be extended past the one-year mark.

"That's 12 units out of 1,250," Schwartz explained. "That's a relatively small

percentage, but that's not insignificant to the individual troops that are obviously involved in this."

Schwartz said the Pentagon did everything possible to avoid having units going beyond a 12-month deployment, from shortening the training time for successor units to reducing reception staging and onward movement and integration.

"We even tried to leave equipment in theater, which would also reduce transit time for equipment on aircraft," he said.

Mission was another reason for the delay of some troops returning home. Certain missions simply could not allow for gaps.

"We came to the conclusion reluctantly, but appropriately, that we had to ask just a touch more from our people," Schwartz said, adding gratitude for the affected service members' work and for their understanding that a significant effort was made to avoid extending their deployment.

Troops about to relieve their comrades have a clear mission to "complete the deal," Schwartz said. "And so they're going with the same sense of commitment and recognition — that this is to deliver on the promise that the president has articulated," he added.

The general said young soldiers deploying for the first time understand that this is what service is: both routine and challenging.

"And clearly this is a more challenging period," he said. "And all of us get tested during periods like this; that is something to look forward to. What young soldiers should know is that they are going to serve a very important cause, they are going to be well- led, and that their work is worthy."

Schwartz said thus far the increasing number of Iraqi security forces being trained by the United States has not affected the rotation of troops to Iraq.

But he added that "over time, and not a very long time, the Iraqi forces will be assuming more and more of the obligation associated with the stability mission."



**HANDYPERSON
HOTLINE**

"CARRYING THE HOMEFRONT"

**SERGEANT MAJOR
TOBY P. CORMIER**
Ph: 860-441-2984
Cell: 860-209-0770
toby.cormier@ct.ngb.army.mil

Guardian Angels keep family, servicemembers' spirits hopeful

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cards, lip balm and disposable cameras.

For the families, new, unwrapped toys for all age groups, were donated. Also collected were grocery gift cards which were used to buy holiday dinners, and phone cards for calling their deployed loved ones. Donations of fuel oil, Christmas trees, snow removal services and financial contributions were also made.

"We're grateful for the courageous service of our Soldiers in Iraq, Afghanistan and here in the United States. One meaningful way we can say thank you is to make sure that the families that they have left behind are given any help they need," said Hoffman.

The amount of support from the private and commercial communities of Connecticut was overwhelming. Family Program Specialists collected donations of more than 3500 toys from businesses and families across the state. Thousands of toys from Dora the Explorer dolls to Talking Elmos accumulated on the Drill Shed of the Hartford armory. The task of efficiently distributing that aid would be Herculean.

"We spent weeks sorting toys by age and gender and making appropriate gift bags for the children of every family with a service member deployed," according to Spec. Jessica McKenna, a Family Program Specialist.

Then Family Program Specialists, service members and volunteers drove trucks filled with gifts across Connecticut making deliveries in time for the holidays.

On Jan. 6, families and friends gathered in the atrium of the Legislative Office Building to say farewell to a platoon of Soldiers from Charlie Company 1st BN 102D Infantry. The Soldiers were preparing for an eighteen-month long deployment, including a year within Iraq.

During his remarks, Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno implored the families to call him personally if they have a problem. He promised them that they could turn to the National Guard for support. Then he addressed the team charged with the task of fulfilling that promise. The general publicly praised the Connecticut National Guard Family Program for its dedication and commitment in support of those families.

As the photographers illuminated the crowd with flashes, Kim Hoffman stood in the wings along with members of her staff listening to the applause that followed, not wanting to be in the limelight, only wanting to do these jobs.

They are Connecticut's true Guardian Angels.



(Photo above) Connecticut's Family Program Manager, Mrs. Kim Hoffman, takes some time out to enjoy a good laugh with one of the thousands of toys donated by the people of Connecticut for the children of deployed servicemembers during the holidays. (Photo by Spec. Jesse J. Stanley, 65th PCH)

(Photo to right) Family Program volunteers turned out to help wrap thousands of holiday gifts for children of deployed servicemembers. (Photo by Spec. Jesse J. Stanley, 65th PCH)



COMMISSARY & EXCHANGE DIRECTORY

Here is a current directory of area commissaries and exchanges along with their phone numbers. Always call ahead to verify hours as they may change without notice. A valid i.d. card is necessary to use these facilities. Contact your unit administrator if you or your dependants need a card. If you have trouble, contact the State Family Program Office at 1-800-858-2677.

AIR NATIONAL GUARD

East Granby
TUESDAY – FRIDAY:
10:00 – 5:00
SATURDAY: 10:00 – 4:00
SUNDAY & MONDAY: Closed
UTAs: Open Saturday &
Sunday: 10:00 – 5:00
Phone: (860) 653-6994

COAST GUARD ACADEMY

New London
MONDAY – FRIDAY:
9:00 – 5:00
SATURDAY: 9:00 – 3:00
SUNDAY: Closed
Phone: (860) 444-8488

CAMP ROWLAND POST

EXCHANGE
MONDAY: Closed
TUESDAY – SATURDAY:
10:00 – 5:00
SUNDAY: 10:00 – 4:00
Phone: (860) 739-9672

COAST GUARD STATION

120 Woodward Avenue
New Haven, CT
MONDAY – FRIDAY:
9:00 – 4:30
SATURDAY: 9:00 – 2:00
SUNDAY: Closed
Phone: (203) 468-2712

WEST POINT, NEW YORK

Exchange Hours:
SATURDAY – WEDNESDAY:
10:00 – 6:00
THURSDAY & FRIDAY:
10:00 – 7:00
Phone: (914) 446-5406
Commissary Hours:
MONDAY: Closed
TUESDAY & WEDNESDAY:
10:00 – 6:00
THURSDAY: 10:00 – 7:00
FRIDAY: 10:00 – 6:00
SATURDAY: 9:00 – 5:00
SUNDAY: 11:00 – 5:00
Phone: (914) 446-5406

SUB BASE, NEW LONDON

Exchange Hours:
MON., TUES., WED.,
FRI.: 9:00 – 6:00
THURSDAY: 9:00 – 7:00
SATURDAY & SUNDAY:
9:00 – 5:00
HOLIDAYS: 9:00 – 4:00
Phone: (860) 694-3811
Commissary Hours:
MONDAY: Closed
TUE., WED. & FRI.: 9:00 – 6:00
THURSDAY: 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 p.m.
SATURDAY: 8:00 – 5:00
SUNDAY: 10:00 – 5:00
Phone: (860) 694-2244

WESTOVER AIR FORCE BASE

Chicopee, Mass.
MONDAY – FRIDAY: 10:00 – 5:00
SATURDAY: 10:00 – 5:00
SUNDAY: 11:00 – 5:00
Phone: (413) 593-5583

ARMY RESERVE CENTER

700 South Quaker Lane
West Hartford, CT
MONDAY – FRIDAY:
10:00 – 1:00
MONDAY – FRIDAY:
1:45 – 4:00
SATURDAY & SUNDAY: Closed
Phone: (860) 236-3393

TEMPORARILY CLOSED

Family Assistance Center locations

Family Assistance Centers are set-up in the following armories around the state:

Bristol Armory
61 Center Street, Bristol, CT 06010
(860) 582-1206 Toll Free 866-347-2283
1st Lt. Lynda Hedenberg & Mrs. Michelle McCarty

Waterbury Armory
64 Field Street, Waterbury, CT 06702
(203) 574-2406 Toll Free 866-347-2291
Sgt. Jonathon Duffy & Spec. Tamara Jex

Manchester Armory & AVCRAD
330 Main Street, Manchester, CT 06040
(860) 646-0780 Toll Free 866-347-2286 Capt. Lauri Tinelle

Windsor Locks, AASF
Bradley International ARPT-BLDG 85-152, Route 75, Windsor Locks, CT 06096
(860) 627-7942 Toll Free 866-347-2292
Sgt. Michael Bertoli

103rd FW, Bradley ANG Base
Bldg 8, East Granby, CT 06026
(860) 292-2730 Mrs. Donna Rivera

Newington SASC
555 Willard Avenue, Building 2W, Newington, CT 06111
(860) 878-6723 (860) 878-6724 Toll Free 800-858-2677
Mrs. Kim Hoffman, Spec. Jessica McKenna and Mrs. Marina Sedor

Branford Armory
87 Montowese Street, Branford, CT 06405
(203) 481-3874 Toll Free 866-347-3351 Sgt. 1st Class Cheryl Gilbert

Norwich Armory
38 Stott Avenue, Norwich, CT 06360
(860) 823-1342 Ext. 12 Toll Free 866-347-3357
Mrs. Andrea Lathrop

103rd Air Control Squadron
206 Boston Post Road, Orange, CT 06477
(203) 795-2983 Charlie and Jane Solomon

118th Medical Company
Location to be announced
Sgt. Geanabelle Burmudez (860) 883-6936
Sgt. Elizabeth Crouthamel (860) 883-6935

Volunteers are needed in each facility.
Those wishing to help out can contact Mrs. Kim Hoffman, Family Program Manager
at 1-800-858-2677.

Any family member or loved one of a deployed soldier who has questions about
benefits or deployment issues may also get answers to their question at the following
email address: kim.hoffman@ct.ngb.army.mil

We need your help!

The editor of the Guardian has run out of ideas for the Kids' Creative Corner, something she never thought she'd do.

Please send us your drawings, poems or letters. Maybe you have a creative puzzle or game you can share with others.

You don't have to be the child of a deployed Soldier or Airman. Anyone can help.

Email your creative creations to debbi.newton@ct.ngb.army.mil

or mail them to

SFC Debbi Newton, National Guard Armory, 360 Broad Street, Hartford, CT 06105-3795

Send us pictures of yourself, too, and we can put them in with your creations.

Kids' Creative Corner

A MONTHLY FEATURE
OF FUN AND
EDUCATIONAL
ACTIVITIES