

Alabama Guardsman

Vol. IV 2011

A publication for the Citizen-Soldiers & Airmen of Alabama

**2001-2011
The Alabama
Guard: supporting a
nation at war**



2001-2011 were monumental times for Alabama Guard

**Staff
131st MPAD**

September 11, 2001 was a day that changed America and its military forever. The terrorist attacks of that day would also change the Alabama National Guard. The ten years that followed 9/11 were like no other in the Alabama Guard’s history as it became a vital contributor to the nation’s defense.

The Alabama Guard’s contribution started that tragic Tuesday morning, as Alabama Air National Guard members began flying combat air patrols over the nation’s skies, and it continues today as Alabama Guard members are currently deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq.

This ten year period has been remarkable for the Alabama Guard; it has been an age when any new enlistee could expect to deploy overseas. It has been a time when hometowns gathered to send units off with deployment ceremonies and welcomed them when they came home.

“Prior to 9/11 our Soldiers told war stories about annual training at Camp Shelby and Fort Gordon, today they tell war stories of their combat experiences in



Contributed/photo

First Lt. Michael Johnson, second from left, of the Alabama Army National Guard’s 203rd Military Police Battalion, uses a measurement wheel to determine the size of the perimeter of one of the critical polling sites in the southern Iraqi city of Basrah. The Headquarters and Headquarters Detachment of the Athens-based 203rd helped set up protection at polling sites in and around Basrah for the Iraq national elections in 2010.

Iraq and Afghanistan,” said Lt. Col. Dennis Mills, who spent much of the past ten years in the Mobilization Readiness Branch of the Alabama National Guard.

The past ten years also brought about changes in training.

“The post 9/11 operating environment has created numerous challenges for the Guard,” said Lt. Col. James Hawkins, who has worked with the state training section for the Alabama National Guard for much of the last ten years. “However, it has also generated a number of benefits, especially in training. For example, additional training funds have become available and new training strategies have been developed to prepare Soldiers and units for deployments. Training has also become more realistic and challenging than ever. Our Soldiers understand the value of this and have risen

to the challenge because they understand the reality of the threat in theater. The end result is units and Soldiers better prepared to fight and win in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

America’s war against terrorism did not end with the ten year anniversary of 9/11, and the Alabama National Guard will continue to play a vital role in defending the nation.

“What we have done over the last ten years is amazing,” said Maj. Gen. Perry Smith, the Adjutant General of Alabama. “The Alabama National Guard has answered the call time and time again. We have proven that we are just as vital to the nation’s defense as the active duty military. I have no doubt that we will continue to play an important role in our nation’s defense.”

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Adjutant General

Tragic events of 9/11 changed the role of the Alabama Guard



**Maj. Gen.
Perry Smith**

September 11, 2011 marked the tenth anniversary of the attacks that changed our nation forever and reshaped our military for the foreseeable future. The National Guard, particularly,

has been changed. We've shifted from a strategic reserve to an operational force. We are more respected by our active duty brethren than in the recent past and we are finally able to sometimes purchase new equipment instead of only getting the ac-

tive force's hand-me-downs. There is even a bill gaining support in congress to give the National Guard a substantial seat at the table with a four-star representative on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

The events of that day illuminated an enemy and began a war. The enemy today, though, is not like the enemy of times gone by. We have not declared war on a country or a regime, not on an empire, but on an ideal. We were attacked that day and continue to fight because there are some in the world who simply hate who we are and what we stand for. They hate the idea that people are free, that men and women can have meaningful conversations in an open and free environment.

With this new enemy came a new war, not a war on a nation, but a war on ter-

rorism. That war has taken us all over the globe. It has taken tanks, fighter jets, unmanned aircraft, satellites in outer space and hundreds of other pieces of sophisticated, expensive equipment. We have transformed into the most versatile, agile, rapidly deployable and sustainable strategic force in the world today.

And yet, none of that equipment can take the place of the men and women who pour their heart and souls into their jobs, put on combat boots every morning, pick up their rifle and go to work to do what we ask of them again and again. We have more than 13,000 Soldiers and Airmen in the Alabama National Guard who continue to volunteer to defend this nation, and I am extremely proud of the job you do day (Please see *anniversary*, page 7)

State Command Sergeant Major

Memory of September 11 etched in the mind of every American



**Command Sgt.
Maj.
Eddie Pike**

As we paused recently to remember a terrible day in our nation's history, 11 September 2001, we must also reflect on how it has changed our American way of life forever. Things that we

often took for granted prior to 9/11 are thought of in a different way today. We have become more cautious in our airline, bus, and train travel plans, and have been trained to observe and report

things that might look out of place.

Thanks to the brave men and women in our Armed Forces, we can still lay our heads down at night with a great sense of security and safety. The Alabama National Guard has contributed greatly to our nation's success in the war on terrorism since 9/11. We continue to deploy well trained, highly motivated and patriotic Alabama Guard members to locations around the world to defeat terrorism and preserve freedom for all Americans.

It was with disbelief and shock that people around the world saw the news footage of the events of 11 September 2001, of the planes-turned -missiles that saw the destruction of the World

Trade Center Towers and damage to the Pentagon and the many Americans that lost their lives that day.

We owe a debt of gratitude to all the brave first responders who also gave their lives that day in 2001 and to the many Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines that have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the decade following 9/11. As the war proceeds today, we all remember what we were doing that moment when the news footage broke about the terrorist attacks on our country. That one memory will forever be etched into the mind of every American.

Snap Shots

A look back at ten years of the Alabama National Guard supporting America's overseas operations



131st MPAD/photo

Members of the 187th Fighter Wing depart Dannelly Field en route to Balad Air Base in Iraq in 2009.



Contributed/photo

Sgt. 1st Class James Lee of Prattville, performs door gunner duties from the back of a CH-47 over Afghanistan during a combat resupply mission. Lee is a member of Company B, 1-169th Aviation. The unit deployed in 2009.



Contributed/photo

A surveyor from the 1305th Engineer Detachment poses for a picture with Afghan children. The 1305th is one of five Alabama units in the 877th Engineer Battalion



131st MPAD/photo

Members of 3rd Battalion, 117th Field Artillery, based out of Troy, participate in a deployment ceremony in Troy in 2004. Soldiers from the battalion were deployed on security missions in Iraq.



Contributed/photo

A soldier with the 711th Signal Battalion gives school supplies to a child in Iraq. The 711th was deployed to Iraq in 2004.



131st MPAD/photo

A soldier is welcomed home by his family, returning from a deployment in 2004.



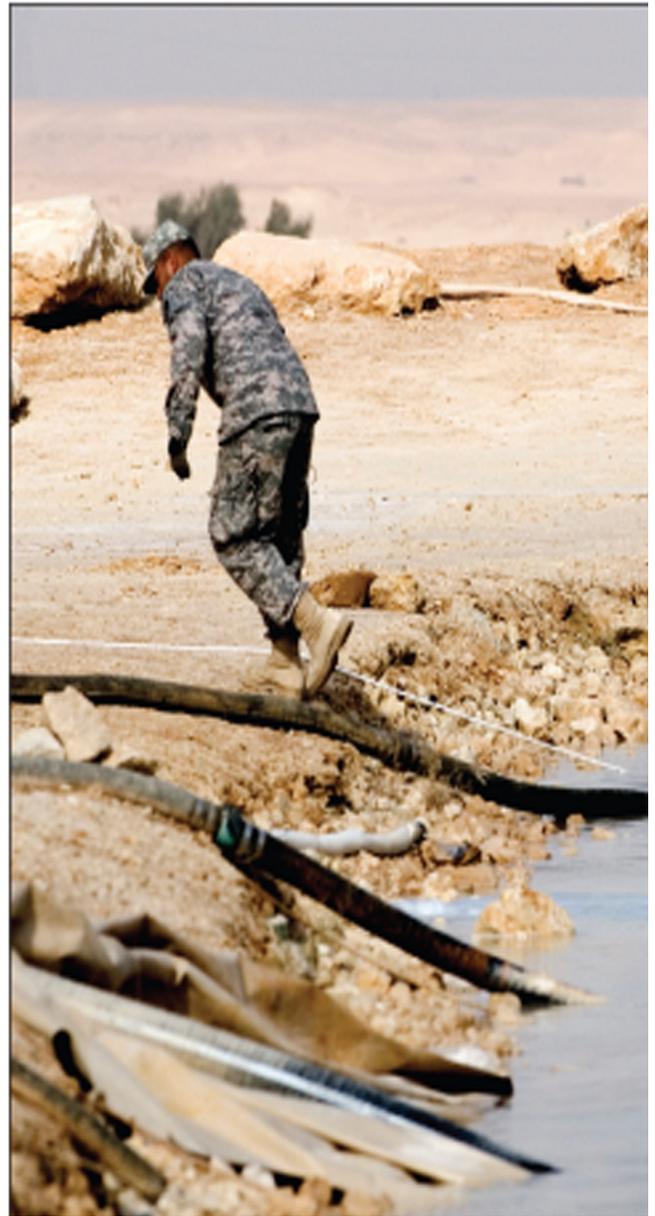
Contributed/photo

Soldiers of the 877th Engineering Combat Battalion are awarded their 168th Brigade combat patches on 10 September 2009. Soldiers may receive their combat patches from the first higher command with a general officer, after spending one day in a combat zone. The 877th Engineering Combat Battalion started sending troops to Afghanistan in March 2008, with the remainder of the battalion joining them in June 2008.



David Scott/photo

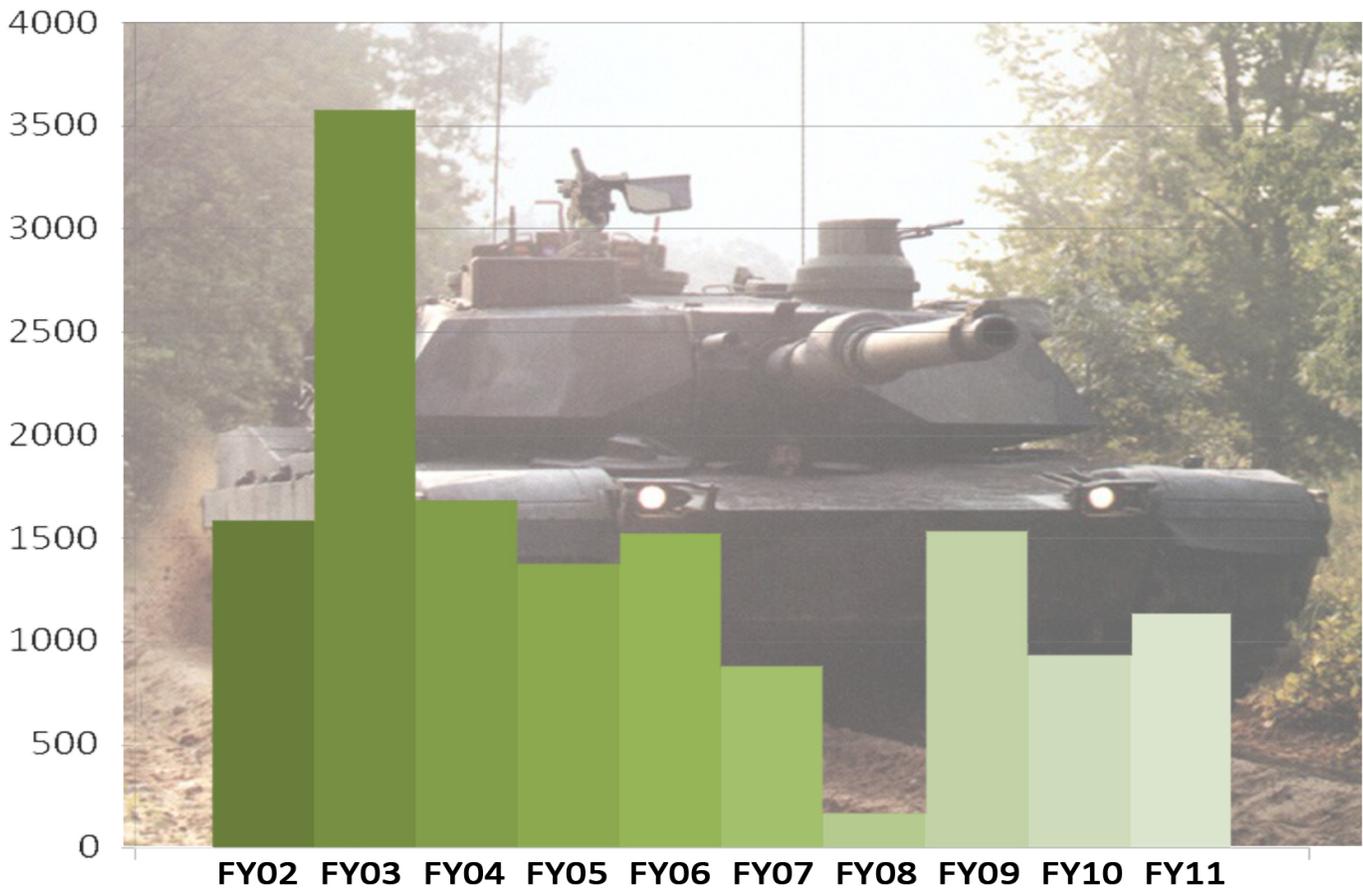
Staff Sgt. Jeremy Burkett, motor vehicle operator, 2101st Transportation Company adjusts chains used to securely fasten a load to his truck, June 17, 2010, in the motor pool on Contingency Operating Base Speicher, Iraq.



Contributed/photo

A soldier with the 961st Quartermaster Detachment fills a jar with water to test it at Freedom Lake, Al Asad Air Base, Iraq.

The Alabama National Guard: A decade of service



Alabama National Guard Mobilizations

(Anniversary continued from page 3)

in and day out, and the integrity in service you continually exhibit.

How we remember that terrible day ten years ago is a mark of our resilient American spirit. We honor and remember those lost, but we also recognize that on that day, a date that once held no special meaning to us, our country and a generation of Americans were changed in an instant. That day was punctuated by profound fear and loss, and it is now a day that is etched

in our memories. The storm that rained down terror on our shores was designed to replace freedom with fear – instead, it bolstered our resolve and became a defining moment for our nation, both individually and collectively, and our military.

Since 9/11, the Alabama National Guard has deployed more than 17,000 Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen. Also, since 9/11, the Alabama National Guard has lost eight Soldiers overseas, five of which were killed in combat ac-

tion. Eight Soldiers gave their lives. Eight families have an empty chair at the table. Let us not forget that.

So, as we remember the ten years since 9/11, I will say an extra prayer of thanks for those who have served and those who continue to serve; and I'll say an extra prayer for comfort for those who suffered the loss of a loved one on that day and those who have lost loved ones in the wars since that day. I hope you will do the same. Lead from the front!



*SPC Adrian Avila
19, Opelika, Alabama
(Kuwait) 29 October 2009*



*SGT Aubrey D. Bell
33, Tuskegee, Alabama.
(Iraq) 27 October 2003*



*SPC Paul J. Bueche
19, Daphne, Alabama.
(Iraq) 21 October 2003*



*1SG Herbert R. Claunch
58, Wetumpka, Alabama.
(Cuba) 18 April 2008*



*Cpt. Ronald G. Luce Jr.,
27, Fayetteville, North
Carolina. (Afghanistan)
2 August 2009*



*SSG John Edward McGee
36, Columbus, Georgia.
(Iraq) 5 May 2005*



*CPT Waid C. Ramsey
41, Red Bay, Alabama.
(Afghanistan) 04 August 2011*



*SPC Christopher Taylor
25, Daphne, Alabama.
(Iraq) 16 February 2004*

Honoring the Fallen