

# Alabama Guardsman

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# Romanians visit state while participating in partnership program

by Spc. Brenda Thomas  
Public Affairs Office

This year marks Alabama and Romania's 19th year of partnership in the National Guard's State Partnership Program, a program that pairs developing allied armed forces with a state National Guard for mentoring and training. This federally funded program allows Alabama National Guard personnel to train with their Romanian counterparts at no cost to the state.

"The partnership between Alabama and Romania has helped Alabama National Guard Soldiers build a knowledge base at the international level," said Lt. Col. Shannon Hancock, State Partnership Program Director. "The world is so international now and we deploy to various theaters of operation and don't just stay in Alabama or the South anymore. This helps our Soldiers gain knowledge about other countries and areas, prior to deploying."

A group of Romania's Land Force visited Alabama in February as part of the program. They visited the armory



Brenda Thomas/photo

*Members of the Romanian Land Force along with Alabama National Guard Soldiers visit the Alabama Capitol building in Montgomery, Ala., February 22, 2012.*

that houses the 231st Military Police Battalion and exchanged information regarding military vehicles and small arms policies and procedures. Their visit was culturally enriched by a visit to several historical sites in Prattville and a tour of the Capitol building in Montgomery, providing a brief look into some of Alabama's state history.

"We conduct exchanges of information that help develop both our Alabama National Guard and the Romania military," said Hancock. "A long term trusting relationship like [this] cannot be

cultivated over night."

"One of the most valuable things about the Guard is our ability to establish and maintain strong partnerships," said Air Force Gen. Craig McKinley, chief of the National Guard Bureau, recently. "Partnerships are what make the National Guard what we are – whether it's our partnership with our parent services, ... our partnership with foreign nations in the State Partnership Program ... or our partnership with local authorities and civilians in communities across the country."

## Alabama Guardsman

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## On the Cover

Senior Training Officer, MAJ Anthony Cloud, 2 Battalion 200 Regiment leads officer candidates from Company B, during a seven mile foot march on Feb. 17, 2012 at Talladega Raceway. Candidates are required to complete a five, seven and ten mile foot march to graduate. The seven mile foot march ends after a lap around the racetrack. (photo by Staff Sgt. Sandra Lucas).

## Adjutant General

# The Alabama Guard is finding strength in our differences



**Maj. Gen.  
Perry Smith**

February is Black History Month, a time we take to specially recognize the contributions of African Americans to our country.

In the Alabama National Guard,

we hold a special piece of black history, the 100th Fighter Squadron – an Alabama Air National Guard active fighter squadron – which carries the honors and lin-

eage of the famed Tuskegee Airmen of World War II. We should all be proud of that heritage.

Perhaps, though, what makes me most proud is the blurring of racial lines in the Alabama Guard today. Today's Alabama National Guard is made up of Soldiers and Airmen of both genders and from various races, creeds and backgrounds. We don't see an individual as black or white, we see green and blue – a Soldier or an Airman. We recognize now that a difference in skin color or background is not a weakness, but a strength.

I hope that as the Alabama

National Guard moves forward in the days ahead to face the challenges before us that we unite on our common goal of making this nation's military the best fighting force in the world. Thank you to pioneers such as the Tuskegee Airmen who helped the military and this nation realize that a person's worth comes not from without, but within oneself. May we remember that message and take the Alabama National Guard to new heights in the coming years, heights prepared for us by leaders like the Tuskegee Airmen. Lead from the front!

## State Command Sergeant Major

# Soldiers should serve as their own best career manager



**Command Sgt.  
Maj.  
Eddie Pike**

When Soldiers are eligible for promotion to sergeant major under the EPPS promotion system, they do not appear before a battalion, brigade, or MACOM board, but rather their packets are

submitted to a state centralized promotion board at Joint Forces Headquarters. This process relies more on how Soldiers present themselves on paper as they won't get an opportunity to articulate their creden-

tials in person. It is imperative, then, that Soldiers competing for promotion pay particular attention to their records and files. All Soldiers should sit down with the unit S-1 Administrative NCO during their birth month each year and thoroughly review their records to ensure that all documents are correct and updated in iPERMS. Soldiers should add any documents that are not in their file. It is a Soldier's individual responsibility to prepare for a promotion board. If Soldiers do not take the initiative when it comes to preparing for a board and no action is taken to verify their files, then the board will consider their records "as is." Soldiers who fail to review their file are essentially telling the board that they don't care, or that they haven't exercised

due diligence in preparing their file for review, which in turn can raise questions about a soldier's promotion potential.

The first item in files that go before senior NCO promotion boards is the Soldier's official DA photograph. Soldiers are responsible for making sure their photo of record is up to date.

Army policy requires soldiers E6 and above to update their DA Photo every five years or when something changes such as new awards and/or promotion. Board members carefully screen each photo for compliance with height and weight standards, proper wear of the uniform, and military bearing. The photo is also compared to the soldier's Enlisted Records Brief to

**(Please see *Career*, page 6)**

# Snap Shots

A look at some of the recent highlights in the Alabama National Guard



David Arnold/image

*The 115th Expeditionary Signal Battalion is doing an “outstanding job on this signal mission that is on a massive scale,” said Lt. Gen. William E. Ingram Jr., Director, Army National Guard, during a visit to the unit in Afghanistan. According to Lt. Col. Todd Grigsby, Commander of the 115th ESB, this battalion maintains the largest signal presence in Southern Afghanistan.*



Contributed/photo

*Assistant Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Sheryl Gordon and State Command Sergeant Major Eddie Pike, along with members of the 200th Regiment, present Master Sgt. Billy Myers of the 200th Regiment with an Honorary SGM/E9 Certificate Feb. 24. Myers has been battling a serious illness.*



Brenda Thomas/photo

*The 781st Transportation Company held their deployment ceremony in Fort Deposit, Ala., Feb. 15, 2012. The 781st Transportation Company deployed nearly 120 Alabama National Guard Soldiers to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The 781st will provide transportation support to units throughout the area of operations.*

# Accelerated OCS is one-stop training for candidates

by Spc. Jennifer Montagna  
131st MPAD

Physical fitness, drill and ceremony, and troop leading procedures training, are just a few of the tasks future military leaders must accomplish to graduate from the Alabama Military Academy's (AMA) Officer Candidate School (OCS). The tools needed to do just that include preparation and dedication. The AMA's OCS can be done two ways. Candidates in the traditional OCS course attend for 18 months, spreading their training out over time. The accelerated OCS offered at AMA compacts the three phases of the course into a short 57 days. Candidates must accomplish three phases of training in just under two months time.

Candidates must prepare themselves before even starting the accelerated course, says Maj. Anthony Cloud, Senior Teach Assisting and Counsel (TAC) Officer.

"You have to prepare yourself for this. Do your research, know what to expect and be physically prepared. This is not the place to re-learn the basics," says Cloud. The goal of this program is to produce a Soldier who is ready to lead proficiently and with confidence, says Cloud. One of the most daunting tasks for candidates in the course is land navigation and map reading. Many do not make it past this training, but those who do are one step closer to becoming a U.S. Army officer. Class 56A, who are currently



Jennifer Montagna/photo

*Teach Assisting Counsel Officers watch the Officer Candidates as they perform push-ups in preparation for lunch. Officer Candidates perform a series of exercises before they are able to enter the Dining Facility. The exercises include the rower, push-ups, dips, and pull-ups.*

training at AMA, recently moved into phase two of the course and are motivated about their progress and the challenges ahead, officer candidate Mathew Lafleur being one of them. Lafleur chose to join the military with the sole intentions of becoming a leader.

"I chose to do the accelerated course of OCS here at AMA, because it is the fastest track to leadership," says Lafleur. Having a father who was enlisted for 26 years pushed Lafleur to become a leader. This is not only the fastest way to lead, but also the hardest, says Lafleur. Sleep deprivation and stress have been his biggest challenge so far but Lafleur says that it is all worth it to see his fellow candidates come together

and keep pushing forward. An especially rewarding moment for him was completing the land navigation and map reading portion of training. Preparation was key to class 56A's success thus far.

"I wanted to lead from the front, and knew that I needed to prepare myself for the OCS accelerated course," says officer candidate Anthony Kilpatric. With nine years of military experience with the Alabama National Guard, Kilpatric says he will be a good leader because he can relate to every Soldier. Kilpatric began his own personal training regiment months before every stepping foot on AMA. Running and extended marches helped to prepare

**(Please see OCS, page 6)**



*Officer Candidates from B Company, 2 Battalion, 200 Regiment take the hill on a seven mile foot march 17 Feb. 17, 2012. The officer candidates are marching toward the completion of phase three in their 18 month inactive duty training. Upon successful completion candidates will be commissioned officers. Not all OCS candidates become officers. In fact, only about 50% achieve this goal. The Alabama National Guard has two options for completing Officer Candidate School, the traditional course and an accelerated course. Interested individuals should visit the Alabama National Guard website [www.alguard.state.al.us](http://www.alguard.state.al.us) click on the Careers tab. (photo by Staff Sgt. Sandra Lucas).*

***(Career continued from page 3)***

ensure all awards are authorized and worn correctly. DA photos add a human aspect to the selection process, and without a DA photo, the quality of any personnel file is greatly diminished.

Once again, preparing for a promotion board is an individual Soldier responsibility. At the battalion, brigade, and MACOM level, it is the S-1's daily mission to provide personnel services to

***(OCS continued from page 5)***

Kilpatrick. He says that the only way to go into the OCS accelerated course is with 100 percent dedication; it is the only way to make it through.

With phase two of their training ahead class 56A will be training even harder. Some of the courses included in phase two include elements of military intelligence, military ethics, military history, and staff organization. These courses are designed to challenge each candidate

all supported soldiers. S-1s need to provide necessary administrative tools in updating, processing, and validating their Soldier's records for up-coming promotion boards. Also, personnel professionals must help their soldiers understand the importance of managing and preparing their records for promotion boards.

Soldiers should do everything, every day to live the Army Values

and to perform their duties to the highest Army standards. When they come to work or drill, they should understand that this is a very professional business where we're looking for the best qualified Soldiers for promotion. Soldiers should focus on the whole-Soldier concept and ensure their records are complete and updated.

mentally. With training comes testing to evaluate candidates understanding and knowledge of key leadership skills. Phase two is knowledge based but still physically demanding as well. A 7-mile foot march, 3-mile release run, and a field training exercise are also included in phase two of the accelerated OCS course.

These candidates are making a huge commitment by choosing the accelerated course, says Cloud. "You can spot an AMA graduate

anywhere, whether it's here in the Alabama National Guard, Afghanistan or Iraq, there is a well disciplined, confident leadership mentality instilled in these graduates," says Cloud. With phase three on the horizon class 56A is staying dedicated to the goals they have set out to accomplish and look forward to graduating from the accelerated course as confident leaders of the U.S. Army.