

THE DISPATCH

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NOVEMBER 2017

DEFINING SACRIFICE

THE HISTORY AND HEROISIM OF AMERICA'S VETERANS

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



An F-16 assigned to the 149th Fighter Wing, Texas Air National Guard, painted with World War II heritage markings is parked outside the Air National Guard Paint Facility in Sioux City, Iowa on May 26, 2017. The wing received authorization for the nonstandard markings in order to commemorate the United States Air Force 70th Anniversary. The markings represent the lineage of the 149th Fighter Wing with the unit's origins dating back to the 396th Fighter Squadron "Thunder Bums" P-47 paint scheme from 1944.

(Air National Guard Photo by: Master Sgt. Vincent De Groot)



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FROM THE TOP

COMMENTARIES FROM TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT LEADERS



COMMENTARY BY:
COL. DARRELL DEMENT

WHO DO YOU WORK FOR?

For those of us in uniform, why do we do what we do? Is it for God and country? Is it for our friends and family? Is it because we have an overwhelming sense of gratitude and patriotism for our great nation? Well, yes, quite frankly, it is for those reasons. But, as I hang up my uniform for the last time and bid farewell to my military career, I keep remembering a conversation I had years ago with one of my all-time favorite sergeants majors, Robert Marshall.

We were busy choking down the latest FRAGO and complaining about various happenings within the organization. There seemed little, if any, unity of effort. Everyone above us appeared only to be looking out for him or herself. We were overworked and overtired. Resources were slipping and requirements were increasing. Sound familiar?

As we busily commiserated with each other, we asked ourselves out of frustration: Why do we do this then? What is it that brought us to a decision to join this program, and why is it that we remain?

For most Soldiers and Airmen, I suspect, continuing their career beyond their initial service obligation is rooted in various reasons. But I charge you to take a minute and ask yourself one simple question: Do you want to leave our organization better than you found it?

Whenever I pose this question to an individual or an audience, I receive a 100 percent "affirmative" response. Of course, I would challenge you to find any three people who

would agree on exactly just "how" to do that or just "what" needs improving. But, that isn't the point here. The point is, you want to leave the Texas Military Department better than you found it.

So, we all agree in our desire to create a future better than the past and the present. This is why I believe it is important for you to concentrate your emotional energy toward remembering the young man or woman who is raising their right hand right now at a Military Entrance Processing Station. They are placing their full faith and confidence in you. This individual - unknown, young, non-prior service - is taking the biggest step in their life to date. You know this. You remember this. We all did this sometime ago ourselves.

The young man or woman taking their initial oath today joined us out of reputation. They do not know you, and you in turn, do not know them. Yet, you are connected. And, it will make you feel good to look in the mirror and give your allegiance to them. They are the newborn children of our agency.

It is a constant struggle to stay fully motivated all the time and give every effort your best. This is especially difficult if you currently are not overly enamored with your workplace or colleagues. No one will make it through his or her career with bosses and co-workers they want to please all the time. So, do not allow them to be responsible for your motivation to do your best. Likewise, we should never allow our own ambitions to be our number one driver. You know this already, because selfless service is a value we all hold dear.

When your feet hit the floor tomorrow morning and you bound into work, you should be giving 100 percent of your effort for the newest enlistee into the Air or Army Guard. By making them your single focal point, you remove all the angst and frustration you may have with your current supervisor, team or organization. - **FROM THE TOP**



Col. Darrell Dement, left, retires in November 2017 after more than 30 years of combined service in the U.S. Army, U.S. Army Reserves and the Texas Army National Guard. During a retirement ceremony held at Camp Mabry, Austin Texas, Brig. Gen. Tracy Norris, right, Deputy Adjutant General - Army and Commander of the Texas Army National Guard, presented Dement's wife, Allison Dement, with a letter of appreciation from the State of Texas for the support she provided during a distinguished military career. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Malcolm McClendon).

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THE ECHOS OF BATTLE

Story By: Sgt. Mark Otte

Texas Military Department Public Affairs

AUSTIN, Texas – When the guns of war have gone silent, and the cannon smoke clears from the battlefield, there is inevitably a moment of reflection for everyone left standing. In that moment, warriors pause to take stock of the sacrifices that were made to take the hill or capture the ground. Nobody leaves a battlefield unchanged.

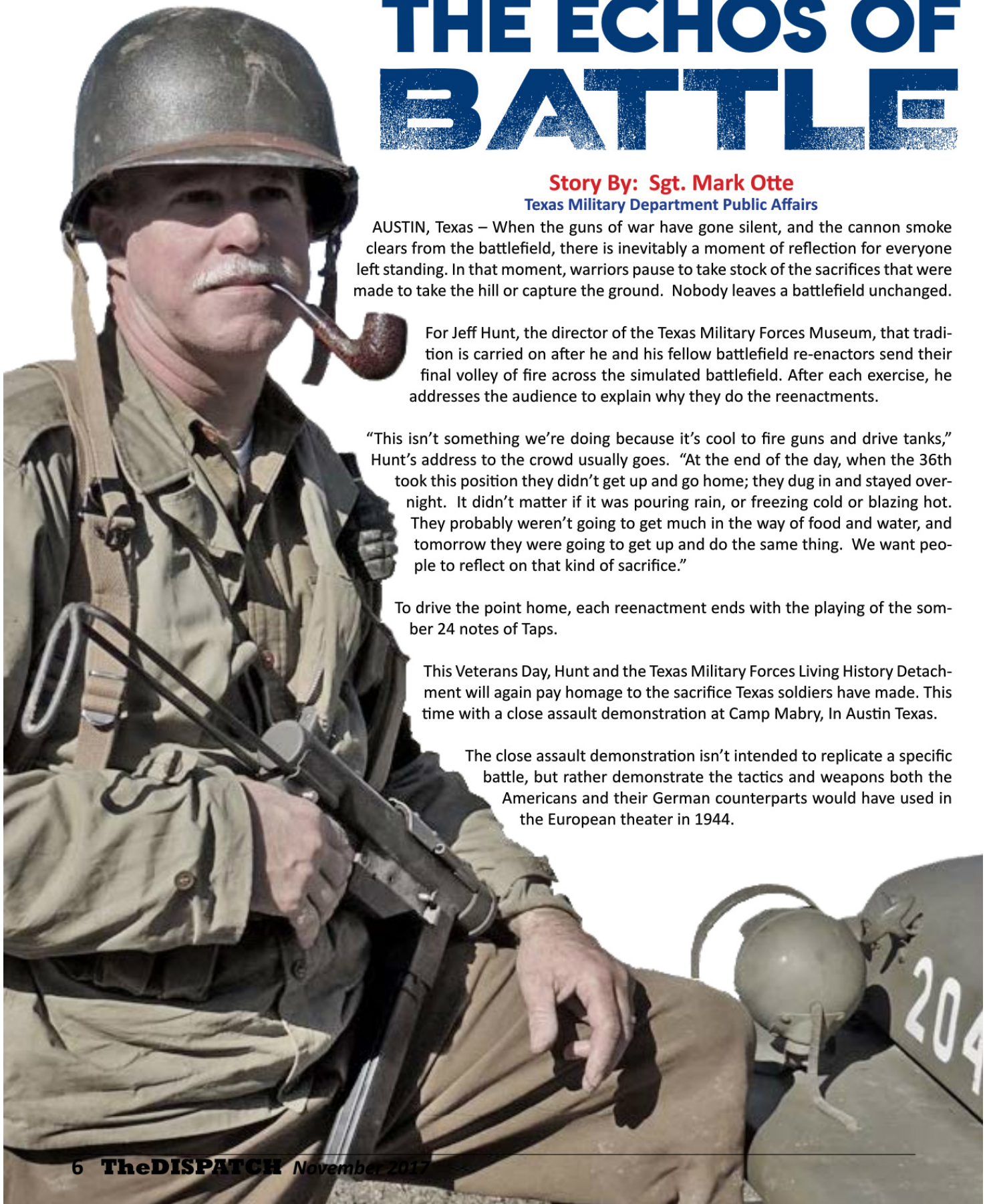
For Jeff Hunt, the director of the Texas Military Forces Museum, that tradition is carried on after he and his fellow battlefield re-enactors send their final volley of fire across the simulated battlefield. After each exercise, he addresses the audience to explain why they do the reenactments.

“This isn’t something we’re doing because it’s cool to fire guns and drive tanks,” Hunt’s address to the crowd usually goes. “At the end of the day, when the 36th took this position they didn’t get up and go home; they dug in and stayed overnight. It didn’t matter if it was pouring rain, or freezing cold or blazing hot. They probably weren’t going to get much in the way of food and water, and tomorrow they were going to get up and do the same thing. We want people to reflect on that kind of sacrifice.”

To drive the point home, each reenactment ends with the playing of the somber 24 notes of Taps.

This Veterans Day, Hunt and the Texas Military Forces Living History Detachment will again pay homage to the sacrifice Texas soldiers have made. This time with a close assault demonstration at Camp Mabry, In Austin Texas.

The close assault demonstration isn’t intended to replicate a specific battle, but rather demonstrate the tactics and weapons both the Americans and their German counterparts would have used in the European theater in 1944.



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Hunt says that attendees can expect to see what a fully equipped rifle platoon would have looked like as soldiers fought their way across the European front. Hunt uses military doctrine of the time to organize his simulated World War II troops to ensure the viewers get an accurate portrayal.

"I can put a full strength World War II rifle platoon in the field, fully equipped by the TO and E, (Table of organization and equipment) from 1944," Hunt said. "We are organized as an infantry platoon, with three squads, a headquarters element, attached medics- the whole bit."

To make the demonstrations as accurate as possible, the Texas Military Forces Living History Detachment also draws on another important source, a source Hunt says is getting harder to find: veterans who were on the battlefield during the time period they are portraying.

Hunt says that sometimes, when the aging veterans see a demonstration they begin exposing a long-forgotten side of themselves, and telling stories their families hear for

the first time.

"When a veteran gets around a living history program, they are able to reach out and touch their youth," Hunt said. "Those are their uniforms, weapons and vehicles. The smells, the textures and all of that can evoke powerful memories."

It's from those otherwise untold war stories that a younger generation gets a new perspective on the generations that came before them.

"Not infrequently we have family members listen to their father or grandfathers tell us these stories and say, 'we didn't know any of that. He never talked to us about that,'" Hunt said. "Now here's a grandkid or sometimes a great grandkid suddenly seeing grandpa as the hero he is."

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Battlefield re-enactors provide a demonstration of U.S. Army tactics, weapons, equipment and uniforms from WWII during a close assault event held at Camp Mabry, Austin Texas, in November of 2016.

(Photos Provided by Chris Hunt)

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111TH ATTACK SQUADRON

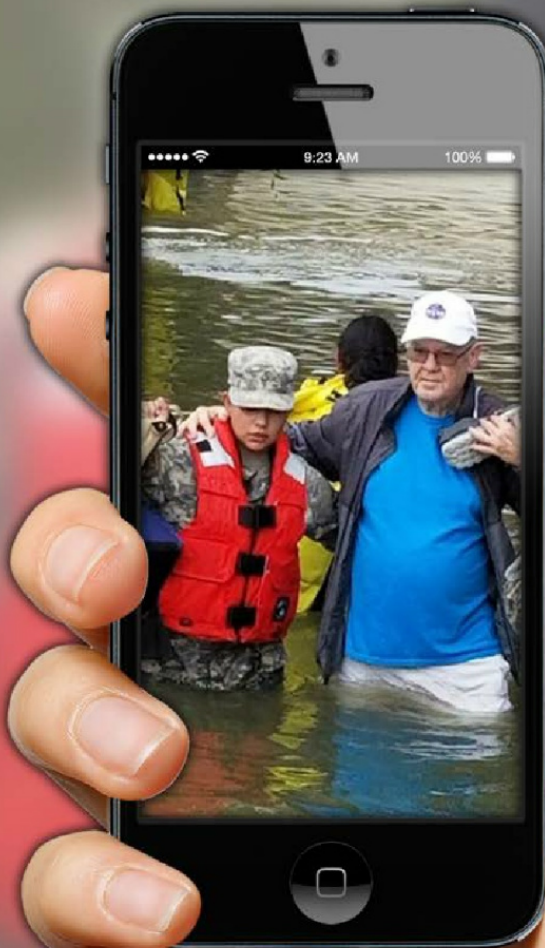
100 YEARS



The 111th Attack squadron, known as the Ace-in-the-Hole Squadron, recently celebrated 100 years of defending the skies over Texas. As the nations second oldest flying squadron, the storied history of "The-Ace-In-The-Hole" spans the length of aviation warfare. Click the video above to learn more.

ACE-IN-THE-HOLE

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OPERATION CRACKDOWN

**Story by: Staff Sgt. Michael Giles
Joint Counterdrug Task-Force**

AUSTIN, Texas—The paint fades and peels. Shattered glass collects on windowsills. Gigantic holes rot through doors and shingled rooftops. These were homes once—symbols of safety, pride and togetherness. Now they have become portraits of neglect.

When these neglected homes are known to shelter illegal drug activities, Operation Crackdown, a component of the Texas National Guard's Joint Counterdrug Task Force, helps cities remove them. Demolition of dilapidated structures is one of the unique military capabilities Texas Counterdrug leverages to support law enforcement agencies and local communities in the detection, interdiction, and disruption of drug trafficking.

Abandoned homes threaten the peace of mind of community members, such as Robstown where residents Mandy Carrion and Romelia Yanez, who recognize the risks they engender for children, for the homeless and for pets.

"Kids, homeless and drug addicts all hang out in there," Carrion said. "Kids go in there, and the buildings could collapse."

"A lot of people stay sometimes weeks, months," Yanez told television station KRIS in August. "And so many homeless in there. And sometimes they die."

Operation Crackdown tore down 32 abandoned structures in Robstown between Aug. 8 and 17th this year, using funds seized from drug manufacturing and distribution operations.

It removed a hundred such structures from neighborhoods in Robstown, Harlingen and Laredo in 2017, said Maj. Travis Urbanek, the officer in charge. More than 1,500 abandoned structures have been removed over the years.

Community members are pleased to see the structures removed because they create problems that require attention from various local agencies, Urbanek said.

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(Page 10) Texas Army National Guard Maj. Travis Urbanek, officer in charge of Operation Crackdown, coordinates the demolition of an abandoned home in Robstown, Texas, Aug. 11, 2017. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Yuliana Patterson)

(Page 11) Texas Army National Guard Spc. Jeremiah M. Thompson, a heavy equipment operator with the 822nd Horizontal Engineering Unit out of Brownwood, Texas, waves to community members after demolishing an abandoned house as part of an Operation Crackdown mission in Harlingen, Texas, Aug. 23, 2017. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Yuliana Patterson)

“In addition to the obvious drug problem, removing these structures reduces the burden on public safety, whether it’s the police department, fire department, EMS or animal control,” he said.

Operation Crackdown personnel and city officials work together to line up the demolitions; then, Texas National Guardsmen knock them down.

Spc. Jeremiah M. Thompson, a heavy equipment operator with the 822nd Horizontal Engineering Unit out of Brownwood, Texas, said it is gratifying to see that community members appreciate the efforts that Guardsmen put in to minimize illegal activity such as drug use and prostitution.

“You can see the civilians’ faces full of excitement about waking up to a better tomorrow in their neighborhoods,” he said.

Thompson also enjoys showing Texans how the Texas National Guard serves communities.

“Here’s Texas stepping in helping Texans, not just leaving the drug problem in the federal government’s hands,” Thompson said.

Guard units are scheduled to return to Robstown in early 2018 to demolish 30 more buildings, said Urbanek, who projects that Operation Crackdown will eventually remove all 160 structures the city has identified.

“It’s something that we’re going to continue to do because it makes an immediate and visible impact in those communities,” said Thompson.

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THE LONG ROAD TO A BETTER LIFE

Story by: Cpl. Alexander Logan
100th Mobile Public Affairs Department

AUSTIN, Texas – To the casual observer that catches him toiling away in his garden or playing with his 11-year-old daughter, Capt. Bau Phan appears to be a normal, everyday citizen. However, his calm demeanor and professional achievements hide the struggles and barriers that he has faced in his lifelong journey.

“My father and I escaped Vietnam; we came over here as refugees,” said Phan. “If he didn’t escape Vietnam, he would have been put through a re-education camp... re-education camps are mostly hard labor or slavery.”

Escaping by sea in 1978 they made their way to the Philippines, where they applied to emigrate to the United States. Phan explained that the United States was one of the few options for refugees fleeing Vietnam so it was important

“We would have gone back to Vietnam, and that would have pretty much meant death for my father.”

Phan and his father were accepted into the United States as refugees. After living in both Oklahoma and Louisiana, they settled in Texas where Phan became a naturalized citizen in 1984.

After graduating high school and searching for a way to help pay for college, Phan enlisted in the Army. After basic training, Advanced Individual Training and Airborne School, Phan was assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division. Three weeks after joining the 82nd, he deployed to the Persian Gulf and served in Operation Desert Storm.

Phan was honorably discharged from the Army and returned to Texas where he studied at Texas State University and worked in the private sector until the terrorist attacks on Sept. 11, 2001. After the events of that day, Phan decided to return to uniform.

“There were some slots available to join the Texas Army National Guard to help contribute,” said Phan. “I got back in after 10 plus years out, and this was the best way for me to contribute while remaining in Texas.”

Returning to the Texas National Guard as a staff sergeant, Phan was chosen to receive a direct commission because of his education and previous leadership experience in the military and the private sector. He commissioned in 2009 and chose to serve in the Army’s Military Intelligence branch.

“I was given two choices: Military Police or Military Intelligence. Military Intelligence allows me to utilize my process of thinking and my intellectual side,” said Phan.

After rejoining the Army, Phan found himself serving in Iraq, where he deployed with the Texas Army National Guard’s 36th Infantry Division and assisted in the breakdown of key facilities in the Basra area.

Today Phan plays two distinct roles in the Texas Army National Guard. As a full-time Active Guard Reserve Soldier Phan is the officer-in-charge for the 101st Information Operations Battalion, Phan is also the acting operations officer for the 71st Theater Information Operations Group for his traditional M-day duties. In these key positions Phan directs the day-to-day readiness and training initiatives that support the organization’s mission to support major commands in deploying cross-functional teams to control the information environment.

In addition to his full-time National Guard commitments, Phan also volunteers as Camp Mabry’s cross fit gym manager, where he leads all the coaches and training times in executing the non-profit gym on the camp.

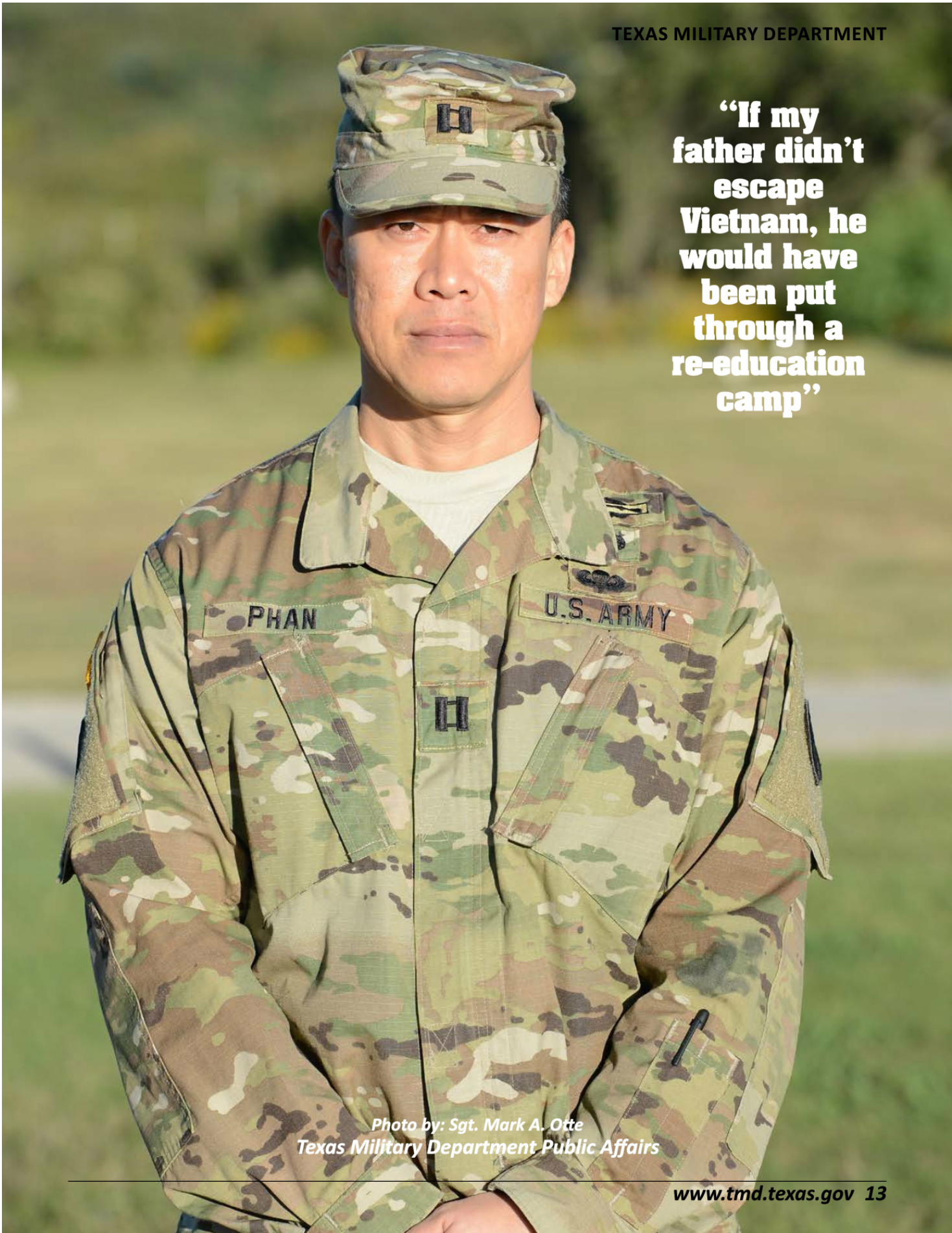
Even with all of his past and current success, Phan has never forgotten his path to the United States or what he left behind in Vietnam.

“We left our family over there,” Phan said, explaining that while his dad had escaped from Vietnam, his mother, grandparents and siblings had remained behind.

Determined to reunite with the family left behind during his escape, Phan returned to Vietnam and located his mother, siblings and surviving grandparents. He also met his siblings’ spouses and children, uniting with family that he never knew existed. Phan now keeps in touch with his family in Vietnam, maintaining ties to the country that he was forced to flee so long ago. **-D**

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“If my father didn’t escape Vietnam, he would have been put through a re-education camp”



*Photo by: Sgt. Mark A. Otte
Texas Military Department Public Affairs*

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ARROWHEADS FLY IN NEW DIRECTION

**Story and Photos by: Master Sgt. Michael Leslie
36th Infantry Division Public Affairs**

AUSTIN, – In the past year, the 36th Infantry Division has celebrated many landmarks, from becoming the first National Guard unit to take over a regional command in Afghanistan to celebrating its 100th anniversary to mobilizing the entire division in support of hurricane relief efforts. All of this took place while the “Arrowhead” Division was undergoing an entire command group overhaul.

From the chief of staff to the commanding general to adding a new command chief warrant officer position, the Division has many new leaders.

In late 2016, Chuck Aris promoted to Brigadier General as he accepted his new role of the assistant division commander – maneuver, while preparing to deploy as the commander of the train, advise and assist command – south in Afghanistan. His team marked the second of back-to-back deployments for the 36th Inf. Div. as a regional command for Operation Freedom’s Sentinel.

Soon after, Col. Scott Kingsley took over his new position as the division chief of Staff and full-time unit staff officer-in-charge, ensuring unit and personnel readiness for any mission the “Fighting 36th” is called to do.

Upon his return from his Afghanistan deployment, Lee Henry was promoted to Major General and assumed command as the division turned 100, an event marked by a ceremonial road march to the Texas State Capitol and wreath-laying ceremony honoring those past and present “T-patchers” who served in the division. “I’m honored and proud to serve alongside each

and every 36th Infantry Division Soldier as we celebrate the division’s 100th anniversary and move onto this next chapter,” said Henry. “Together we’ll continue to build upon the storied legacy of the 36th we’ll honor those who have served and sacrificed before us and I’m confident that we’ll succeed in all assigned missions.”

In June 2017, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Horn was selected from the 36th Sustainment Brigade to be the next division command sergeant major after Command Sgt. Maj. John Sampa was selected as the Texas command senior enlisted leader.



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"I can say that I am really blessed to be selected by Maj. Gen. Henry," said Horn. "I want to thank him for believing in me and selecting me for this position I look forward to serving the Soldiers of the 36th."

The division then created a new command team position to assist in all matters pertaining to its Warrant Officers. Chief Warrant Officer 5 Paul Jenschke was named as the division command chief warrant officer, the first of its kind within the division headquarters.

"As far as I know the 36th Infantry Division is the only division thus far to have senior warrant officer representation at the command level," said Jenschke, "and I am hoping it will set a precedence for other divisions to do the same."

In August 2017, when needed most as Hurricane Harvey ripped through the Texas coastline, Michael Adame was selected as the assistant division commander – Support and promoted to brigadier general. His sustainment expertise was critical as the Texas Military Department and the division as Soldiers provided much needed rescue and relief operations to those affected by the storm.

"Despite the tragic circumstances of a hurricane, the immediate immersion into the day-to-day operations as the ADC-S greatly accelerated my integration into the role," said Adame. "Nothing better than to jump into a real world mission to shorten the learning curve."

With new leadership, there always comes change for the better.

"My plans are to get out with the Soldiers and talk to as many non-commissioned officers and junior enlisted soldiers as possible," said Horn. "I want to know what they think and what motivates them; how we can work together and make the division the very best it can be."

"Just having a senior warrant officer as part of the division command group is already a tremendous improvement and the way forward," said Jenschke, who enlisted into the Texas Army National Guard by a warrant officer and is now the division's highest chief.

One change to elevate sustainment is creating a new course for company-level leadership to learn the intricacies of the process and develop within the division ranks.

"One of the commanding general's initiatives that I am tasked with implementing is the new Division Executive Officer Academy," said Adame. "The XO Academy is about leader development with a focus on the XO's key roles and responsibilities related to sustainment readiness."

This academy will help leaders make sure their Soldiers meet the commanding general's intent, which Maj. Gen. Henry delivered as a simple message to soldiers of the "Arrowhead" Division.

"Our foundation will be individual and collective readiness," said Henry. "The 36th is recognized by both the National Guard and Active Duty Army for its excellence and consistently setting the standard for other divisions to follow." **-D**



Maj. Gen Lee Henry, Commander of the 36th Infantry Division pins a colonel rank to the hat of the newly promoted chief of staff for the 36th infantry division, Scott Kingsley.

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HURRICANE HARVEY THE GREAT TEXAS STORM

Hurricane Harvey was an extremely destructive storm that made landfall along the Texas coast.

In a four-day period, areas throughout Texas received more than 40 inches of rain causing catastrophic flooding with peak accumulations of 64.58 inches. Harvey is the wettest tropical cyclone on record in the United States. The resulting floods inundated hundreds of thousands of homes, displaced more than 30,000 people and prompted more than 17,000 rescues by members of the Texas Military Department. Harvey was the strongest hurricane to enter the Gulf of Mexico since 2005.

In response to the storm surge, Texas Governor Greg Abbott deployed more than 17,000 Guardsmen to serve their communities.
(Click the video to learn more.)





The United States Air Force Thunderbirds honored the Texas Military Department, alongside other first responders, for efforts during Hurricane Harvey, at the Wings Over Houston air show at Ellington Field on Sunday November 22.



A Texas Army National Guard Soldier with the 1-149th Attack Reconnaissance Battalion poses with community members as they view an Apache helicopter on display at Ellington Field during the Wings Over Houston airshow.

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BREAKING THE LANGUAGE BARRIER ROMPIENDO LA BARRERA DE LENGUAJE

*Story and Photos by: Staff Sgt. Melisa Washington
100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment*



ORANGE, Texas - When Texans serve Texans, there is often a connection to the community that wouldn't be felt if outside agencies were brought in to do the work. That connection was felt by many in minority communities when soldiers from the Texas National Guard took to the streets of Houston in high water rescue vehicles during the largest mobilization of Texas military forces since World War I.

During Hurricane Harvey operations in Orange, Spanish was far from a foreign language. Out of 11 Soldiers and one civilian journalist on a mobile supply distribution mission in Orange, eight were bilingual.

Rescuers there quickly realized there was no standard operating language for this mission. One of the those rescue workers, Texas National Guard Spc. Laura Campa made sure that everyone was getting what they needed was her top priority.

"Stop, they might need something!" Campa barked at the driver of their high-water truck.

He obliged, stopped the vehicle and pulled back his window. Campa took off her seatbelt, leaned over him and put her head out the driver's window.

"Ocupan algo?" she asked.

She was asking two middle-aged women with two small girls if they needed anything. They didn't, this time. They shook their heads no and continued to walk.

"They're Hispanic, they might need something and not be able to ask for it," Campa explained. "I always stop to ask, even if they don't wave for us."

The driver shifted back into gear to catch up with the lead truck.

According to Campa her ability to speak Spanish had proven useful during their mission to

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(Page 18) Spc. Laura Campa of the 949th Battalion Support Brigade takes shoes and baby products to a family stranded by the Harvey flood. Texas Army National Guard Soldiers from the 36th Infantry Division transported and distributed food, water, and supplies from Orange County Airport to stranded residents in low-income areas of Orange, Texas on September 6th, 2017.

(Page 11) Pvt. Juan Retana, of the 3-133rd Field Artillery, guides a vehicle through flood waters. Texas Army National Guard Soldiers from the 36th Infantry Division transported and distributed food, water, and supplies from Orange County Airport to stranded residents in low-income areas of Orange, Texas on September 6th, 2017.

distribute food, clean water and supplies to Harvey victims in low-income neighborhoods of Orange.

“We went to one shelter to give out supplies, and a woman there couldn’t speak any English,” Campa said. “I had to translate for her.”

Texas National Guard Soldiers from the 36th Infantry Division continued to trek through flooded streets, asking residents what items they needed. They shouted the requests back to the truck and returned with the items.

The embedded journalist took photos and captured videos of the Soldiers in action.

As the convoy continued several streets down, requests were shouted by flood victims, “Agua, necesito agua!” ‘Water, I need water!’

The Soldier on the truck removed a case of water.

“Pañales, talla dos!”, ‘Diapers, size two!’ The next request rang out.

Requests for supplies continued to bounce back and forth between driveways and LMTVs in English and Spanish.

Language was fluid that day; there were no barriers. These were the Soldiers’ communities. These were their neighbors and families waiting for help. Texas Guardsmen acted and reacted rhythmically because they understood each other far beyond the words they were speaking. **-D**



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HEALING AFTER HARVEY

ONE SOLDIER'S JOURNEY THROUGH THE GREAT STORM OF 2017

Story and Photos by: Staff Sgt. Bethany Anderson 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

SWEENEY, Texas - As a mother and Texas Army National Guardsman, I have had first-hand experience with wild-fires, tornadoes, ice storms, snow storms and earthquakes, but Harvey was my first hurricane.

What could have been an ugly and terrible life changing event for my little girls was turned into a beautiful adventure.

As Texas Guardsmen from across the state geared up to serve Texas citizens, I was preparing to evacuate my family from our home. Not knowing where we'd go, how long we'd be gone, weighed me down like a ton of bricks. But I was not about to unnecessarily put my three little girls in harm's way.

While we loaded food and clothes into the cars, I asked my 3-year-old daughter, Kayden, and my 5-year-old daughter, Alex, to make sure they picked up everything off the floor in case water got inside while we were away.

"Is the house going to sink, Mommy?" Kayden asked, peering up at me with her beautiful big blue eyes.

"Sort of," I replied. "Now, please go pick up your things off the floor." Alex and Kayden darted off to their rooms and I continued to pack.

I was gathering up the last of our belongings when I heard Alex and Kayden talking in the hallway. "I love you, one would say. "Be safe," the other would say. "I'll miss you... we'll be back soon."

I peered out of the doorway to see my two babies hugging door frames and kissing the walls of our house. When they reached me, I could barely hold back my tears.

I evacuated my family around six o'clock on the evening of Monday, August 28, 2017. With my mother's help, we loaded up my three daughters and three dogs into the car. My mother, whose flight back to California out of Houston was canceled, drove my husband's truck containing our food, water, some valuables, and clothes. My husband, JD, who was working in Brownsville, looked for someone who could house our dogs.

The drive from Sweeney to San Antonio took us almost seven hours; a drive which normally takes three.

My 13-year-old daughter, Emily, argued with Alex while Kayden made animal noises and sang at the top of her lungs and one of the dogs whined and howled. The madness inside our car seemed to mimic the madness outside the car while I gripped the steering wheel and strained to hear the GPS.



Staff Sgt. Bethany Anderson helps her children stay positive by distracting them from the floods back in Houston that threaten their home. Important belongings fill the vehicles cargo area to keep them safe from the rising water.

I took a deep breath, focusing on the road as another violent gust of wind rocked the car. What used to be open fields of green were now angry oceans of flood water stretching out as far as I could see. It seemed as if our Toyota 4Runner was precariously skimming over the thin ribbon of road that cut through the massive expanse of water. I have driven through a lot of intense situations as a mom and as a Soldier, but this was, by far, my most stressful drive ever.

We arrived at the hotel in San Antonio around one o'clock in the morning, August 29, 2017.

Despite being mentally and emotionally drained, sleep did not come easy. Kayden's little fingers were gripped around my index finger and Alex's head rested gently on my shoulder while I listened to Emily sleep on the couch. My family was safe; but instead of feeling relieved, the uncertainty of our situation gnawed at me. With a heavy heart and my stomach in knots, I finally drifted to sleep.

Warm sunshine poured through the windows of our hotel room the next morning. Alex and Kayden hopped up in bed and exclaimed, "It's not raining! Can we go home now?" I was both amused and disheartened. "No, girls. It's still raining at our house. It's not safe to go back."

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I spent the next two weeks answering the same question, and each time my answer never failed to produce a look of disappointment on my children's faces.

We relocated three times and had to relocate the dogs twice. Each time we left the dogs with someone else, Alex's heart would break and she'd sulk into my arms desperately fighting back tears.

I spent every day checking the weather, skimming through Facebook for information and watching Brazoria County press conferences for updates. I hated not being able to tell my children when we would go home. I didn't even know if we'd have a home to go back to.

WHEN I FIRST HEARD THE PHRASE 'TEXANS SERVING TEXAS,' I ONLY THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS A TEXAS GUARDSMAN, SERVING THE CITIZENS OF TEXAS AND THE UNITED STATES. I NEVER THOUGHT IT WOULD MEAN TEXAS ARMY NATIONAL GUARD SOLDIERS SERVING MY FAMILY.

Anxiety, guilt and frustration came to me in waves, but I held it all; my girls needed to feel safe. They couldn't see Mom disappear into her emotions.

Disappointing my children wasn't the only thing on my mind. I had a couple part-time jobs and had recently started my own business to help pay the bills. Even though my husband was still working, Harvey's relentlessness put every stream of income I had in limbo. Our family was already struggling to keep our finances afloat, and this certainly wasn't going to help.

When I first received a message from my unit asking if our family was financially affected by the storm, I didn't respond. Thousands of other people were much worse off than we were; it didn't feel right asking for help. But my mom reminded me of all the times that we were able to help other people.

"You and JD have helped financially support others when they needed it," my mom said. "You need to give others the opportunity to bless you."

I replied to the text and let my unit know our family's situation.

While our story is filled with tears and frustration, it is also filled with kindness, hope and gratitude. I have never been on the receiving end of so much generosity, support and encouragement.

When I first heard the phrase 'Texans serving Texas,' I only thought of myself as a Texas Guardsman, serving the cit-

izens of Texas and the United States. I never thought it would mean Texas Army National Guard Soldiers serving my family.

Peers and leaders in the 71st Troop Command reached into wallets, without hesitation, and gave money, gift cards, toiletries and toys to my family, many of whom had never seen my face or heard my name before. Letters, gift cards and care packages also arrived from friends of Soldiers.

"This is like Christmas!" Alex shouted in excitement as she reached into a box of toys.

My children were filled with joy and laughter as they played with their new treasures. I was, and still am, both overwhelmed and humbled by the support my family and I received from my fellow service members.

One of my responsibilities as a Public Affairs NCO is to help tell the Army story. My unit, the 100th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, even found a way for me to support the Texas Military Department's mission in response to Hurricane Harvey, despite my situation. I had Soldiers from my team spread out all over the state of Texas working long, hard hours to make sure people knew who the Texas Army National Guard was and what we were doing to help. It is difficult to be a leader and stand on the sidelines, but my unit empowered me to dig in and help my Soldiers be successful.

While my unit was doing everything they could to ensure the safety and well-being of my family, my business partners from all over the country flew into action. They took up donations and sent our family care packages with activities for the girls, home made cookies and gift cards. Another business partner sent a care package of supplements to help with my daughter's digestive health problems.

We were even able to explore some fun places, as many businesses (like the aquarium) were opening their doors to Harvey evacuees free of charge. I didn't have to stress over where dinner was coming from, and I didn't have to confine my children to a hotel room for two weeks because we didn't have money for gas. Every penny we received was used on gas, groceries and bills. The monetary and physical gifts my family received were in exact proportion to what we needed, exactly when we needed it. No more, no less.

On Saturday, September 9, the roads cleared and the sun broke through the clouds, so we headed home.

JD had driven up from Brownsville to help me get our family back to the house. We hadn't seen our home in almost two weeks and didn't know what to expect, but we were hopeful.

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The closer we got to home, the more destruction and devastation we saw. Sheet rock, furniture and appliances were already sitting outside of houses. Trees, bushes and buildings were coated with thick brown mud. Some of the trees and bushes were tangled up with mattresses, chairs and trash. My 13-year-old daughter, Emily, noticed her best friend's house had fallen prey to the flooding.

Alex and Kayden sorted through all their belongings so they could share their clothes and toys with children who have none. Emily spent her free time with our church youth group helping people clean up wherever they could. So many people helped us after we evacuated and we're going to do everything we can to help too. Only good things can come from helping others.

Our home was spared, for the most part. The menacing waters of the flooded San Bernard River came within just a few short feet of touching our home. Our master bedroom, bathroom and closet will need repairs from water damage caused by a leak from the first few days of the storm.

The road ahead for our family is going to be a difficult one. But we know that we won't have to travel that road alone, or more than one day at a time. The recent events of the last three weeks have shown me that I have the strongest support networks a person could hope for.

We are truly blessed to have so little to repair when so much of our neighborhood and community lost everything.

I am a better person because of this experience and I will be able to bless others because of it. There are too many people who helped to list them all, but I will never forget and will always cherish their generosity.

Whether in uniform, or out of uniform, I am a Texan serving Texas. I'm working to raise money to buy new playground equipment for Kayden's daycare that lost everything in the flood.

There is a lot of uncertainty in our near future, but I am certain that everything's going to be just fine. -D



New Key Leadership Positions

LTC Max H. Krupp
Deputy G3, Texas Army National Guard



Experience:

LTC Max H. Krupp commissioned as an Infantry Officer in 1997, Distinguished Military Graduate. He has held numerous staff assignments within the 36th Infantry Division, TXARNG Staff, and United States Army South. His previous commands include 1st Battalion (Airborne) 143rd Infantry Regiment, Charlie Company 1st Battalion 19th Special Forces Group (Airborne), SFODA 9534 (Military Free Fall) Charlie Company 5th Battalion 19th Special Forces Group, Joint Counter Drug Special Operations Detachment and the 49th Armored Division Long Range Surveillance Detachment (Airborne).

Education:

He earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Finance and Masters of Public Affairs, both from the University of Texas at Austin. He is currently pursuing a second Masters of Strategic Studies at the US Army War College.

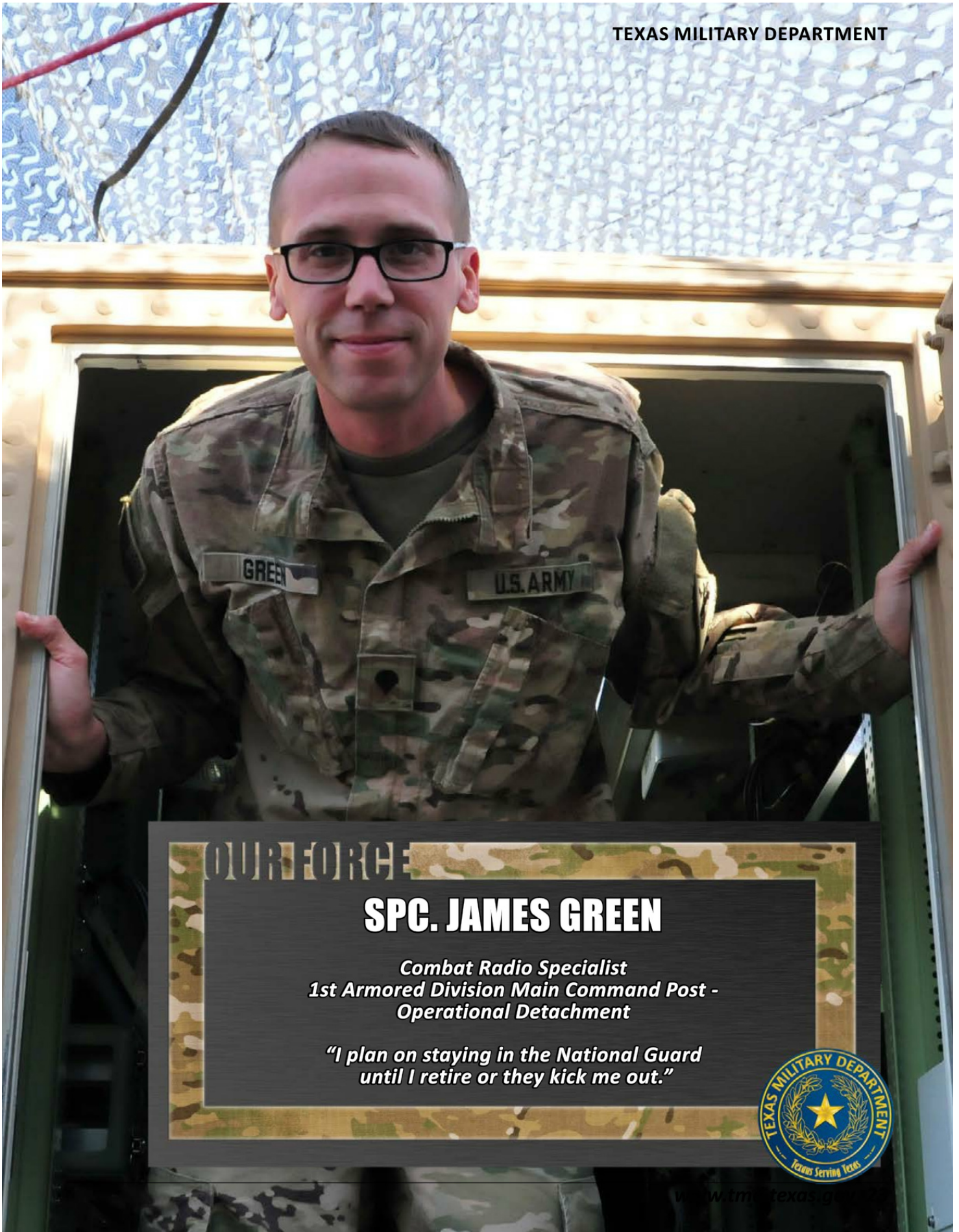
Did You Know:

Krupp desires to pursue farming, ranching and the slower pace of rural life when his military service has concluded.

In His Words:

"I am a steady advocate for the Army Total Force Policy and believe the Army National Guard's vital contribution as the Army's Combat Reserve cannot be overstated. Out of the 54 states and territories, the Texas Military Department's contribution to the Total Army and Joint Force is particularly significant."

TEXAS MILITARY DEPARTMENT



OUR FORCE

SPC. JAMES GREEN

*Combat Radio Specialist
1st Armored Division Main Command Post -
Operational Detachment*

*"I plan on staying in the National Guard
until I retire or they kick me out."*



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The U.S. Uniformed Services Blended Retirement System

Reserve Component

The Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act provides our military force with a modernized retirement plan built for retirement savings. Beginning in 2018, Reserve Component service members can get **automatic and matching Thrifts Savings Plan contributions, a mid-career compensation** incentive, and if they obtain 20 years of service, **monthly retired pay** for life starting at age 60.* All service members under the current system are grandfathered into today's retirement system.

Effective Date: January 1, 2018



Retirement System Selection

- Reserve Component members with more than 4,320 retirement points will remain under the legacy retirement system.
- Reserve Component members with less than 4,320 retirement points as of December 31, 2017, will have the choice of whether to opt into the new Blended Retirement System or remain in the legacy retirement system.
- New accessions after January 1, 2018, will automatically be enrolled in the new Blended Retirement System.

Reservists and Guardsmen While Serving

Thrift Savings Plan Contributions



You Contribute	DoD Auto Contribution	DoD Matches	Total
0%	1%	0%	1%
1%	1%	1%	3%
2%	1%	2%	5%
3%	1%	3%	7%
4%	1%	3.5%	8.5%
5%	1%	4%	10%

The DoD automatically contributes 1% of your basic pay or Inactive Duty Pay to your **Thrift Savings Plan** after **60 days of service**.

You'll see matching contributions at the start of 3 years through the completion of 26 years of service, and...

You're fully vested — it's yours to keep — after completing 2 years of service and it goes with you if you leave.

Continuation Pay Received at the mid-career point



At the mid-career mark, you may receive a cash payment in exchange for additional service.

Retired Reservists and Guardsmen Eligible for Retirement Pay

Monthly Annuity for Life

$$2\% \times \text{Years Served} \times \text{Retired Pay Base}$$

Calculate your **retired pay base** by averaging the **highest 36 months** of basic pay.

You'll gain this monthly annuity for life after completing 20 qualifying years of service and attaining age 60*

**or earlier based on qualifying active service.*

Collecting Your Retired Pay

OPTION 1 Full retired pay annuity beginning at age 60 or earlier based on credited active service

OPTION 2 **Lump sum** **or** **with Reduced retired pay as monthly annuity**

25% or 50% lump sum and reduced monthly annuity at age 60
Monthly annuity bumps back up to 100% at full retirement age (67 in most cases).*

You can find additional information at <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement>

Sources: Fiscal Year 2016 National Defense Authorization Act, sections 631, 632, 634, and 635

Created: 8/2016