

# Alabama Guardsman

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# Distracted driving is deadly

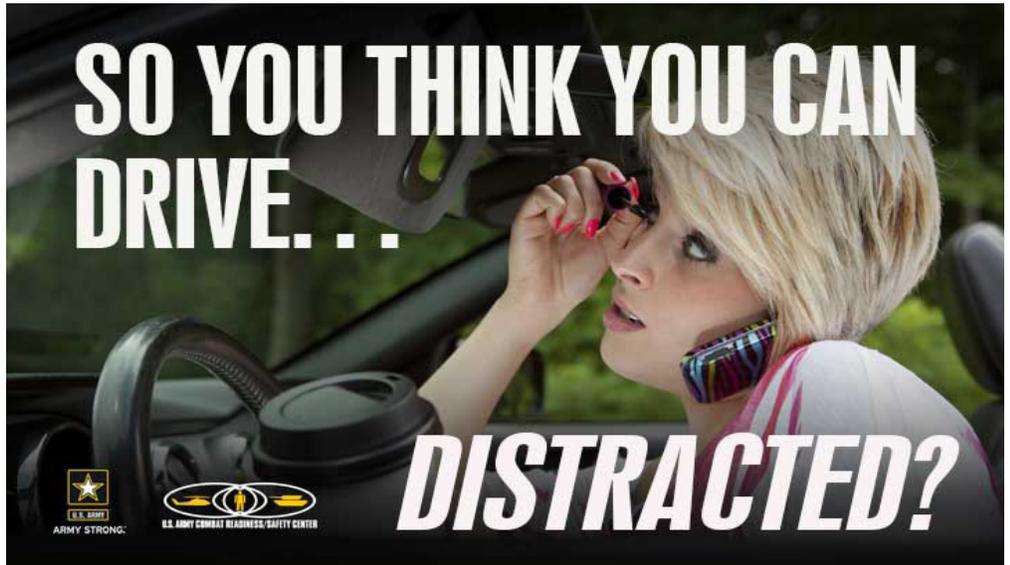
By Lori Yerdon

U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center Fort Rucker, Ala.

FORT RUCKER, Ala.- Motor vehicle accidents involving a distracted driver kill thousands of people each year on America's roadways. Anytime drivers text, use a cell phone or navigation system, change a radio station, eat or drink, or do anything that diverts their attention from the road, the opportunity for an accident to happen increases exponentially.

For some accident victims, they were merely in the wrong place at the wrong time and a distracted driver slammed into their vehicle. No matter the circumstances, organizations across the nation agree that distracted driving has become an epidemic on U.S. highways.

Joining the nationwide effort to raise awareness of the risks associated with this unsafe practice, the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center hosted its first-ever distracted driving event, "So you think you can drive... distracted?" here June 4. "We are all guilty of driving distracted and putting ourselves and others at risk when



U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center /image

*Distracted driving has become an epidemic on U.S. highways. Joining the nationwide effort to raise awareness of the risks associated with this unsafe practice, the U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center hosted its first-ever distracted driving event, "So you think you can drive... distracted?" at Fort Rucker, Ala. June 4.*

we're on the road," said Brig. Gen. Timothy J. Edens, director of Army Safety and commanding general, U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center. "We hope today's activities will demonstrate just how dangerous distracted driving really is."

Thirty-three Soldiers and Department of the Army Civilians, between the ages of 21 and 45, negotiated a one-mile driving course that simulated urban driving while observer/controllers attempted to "distract" them as they drove.

Throughout the course, drivers encountered hazards designed to replicate distractions that drivers face daily. They dealt with

objects suddenly jutting across the road, "passengers" attempting to get their attention, blaring music, continually ringing cell phones and a barrage of text messages.

"The training was very realistic and helped point out your weaknesses and strengths," said Spc. Hilary Phillips, U.S. Army Aeromedical Research Laboratory. "I think it (the training) will definitely teach people to be safer drivers."

Once the drivers completed the course, the OCs critiqued their performance. Then the drivers listened to a testimonial from a Crestview, Fla., man familiar with the (Please see **DRIVING**, page 7)

## Alabama Guardsman

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Adjutant General.....Maj. Gen. Perry Smith  
Public Affairs Officer.....Col. Dennis Butters  
131st MPAD Commander....Capt. Andrew J. Richardson  
Senior Editor.....Sgt. 1st Class. Jamie Brown  
Staff Writer.....Sgt. Bethany McMeans  
Staff Writer.....Sgt. Eric Roberts  
Staff Writer.....Spc. Jonathan Wood  
Staff Writer.....Sgt. Brenda Thomas

## On the Cover

*CAMP BLANDING, Fla. - Spc. Glyn Holmes of C Battery pulls the lanyard as C Battery, 1-117th Field Artillery Battalion conducts direct fire operations May 10 during the unit's annual training. During their Annual Training, members of the 1-117th performed missions such as direct fire operations, calling/observing fire and unit movement. Please see more coverage of the 1-117th Field Artillery Battalion in the Snap Shots section, pages 4-5 (photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Brown).*

## Adjutant General

**Safety in the Guard is a life or death issue**

**Maj. Gen.  
Perry Smith**

June is National Safety Month. Yet already this month I have gotten the call that two Alabama National Guard military vehicles have been in accidents and one Soldier lost her life in a pri-

vately owned vehicle accident. This is unacceptable. As leaders, we must do a better job of emphasizing safety in all missions, and training Soldiers and Airmen how to better integrate safety into every action.

Mission specific safety briefings, composite risk management utilization and appropriate inspections are non-negotiable requirements. Safety considerations are not check marks on a list – they are ways we can help protect warriors and save lives. When leaders look at a Soldier or an Airman, they should see not a uniform, but an individual who is valuable not only to the National Guard, but to a mother, father, spouse, child, friend, community. When we look at Guardsman in this light, we will take the extra time and go the extra mile to ensure our troops are safe.

We have long said that the National Guard is a family. We need to make sure that we are acting in ways that prove this. Commanders and senior

noncommissioned officers must step up and take ownership of their safety program. Each Soldier and Airman needs to take it on himself or herself to practice safety and influence fellow troops to do the same.

Please remember that safety is not an inspection issue, or a checklist issue – it is a life or death issue. No one wants to explain to a grieving family member that their loved one died because someone cut corners.

If you need safety tips, visit the Army (<https://safety.army.mil>) or Air Force (<http://www.afsec.af.mil>) Safety Center web sites. Remember that every Soldier and Airman is a safety officer. Lead from the front!

## State Command Sergeant Major

**The United States Army: 238 years and counting**

**Command Sgt.  
Maj.  
Eddie Pike**

During the first year of the American Revolution, on June 14, 1775, the Second Continental Congress established “the American Continental Army.” The United States Army is the

senior service of the Armed Forces. As one of the oldest American institutions, it predates the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. For almost two and a half centuries, Army forces have protected our Nation. Our Army

flag is adorned with over 180 campaign and battle streamers, each one signifying great sacrifices Soldiers made on behalf of their Nation. Because of the Army, the United States is independent and one undivided nation. The Army explored the Louisiana Purchase, ended slavery on the battlefields of the Civil War, helped build the Panama Canal, played a major part in winning two world wars, stood watch throughout the Cold War, disposed of Saddam Hussein, took the fight to Al Qaeda, and disposed of Osama Bin Laden in the War on Terror.

What does the uniform of the Army, the National Guard, and the Reserves represent? For Soldiers it means that they have become part of something far bigger than themselves, a chance

to serve their country, and to change the world. It also means danger, long separations, grinding fatigue, and stress. Soldiers embrace the Soldier’s Creed and the Warrior Ethos. For our Army families, the uniform is a source of both pride and anxiety, knowing the sacrifices ahead. For our veterans, it represents one of the most important periods of their lives, pride in awards and decorations, and sometimes intense emotional and physical stress. For Army civilians, Soldiers are the reason for their service. For the American citizen, Soldiers represent patriotism and selfless service, men and women in whom the nation takes great pride.

People around the world recognize (Please see *ARMY*, page 7)

# Snap Shots

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



Jamie Brown/photo

*CAMP BLANDING, Fla - A Battery, 1-117th Field Artillery Battalion personnel prepare to load propellant into the M777A2 Howitzer for a fire mission May 9, 2013.*



Jamie Brown/photo

*CAMP BLANDING, Fla - Forward Observers from 1-131 Cavalry call and observe fire from the 1-117th Field Artillery Battalion May 9, 2013.*



Jamie Brown/photo

*CAMP BLANDING, Fla - A Soldier from the 1-117th Field Artillery Battalion prepares an 155MM high explosive round for Direct Fire Operations May 10, 2013.*



Jamie Brown/photo

*CAMP BLANDING, Fla.-Soldiers from A Battery, 1-117th Field Artillery Battalion prepare to March Order after conducting Direct Fire Operations May 10, 2013.*



Jamie Brown/photo

*CAMP BLANDING, Fla. -The 1-117th Field Artillery Battalion conducts direct fire operations May 10, 2013.*



Jamie Brown/photo

*CAMP BLANDING, Fla -Soldiers from C Battery, 1-117th Field Artillery Battalion occupy the direct fire range May 10, 2013.*



Brenda Thomas/photo

*Col. Vasile MOTOI, Chief of Military Police in Romania, dusts a plastic bottle for fingerprints. Several Romanian officers received instruction from the 1156th Military Police Detachment (Criminal Investigation Division) in several investigative tactics such as fingerprint lifting and footprint casting during a recent visit to Alabama.*



Brenda Thomas/photo

*The NFL High School Player Development program, sponsored by the National Guard, addresses challenges facing high school football programs across the country focusing primarily on underserved communities. HSPD serves as a free resource for both high school player and coaches. The program emphasizes safety and concussion awareness, character development and life skills, and football fundamentals.*



James Burroughs/photo

*Alabama National Guardsmen complete Sexual Harrassment/Assault Response and Prevention training at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. Each Soldier that graduates is awarded an Additional Skill Identifier as Sexual Harrassment/ Assault Response and Prevention representative. Members of the 135th Expeditionary Sustainment Command, stationed in Kuwait, and members of the 226 Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, stationed in Afghanistan, attended class together. (l to r:(135 ESC) Staff Sgt. Lisa Robertson, Staff Sgt. Chris McCormack, Capt. Billie Blaschke, (226 Maneuver Enhancement Brigade) Maj. Steven Meadows, Master Sgt. Sabrina Robinson and Capt. Shan Anderson)*

*(ARMY continued from page 3)*

the American Soldier as a symbol of the United States, just as they do the White House or the Washington Monument. To American citizens, Soldiers are their sons, daughters, relatives, neighbors, and during natural disasters, their lifeline. To potential enemies of the U.S., American Soldiers represent our means to seize and hold their vital territory, control populations and resources, and deliver the decisive blow. To U.S. enemies, our Soldiers impose a lethal dilemma; Soldiers complement American air and maritime power by overcoming the protective effects of terrain, weather, and combatants.

Each day, young Americans volunteer to serve the nation as Soldiers. Each day, Soldiers reenlist, continuing their service

*(DRIVING continued from page 2)*

consequences of distracted driving.

In 2011, Rusty Fine's 18-year-old-niece, Megan Warman, was texting and driving on her way to school. She veered off the road slightly, overcorrected and her car flipped at least six times. She died 10 days later from her injuries.

Fine was also Megan's legal guardian and he said the impact of her death was devastating.

"Never in a thousand years did we think this would happen to Megan," Fine said. "But it did and it can happen to any family. It's important that the word gets out about how dangerous it is to drive distracted."

The National Safety Council reports that thousands die needlessly each year because people continue to use their cell phones while driving, handheld or hands-free. Here are some facts from the NSC and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that are indicative of how rampant and dangerous distracted driving is:

- Drivers who use handheld devices are four times more likely to be involved in crashes serious enough to cause injury
- Sending or receiving a text takes a driv-

er's eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds; the equivalent, at 55 mph, of driving the length of an entire football field, blind.

Through this oath, Soldiers affirm subordination to the nation's elected civilian leadership and stay away from public political involvement. Soldiers voluntarily give up freedoms fellow citizens take for granted and become subject to military discipline and regulations. Soldiers accept unlimited liability in the service to our nation. This becomes the foundation of our

er's eyes from the road for an average of 4.6 seconds; the equivalent, at 55 mph, of driving the length of an entire football field, blind.

- Eleven percent of all drivers under the age of 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted.

- In 2011, vehicle accidents involving a distracted driver accounted for 387,000 personal injuries.

- About nine percent of all drivers are talking on cell phones at any given daylight moment.

- Text messaging creates a crash risk 23 times worse than driving while not distracted. With the number of people dying in crashes involving a distracted driver on the rise – 3,331 in 2011 compared to 3,267 in 2010 – safety officials are determined to educate individuals on the dangers of distracted driving.

"The biggest problem is most people don't realize how dangerous it is," said Dr. Joseph MacFadden, USACR/Safety Center Human Factors Directorate, research psychologist.

"They don't know the statistics. Most young

profession.

Through our service, we continue the heritage of American Soldiers stretching back to the minutemen at Lexington and Concord. We stand with the continental line at Yorktown, charge with the Union regiments at Missionary Ridge, and go over the top in the Argonne Forest with the doughboys. We dig in with GIs to stop German armor in the Ardennes; board Huey helicopters with the grunts in Southeast Asia, and sweat in our body armor and Kevlar helmets while patrolling the hills of Afghanistan. Army civilians support us, ensuring that our needs are met, our equipment is ready, and our facilities are first rate. Today, as in 1775, we are the strength of our nation and its decisive force.

people (who) are texting and driving these days are completely unaware, and of course, they feel also that they can defy the odds."

The event coincided with National Safety Month (June) and safety officials hope it raised awareness of an Army and nation-wide driving safety problem. USACR/Safety Center officials are in the process of producing an informational awareness package within the upcoming weeks using some of the information gathered at the event that will be available to everyone in the Army.

Distracted driving is an emerging trend that needs to stop said Walt Beckman, program manager and deputy director, Driving Directorate, USACR/Safety Center.

"Many times Soldiers think they can multi-task while driving and that's not the case," said Beckman. "Drivers need to focus on driving and not worry about the text message or phone call that can wait. Taking your eyes off the road or your mind off the task of safely operating a motor vehicle, even for just a few seconds, can cause a devastating accident and a life-changing event. It's just not worth it."