

February 13, 2015

NTSSC This Month



U.S. Army Garrison Natick Public Affairs Office



2013 Department of Defense Thomas Jefferson &
U.S. Army MG Keith L. Ware Award-winning Digital Publication



Publisher's Note

John Harlow
USAG-Natick and NSSC Chief of Public Affairs



Table of Contents

February 13, 2015

NSSC This Month

Doing for others ...

Sometimes, we get a little caught up in the day-to-day rat race and forget that it's people who make an organization great.

There are some amazing people doing great things here at Natick, not only to protect the Soldier on the battlefield, but to benefit our local community.

Twenty-five years ago, a group from the Combat Feeding Directorate decided to give back and go to the Salvation Army in Framingham and cook for those who are in need. It continues today with Soldiers and civilians giving back to those who need it most.

February 1 was a great day because the New England Patriots captured their fourth Super Bowl title. It was also great because a few of our workers decided to get snacks for the Human Research Volunteers so they could enjoy the Super Bowl in their barracks like many of us did in our homes.

In the past year, the workforce here at Natick donated more than a ton of clothing and personal hygiene items to homeless veterans in the area. Last year, the donations to Toys for Tots topped expectations and made Christmas special for kids in need.

The work done here on behalf of Soldiers is vital to their survivability on the battlefield. The kindness shown by those same people makes our community better.



John Harlow
USAG-Natick and NSSC Chief of Public Affairs

NSSC This Month

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NSSC This Month is a monthly newsletter covering NSSC news within the Army and commercial media.

NSSC This Month is maintained by the USAG-Natick Public Affairs Office.

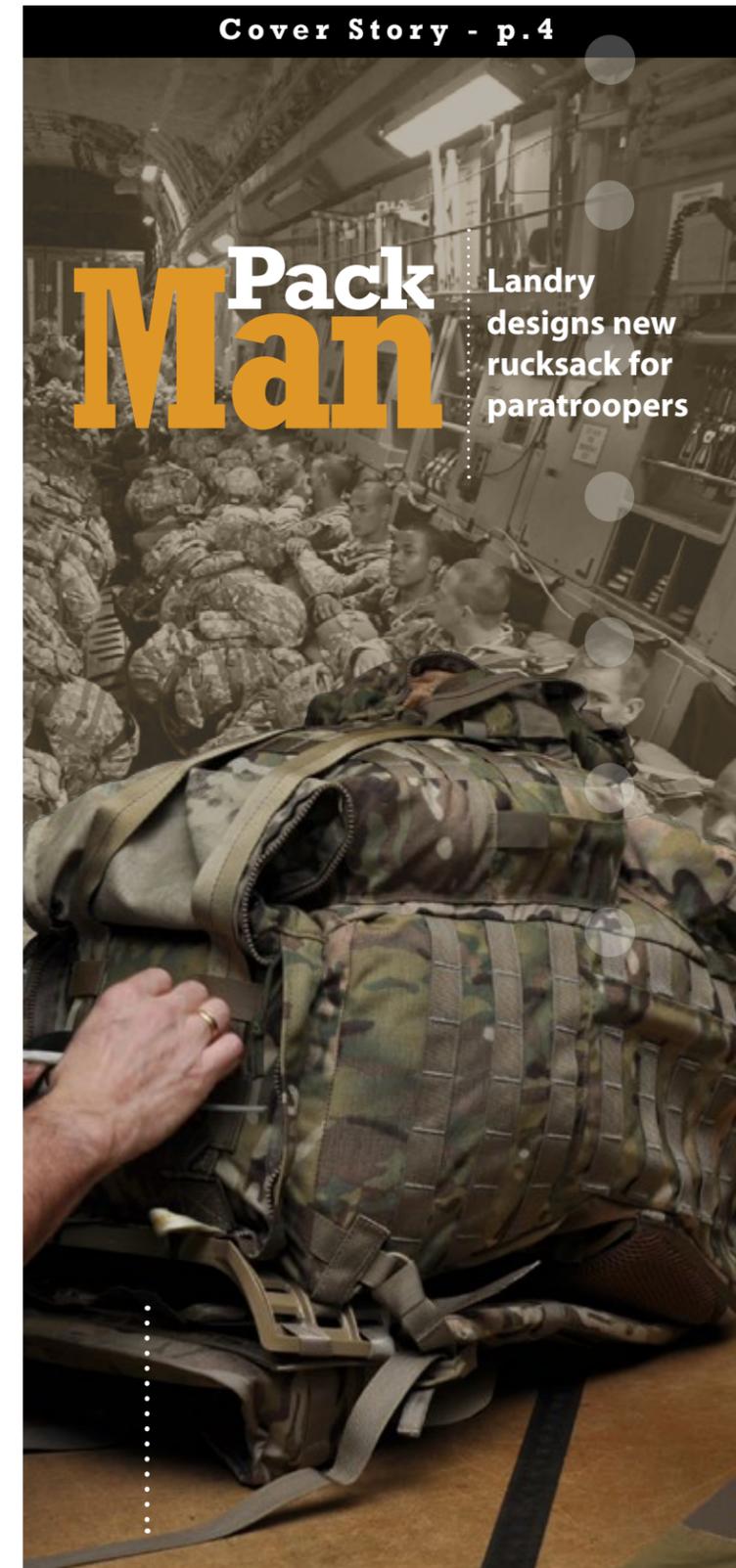
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Cover photos: Tazanyia Mouton (Landry), Senior Airman Asha Harris (82nd Airborne Soldiers)



NSSC This Month Feature Stories

Food for Thought p.6
Research team shapes future of combat rations

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs

Up on the Roof p. 8
Natick airbeam technology at Carnegie Hall

By Jane Benson, NSRDEC Public Affairs

HEROES Working Together p. 10
NSRDEC, UMass Lowell combine forces

By Jane Benson, NSRDEC Public Affairs

Troops Coaching Hoops ... p. 12
Natick Soldiers commit to serve youth basketball program

By Tazanyia Mouton, USAG-Natick Public Affairs

Neutral Ground p. 14
Women in service rollout due January 2016

By Amaani Lyle, DoD News, Defense Media Activity

Doing What's Right p. 16
Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs

Senate Confirmation p. 17
Warren highlights Natick Soldier worker in speech

By Brian Benson, MetroWest Daily News Staff

Healthy Choices p. 18
Teaching military families how to eat better

By Kelly Field, USARIEM Public Affairs



Pack Man

Landry designs new rucksack for paratroopers

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (Jan. 30, 2015)

He used to be one of them, so when paratroopers from the [82nd Airborne Division](#) asked Rich Landry to design a rucksack to meet their needs, he was thrilled.

“That’s my past,” Landry said. “This ... is my favorite kind of work, because the whole parachute (piece) is just such an interesting dynamic when you start talking about load and how all the pieces have to work together.”

“It’s a huge challenge, but when it’s a lot of fun, it’s certainly easier.”

An individual equipment designer in Load Carriage Systems, [Product Manager Soldier Clothing and Individual Equipment](#), [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#), Landry spends most of his time thinking about how to lighten the Soldier’s load.

“One of the things we always say is, we don’t do all the critical design work here,” Landry said. “It’s Soldiers that do that. We put it into something tangible.”

In this case, Soldiers were telling Landry that the Modular Lightweight Load-carrying Equipment, or MOLLE, large and medium rucksacks in the Army

inventory were too large and small at 3,000 and 5,000 cubic inches, respectively, for their purposes.

And the MOLLEs, as well as other existing systems, had to be fitted with the current Harness, Single-Point Release, or HSPR, that wrapped around the rucksacks and secured them to the parachutes, making them difficult to pack and unpack. Soldiers also wanted a design that interfaced well with body armor and was as comfortable as possible.

“It took time to set up existing rucksacks with the HSPR,” Landry said. “So that was one of the problems that the 82nd Airborne Division had. They needed flexibility to rig, to de-rig, and to possibly reconfigure the rucksack loads at various phases before the airborne operation. The ability to reconfigure the load was critical.”

Enter the MOLLE 4000, a 4,000-cubic-inch rucksack that Landry designed, using a frame already in the [U.S. Marine Corps](#) inventory as a foundation. In fact, Landry had worked on that pack, as well.

Soldiers also had asked for a permanent harness for airborne operations on the outside of the new rucksack, but Landry’s solution was a removable harness that looked permanent.

[Continued on page 19](#)

Food for Thought

Research team shapes future of combat rations

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (Jan. 21, 2015)

What kinds of rations might the military be using to feed its warfighters 15 years from now?

Seeking to provide a window into the future of combat feeding, the Consumer Research Team, or CRT, working on behalf of the [Combat Feeding Directorate](#) of the [Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center](#), developed an online questionnaire for current and former military members.

A more detailed version of the questionnaire can be completed by [Department of Defense](#) personnel whose work involves military field feeding.

“This is a great opportunity,” said CRT’s Wendy Johnson. “It’s very unusual, in my experience, that we stop and we think 15 years ahead and say, ‘What can we do?’ Taking a look at the long term is very interesting, and I think it’ll be very beneficial in the long run.”

As Johnson pointed out, the Future General Purpose Operational Ration, or FGPOR, could take any form.

“We try not to say MREs [Meals, Ready-to-Eat] because we’re trying to think outside the box,” Johnson said. “It doesn’t have to be an MRE. They can look very, very different.”

“Do we have to give them meals? Can we think about it in a different way? And can we give them a bunch of foods that maybe they can graze on?”

The CRT began its process about 18 months ago with a series of focus groups. The participants were told that rations could take on virtually any configuration.

“They were pretty interesting,” Johnson said. “There were a lot of things that came up. What we were looking for were things that came up maybe multiple times.”

Among the concepts that interested the focus groups were just-in-time delivery of rations, producing food with 3-D printers, and tailoring rations to parts of the world or missions.

Johnson said she was surprised by how much the groups focused on education.

“They’re talking about educating the Soldiers, for one thing, and also educating their chain of command, so that everybody is aware of the importance of nutrition and how the rations fit into that,” said Johnson, noting that this aspect of combat feeding is “not always fully understood.”

Jeannette Kennedy, a senior food technologist at Combat Feeding, added that field rations are about “performance fueling and performance nutrition.”

With data from focus groups in hand, four members of the CRT went to work fashioning the questionnaire.

“We went over every, single idea and talked it over and made sure that it was as clear and as concise as possible,” Johnson said. “That took up a lot of time. I think we’ve got a good set of ideas from that whole process.”

The basic questionnaire consists of 14 random questions and takes five to seven minutes to complete. The extended version, for subject-matter experts, asks them to rate 14 ration ideas, and they also have the opportunity to identify any obstacles they see to making each

of those ideas a reality. This version of the questionnaire takes seven to 10 minutes.

Johnson said the questionnaire will be online through March.

“We tried to streamline it and make it go as quickly as they wanted it to go,” Johnson said of participants. “Some people like to linger and think things over, and they’re free to do that.”

“We hope they’ll be interested, and we hope that they take it seriously and they give us good, accurate answers.”

CAC users can access the questionnaire at <https://surveys2.natick.army.mil/Surveys/rations.nsf>. Those without CACs can find it at <https://surveys.natick.army.mil/Surveys/rations.nsf>.

Following data analysis on the completed questionnaires, CRT will deliver actionable requirements and concepts to Combat Feeding. These requirements will form the basis of future science and technology programs, which one day will lead to a FGPOR aligning with requirements projected today.

“This is another opportunity for us to gather information from our military customers on their requirements, in particular their future requirements,” said Kennedy, “so that we can focus our efforts on meeting those needs.”

The Consumer Research Team at the Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center has posted an online questionnaire that will help the center’s Combat Feeding Directorate determine the direction it will take with future operational rations.



Photo: Michael Seipen, Combat Feeding Directorate



Photo: Julie Skarvatt Photography, Inc.

Up on the Roof

Natick airbeam technology at Carnegie Hall

By Jane Benson, NSRDEC Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (Jan. 26, 2015)

The wide-reaching, overarching success of airbeam technology is music to Natick's ears. The technology has made its debut in a new incarnation as a part of a surprisingly luxurious rental tent used for a gala on the rooftop of [Carnegie Hall](#).

Airbeam technology consists of inflatable, high-pressure arches. The arches replace metal frames in tents and can be deployed rapidly. The airbeams come in small, lightweight packages. Large shelters and shelter complexes can be set up quickly and with fewer personnel than metal frames.

The [Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center](#), NSRDEC, along with its industry partners, has a long history of developing the very best shelters to protect the nation's Soldiers and their equipment. Many of the technologies developed by NSRDEC and industry for the military have directly and indirectly resulted in commercial applications.

Todd Dalland, co-founder and president of [Pvilion](#) of Brooklyn, New York, designed the groundbreaking rental shelter for the Carnegie Hall rooftop event.

"The special event tent that Pvilion designed and produced for the rooftop of Carnegie Hall in midtown Manhattan uses airbeams developed by [Federal Fabrics-Fibers](#) for its structural supports instead of aluminum frames," said Dalland. "This represents the first time that high-pressure airbeam technol-

ogy has crossed over from military applications, associated with Natick, to commercial applications."

"This was really an eye-opening demonstration of what this technology can do in the rental tent industry," said Jean Hampel, team leader of the Fabrics Structures Team, part of NSRDEC's [Expeditionary Basing and Collective Protection Directorate](#), and a longtime expert in military airbeam shelters. "It shows the cost is coming down so it can be used in rental tents, and that's a really big commercial application."

Pvilion designed, engineered and produced the shelter, which is the first practical and affordable rental tent using high-pressure airbeams. The company enlisted Federal Fabrics-Fibers to fabricate the airbeams and Anchor Industries to fabricate the fabric top. Stamford Tent installed the shelter at Carnegie Hall.

"Since it's on a rooftop, you can't lay out many large pieces of framework," said Hampel. "Basically, with this, you just unroll it, inflate, and it stands up on its own. This was a very unique capability."

Pvilion began working on various types of shelters with Natick in the late 1980s. Pvilion has collaborated with Natick in three areas, including General Purpose Tents, Flexible PV Fabric Tents, and Airbeam-Support Tents. Pvilion has been involved in the development of high-pressure airbeams for more than 20 years.

"I think Natick may be the best new tent technology incubator in the world," said Dalland. "Natick has the best understanding of where military tents need to go in the future, and they are able to help support small, new tech companies with projects that move tents closer to Natick's vision."

Federal-Fabrics-Fibers of Lowell, Massachusetts, has also been involved in key textile technology collaborations with NSRDEC, including the airbeams used in the Pvilion tent.

NSRDEC, a pioneer in airbeam technology (and shelters in general), guides industry partners with its vast knowledge of military requirements and military textiles to oversee the technology development, the results of which have included airbeam-based military medical shelters, chem-bio protective shelters, aircraft shelters and expeditionary shelters.

"It's safer than a metal frame tent in a storm," said Hampel. "If you're in a metal frame tent, you could have metal falling down on you or what's stored in the tent. With airbeams, they'll bend and pop back up. It's a big advantage."

Natick has been improving and perfecting airbeam technology since the 1970s and began working with Federal-Fabrics-Fibers in the early 1990s. The late Zvi Horovitz established Federal-Fabrics-Fibers with his wife,

[Continued on page 19](#)



Photo: Julie Skarvatt Photography, Inc.



HEROES

Working Together

Quoc Truong, a physical scientist at Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center, or NSRDEC, is shown working with Colleen Cannon, who is pursuing her M.S. in plastic engineering at the University of Massachusetts Lowell. NSRDEC and UMass Lowell are working together to improve life for the Soldier.

NSRDEC, UMass Lowell combine forces

By Jane Benson, NSRDEC Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (Jan. 29, 2015)

The [Natick Soldier Research, Development and Engineering Center](#), or NSRDEC, and the [University of Massachusetts Lowell](#) are working together to make life better for the Soldier.

The two organizations are collaborating as part of a joint research and development initiative called Harnessing Emerging Research Opportunities to Empower Soldiers, or [HEROES](#).

“This unique partnership benefits all by being able to effectively combine the best of both organizations — people, facilities and expertise — to work together to find creative and innovative solutions to improve the safety, mobility and sustainability of our warfighters,” said Lynne Samuelson, Ph.D., NSRDEC co-director of the HEROES program and an NSRDEC senior scientific adviser. “HEROES also helps draw in other external partners in academia and industry to all work together to advance (science and technology) for our warfighters.”

Through the HEROES program, dozens of engineers and scientists from NSRDEC and faculty members and students from UMass Lowell are working together to solve complex scientific and engineering challenges.

“As NSRDEC co-director of HEROES, I am thrilled to be able to work with the UML co-director, Professor Ramaswamy Nagarajan and the team at UML, to identify, establish, mentor, and provide continual scientific, programmatic and logistical oversight to valuable and mission-relevant HEROES collaborations that will advance Soldier (science and technology),” said Samuelson.

Areas of collaboration include Soldier protection (flame and thermal, environmental, chemical/biological, ballistic and antimicrobial protective materials), and Soldier sustainability (airdrop parachutes and parafoils, nutrition, power-generating nanocomposites, wearable thermo-electrics, as well as combat rations, combat ration safety, and novel food packaging).

“It is anticipated that new, exciting advancements will be made in each of these areas that will benefit our warfighter,” said Samuelson.

One of the NSRDEC scientists participating in the collaboration is Quoc Truong. Truong believes that the program brings together complementary expertise. The professors teach theory and concepts while NSRDEC scientists are working to develop practical applications.

“By working together, it’s like the right hand working with the left hand,” said Truong. “It makes things more complete.”

“I am currently working with Quoc Truong on a project developing environmental, chemical/biological protective membranes that will be comfortable to wear, be selectively permeable, allowing breathability while protecting the Soldier from toxic chemicals, viruses/bacteria, liquids, vapor,” said Bridgette M. Budhlall, Ph.D., associate professor, UMass Nanomanufacturing Center at UMass Lowell. “Being able to leverage my research’s group expertise in polymer coatings to help and protect the Soldier is an honor for me.”

“The UMass Lowell/NSRDEC collaboration provides the opportunity to work with an excellent scientist on projects that are important for our nation’s well-being,” said Nese Orbey, Ph.D., associate professor, chemical engineering, University of Massachusetts Lowell, who is also working with Truong.

Students benefit from the program, as well.

“HEROES is a great opportunity for NSRDEC (scientists and engineers) to provide UML students valuable firsthand experience in research, innovation and potential commercialization of promising Soldier technologies,” said Samuelson. “For many of these students, it is their first exposure to a laboratory outside of academia, and through HEROES they are able to apply their studies to exciting real-world military applications. Our NSRDEC (scientists and engineers) also benefit from the fresh ideas, dedication, passion and excitement that the students bring to each project. Ultimately, the DoD may benefit from the development of future DoD scientists.”

[Continued on page 19](#)



Photo: Tazanyia Mouton, USAG-Natick Public Affairs

Pvt. Chris Baker, a human research volunteer, coaches a Jr. Celtic on basketball skills during a clinic at Madison Park High School, Jan. 31.

Troops Coaching Hoops

Natick Soldiers commit to serve youth basketball program

By Tazanyia Mouton, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / ROXBURY, Mass. (Feb. 4, 2015)

A group of human research volunteers from the [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#) participated alongside members of the [Boston Celtics](#) as part of the Commitment to Service initiative during a Jr. Celtics Event at Madison Park High School, Jan. 31.

Through the [Commitment to Service](#) program, the [National Basketball Association](#) and the [Department of Defense](#) have forged a comprehensive partnership while using the popular sport.

The joint venture supports local communities and hundreds of thousands of active and retired armed forces members, and their families, each year.

The program is based on four pillars: community, health, leadership and transition.

The recent community service activity involved the Celtics' program, Jr. Celtics, which challenges more than 650 children in grades three through five to develop their basketball game through skills, drills and leadership training.

Along with Soldiers and Celtics players as mentors, youth coaches were also on hand from [Up2Us](#), a leader in the sports-based youth-development movement.

Up2Us promotes everything from health to inspiring children to take on roles as leaders, to the importance of teamwork.

According to the Up2Us website, "sports is not 'just a game,' it's one of the most powerful tools to positively transform kids' lives."

Pvt. Jacob Hammons said participating in the event made him feel great.

"I like working with kids, and it's an opportunity to come out and spend time with the Celtics and teach the children different techniques of basketball," Hammons said. "I just mainly thought I would be doing research for the Army (here at Natick), and I never thought I would have an opportunity to do volunteer work such as this."

Spc. Jack Forest, whose hometown is Elmira, New York, said he was excited to see some familiar faces.

"I've spent probably the last 10 years with youth in the community, both in Boston and back in my hometown," Forest said.

Forest said he was motivated when the Jr. Celtics began to file into the gym.

"I think if you come with high energy, the kids will have high energy, and I think it goes vice versa (and) you can feed off the kids — especially that age group," Forest said. "I think they always bring a certain level of excitement that pumps you up."

Pvt. Chris Baker, a Macon, Georgia, native, said he has always enjoyed doing community service and has worked with children in the past.

"I used to be a mascot for the Cherry Blossom Festival down in Macon," Baker said. "I enjoy volunteering because it gives me a sense of happiness and it also reminds me of the times when I would volunteer in my hometown."

The NBA has always urged players to get involved in community service acts through programs such as NBA Cares, the league's global outreach initiative that addresses many important social issues such as education, youth and family development, and health and wellness.

Through NBA Cares, the league and its teams support a range of programs such as "Hoops for Troops," "NBA Green," and "NBA Fit."

Sam Taub of the Celtics' community relations department said the team always takes part in various community activities.

"Being involved in the community is a foundation of the organization," said Taub. "We're blessed to have the most dedicated, loyal fans in the NBA, and that's why we like to give back to them through programs like this."

Taub said having Soldiers participate in these events has been an amazing addition.

"It's been incredible having Soldiers come out and interact with our players (and) interact with people in our community," said Taub. "They're so dedicated to protecting our country, and they do so much for us, and having the privilege to work alongside them is so valuable." "They bring so much energy to our programs ... more pride and excitement ... and we're honored to be involved with the Army and all of the military."



Neutral Ground

Women in Service Review rollout due January 2016

By Amaani Lyle, DoD News, Defense Media Activity / WASHINGTON (Jan. 12, 2015)

Following the 2013 repeal of the [Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule](#), the secretary of defense is scheduled to announce final decisions to integrate remaining closed occupations and any approved exceptions to policy on or about Jan. 1, 2016.

Juliet Beyler, the Defense Department's director of [Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management](#), reported "good progress" in the Women in Service Review, which validates all occupational standards to ensure they are operational, relevant and gender-neutral by September 2015.

"Throughout the course of the review of the regulations governing women in the military, we determined that the time had come to do away with the direct ground combat rule and open all positions to women instead," Beyler said.

The goal, she explained, is to expand opportunities to ensure that all service members are eligible to serve in any capacity based on their abilities and qualifications, and to "remove those old gender-based barriers to service that no longer made sense."

When Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff [Gen. Martin E. Dempsey](#) and former Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta removed the direct combat ground rule in 2013, they realized the need for a deliberate and measured approach to ensure the smoothest transition, Beyler said.

U.S. Army 1st Lt. Audrey Griffith points out an area of interest during a force protection drill to Spc. Heidi Gerke along the perimeter of Forward Operating Base Hadrian in Deh Rawud, Afghanistan, March 18, 2013. Both women are members of the 92nd Engineer Battalion from Fort Stewart, Ga.

The services, she said, have been conducting various studies in order to review, validate and complete their occupational standards by the fall of 2015. "We're on track and moving toward that goal," Beyler said.

Since rescission of the definition and rule, Beyler said, the DoD has notified Congress of the integration of about 71,000 positions previously closed to women. This development, she said, can positively affect the force by allowing people to serve based on their ability.

"Expanding opportunities to women, to include the 71,000 we've already opened since 2013," Beyler said, "[gives] a wider pool of qualified people so that commanders have greater flexibility ... and it'll strengthen the all-volunteer force."

More than 280,000 women have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, including Beyler, who's a two-time combat veteran.

"I like to say that women have been serving in combat since the Revolutionary War, but the 280,000 that we've recently seen deployed have contributed in immeasurable ways," Beyler said.

She said there were various ways in which women were restricted from occupations under the direct ground combat rule, primarily preclusion from assignments to combat units below the brigade level.

"But there were other restrictions, such as for physical requirements or positions associated with special operations or long-range reconnaissance," she added. "We are reviewing all of the occupational standards."

The services, she said, "are expending a good amount of their time on those 100-percent closed occupations."

Historically, the department had opened positions by exception, but it now has acknowledged it would make more sense to "flip the presumption," Beyler said, so that all positions will be open to women unless there's a reason that they should be closed.

Guidance to the services and to [U.S. Special Operations Command](#) includes a provision in which a military department secretary or service chief can request an exception to policy to keep a position closed, Beyler said.

"But any exception is going to have to be rigorously justified and will have to be based on the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the duties of the position," she said.

Regarding assignments, training, and accessions, Beyler said those elements have been and will continue to be service responsibilities.

As defense secretary, Panetta directed each of the services and SOCOM to develop individual implementation plans tailored to their unique requirements, she said.

"As we have with the positions we've already opened and the ones that we'll continue to open throughout the next year and beyond," Beyler said, "each service will use the regular accession and training assignment pipelines and timelines that they've always used."

The process of opening more military occupations to women is about maintaining the all-volunteer force and readiness, Beyler said.

"More than 90 percent of our occupations are already open to women and 15 percent of our forces are women," she said. "By removing these antiquated gender-based barriers to service, it can only strengthen the all-volunteer force and allow people to serve based on their ability and their qualifications."



Doing What's Right Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King

By Bob Reinert, USAG-Natick Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass. (Jan. 22, 2015)

In a stirring address to her colleagues, a member of the [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#) workforce reminded them of words from [Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.](#) that resonate today, nearly 50 years after they were first uttered.

During the federal holiday observance Jan. 21 in Hunter Auditorium, Donna Leon echoed a passage from Dr. King's June 1965 commencement speech at Oberlin College: "The time is always right to do what is right."

With her charitable parents serving as unyielding role models, Leon has always tried to do what is right. Her lifetime of service

to others was recognized last July, when she became the U.S. Army's recipient of the [NAACP 2014 Roy Wilkins Renown Service Award](#).

As she spoke at NSSC's MLK program, it became apparent that Leon had chosen the right path even in the face of considerable resistance. She recalled her initial day of first grade, which coincided with the beginning of integration for schools in her North Carolina hometown. She was the only African-American in her class.

"I knew for some reason there were those who believed I was different, a lesser person,"

During an observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday at Natick Soldier Systems Center on Jan. 21, Donna Leon called her NSSC co-workers to action in the service of others.

Leon said. "But because of my family background, I was not exactly sure why."

Trouble began for her before she was able to take her seat on the bus, when an older girl hit her.

"I protected myself and fought back ... a little, skinny, chicken-legged first-grader," Leon said. "It should not have been that way, but it was. When all was said and done, I asked that older school girl who had hit me and who had called me out of my name, I asked her if she was OK. Doing right is not always easy."

The challenges didn't stop there, but neither did Leon's resolve to always reach out to others. The retired Soldier urged her co-workers to also do what they could for those around them.

"Be aware of your surroundings," Leon advised. "Take time to speak to others or offer your assistance. You might make their day. If they ignore you or turn you down, shake it off and move on to the next thing, knowing that you made a genuine effort."

"Because, after all, we are human and have our bad days, and that's OK. Make an effort to get through the mess of it all and start doing what is right once more."

Leon conceded that she sometimes gets tired and wants to stop making the effort.

"When I get this way, not wanting to serve, I have to stop and take the time to reflect on those who have helped me along the way," said Leon, "especially in my adult life."

"Please understand this — when you genuinely, and not for your glory, help someone, they will never forget."

Leon said that Dr. King's dream for a bright future has yet to be fully realized, and she called her colleagues to action in that quest.

"Since when did doing nothing ever change anything?" Leon said. "Now is the time to strive to do what is right, and if you fail, strive to do what is right — again!"

"The time is always right to do what is right. Please say this with me. The time is always right to do what is right."

"Ladies and gentlemen, that time? That time is now!"

U.S. U.S. Sen. Elizabeth Warren this week highlighted the story of a former [Natick Soldier Systems Center](#) worker while making the case to her colleagues to support a bill that seeks to reduce [veteran suicides](#).

Warren, D-Mass., on Monday described how Justin Fitch, who has terminal colon cancer and recently retired from the Army as a major, talked about the 22 veterans a day who commit suicide.

"Too many veterans are suffering in silence," Fitch told her. "Twenty-two a day is a lot. One is too many."

Warren said Fitch is "a powerful and a relentless voice fighting to improve care and prevent suicides among veterans fighting depression and psychological stress after returning home from war."

The Senate Tuesday unanimously passed the [Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act](#), sending the bill to President Barack Obama, who supports it, the Associated Press reported.

The bill "calls for an evaluation of federal mental health services and suicide prevention efforts, improves informational resources related to [Department of Veterans Affairs](#) (VA) services, and launches a pilot program to provide education loan repayment for psychiatrists who work at the VA," according to a press release from Warren's office.

Fitch, 32, has dedicated what time he has left to raising awareness about veteran suicides. He has participated in ruck marches along the [Boston Marathon](#) route where people carry heavy backpacks in support of [Active Heroes](#), a nonprofit that helps active duty military, veterans and their families manage stress and triggering points that can lead to suicide.

"The reality of that (22 veterans a day statistic) is really beyond practical comprehension," he said. "It's also what has kept me motivated and kept me focused through some really tough times for me."

Fitch, who once contemplated committing suicide himself, said he is pleased to see federal lawmakers take action in an effort to reduce veteran suicides.

"It's good to see movement in the right direction," he said. "I still believe they have a lot more to do on this issue."

He said it was clear in talking to Warren that the senator cared about the topic.

Warren in her speech said the country's commitment to service members does not end when they come home from a conflict.



Senate Confirmation Warren highlights Natick Soldier worker in speech

By Brian Benson, MetroWest Daily News Staff / NATICK, Mass. (Feb. 4, 2015)

"Our armed service men and women are tough, smart and courageous," she said. "They make huge sacrifices to keep our families safe, and we owe them all a true debt of gratitude for their service. But gratitude isn't enough. We must do more to protect our men and women in uniform who devote their lives to the service of our country."

Fitch said while the military does a good job working to prevent suicides among active duty personnel, more needs to be done when people transition out of the military. "There needs to be better ways to identify

people who are suicidal and obviously better ways to treat those people," he said.

For more information about Active Heroes and the Carry the Fallen ruck marches, visit [carrythefallen.org](#) and [activeheroes.org](#).

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Editor's Note: President Obama signed the [Clay Hunt Suicide Prevention for American Veterans Act](#) on Feb. 12.



Photo: Cade Martin, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Healthy Choices

Teaching military families how to eat better

By Kelly Field, USARIEM Public Affairs / NATICK, Mass (Feb. 10, 2015)

The [U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine](#) launched a collaborative research study with [Tufts University](#) to assess the effectiveness of two weight-loss strategies.

Called “Healthy Families, Healthy Forces,” this randomized trial will measure the effectiveness of two weight-loss programs for meaningful and sustainable weight loss in military families.

“This study targets dependents of active-duty military personnel and addresses the eating environment at the Soldier’s home,” Lt. Col. Asma Bukhari said. “Collaborating with Dr. (Sandra) Roberts and Dr. (Sai Krupa) Das at Tufts University is a great opportunity for us to further investigate evidenced-based

weight-loss strategies for our military beneficiaries.”

The Tufts researchers bring over 30 years of research expertise in the weight loss arena.

Bukhari, a research dietitian with USARIEM’s [Military Nutrition Division](#), said this study is in line with the Army surgeon general’s vision on addressing Soldiers’ “life space” and moving from health care to health.

“Spouses of active-duty Soldiers may be the primary influence for eating behaviors, food selection and preparation at home. While we are aiming to see improved weight in the dependents directly participating in this study,

our thought is that this program may also have a ripple effect on the active-duty family members — the Soldier(s),” Bukhari said.

This two-year study, which is based on Tufts University’s innovative “Healthy Weight for Living Program,” began in January 2015 and features group classes that provide free education and support to help family members lose weight and prevent weight regain. These classes will be a fun way to learn menu planning, grocery shopping, self-monitoring of weight, diet and activity.

Bukhari said many times military families just do not know where to start when it comes to healthy eating. She said that quick weight-loss programs can often be expensive and frustrating, with no real long-term benefits. This program focuses on changing behaviors in an environment that connects military families to one another.

“We are trying to change a lifetime of habits for a healthier life,” Bukhari said. “We approach weight loss as an opportunity for problem solving. So, for example, we have group sessions to help with recipes, explaining how to cook with healthy ingredients using recipes that are easy to make and that taste good. Participants will get to test some of the foods, and then they can go home and make them.”

Bukhari said that if this study is successful in the Boston area, where it is currently taking place, she would like to scale it up to the rest of the military community nationwide so weight-loss programs are consistent on all installations. She would also like this program to help her and other Army registered dietitians understand the barriers to seeking a weight-loss program as families move from one duty station to the next, even though there is a desire to participate in them.

She said the interesting aspect of this study is an online capability if dependents have difficulties with in-person group sessions and follow-up.

“In surveys, dependents expressed a high need for a program like this,” Bukhari said. “Even though the Army has programs, they vary from place to place, so progress is disrupted by deployments, PCSs, etc. We are taking all those factors into consideration. Through this study, we are exploring an intervention in the service members’ home space to expand effective strategies that promote weight loss and weight maintenance for the military families no matter where they are.”

“Why should we have two to three pounds of excess equipment permanently attached on that rucksack that they’ve got to carry around with them?” Landry said. “This is so simple. It’s a (minute-long) process. Normally, when you’re rigging a rucksack with the removable standard (HSPR), it can be as long as a 10-minute process, especially when you’ve got new ... paratroopers that haven’t done it before or haven’t done it very often.”

Landry said the removable system is more cost effective than a permanently sewn harness, which could add as much as \$200 to the cost of a rucksack. He added that any failure in either the pack or the harness would leave the other reusable, avoiding replacement of the entire \$400 system.

The MOLLE 4000 tested well, but Soldiers recommended a few more modifications, such as a stronger carry strap, side compression straps and — most importantly — a flap closure on top to replace the original zip closure. The flap will allow for load flexibility when necessary and be more durable when released and lowered to the bottom of a 15-foot lowering line during a jump.

“We got it right (as) to what their concept was, but then we learned in the technical testing that we needed to change the design slightly,” Landry said. “We all learned something, and that’s fine. That’s what you want. That’s why you test.”

The current version will go into safety certification testing during March and be operationally tested in late spring at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Upon completion of a yearlong user assessment, airborne units could receive their first MOLLE 4000s before fiscal year 2017.

The final product could have applications beyond airborne operations.

“This pack can be used by any unit in the Army if they’ve got a size requirement like this, and all they do is remove the harness,” Landry said. “It can be an Army common item at some point in time, and wouldn’t that be great?”

“Once it gets on the ground, it must carry the load efficiently, because once a paratrooper lands, the pack’s job really begins, and the mission is to be as fast and effective as possible in the fight.”

And Landry said he hopes that others might see the utility in that.

“To have a service-common pack of this design,” Landry said, “would be really the ultimate goal.”

Bracha Horovitz, in 1991, and NSRDEC’s collaboration with Horovitz resulted in key innovations.

Hampel said that the circular loom used by Horovitz was much better suited for inflatable fabrics than the usual flat loom and that Horovitz developed a computer-controlled device that could weave a curve into a tube. The innovation greatly advanced and improved airbeam technology, making airbeam shelters more durable, easier to set up, move and maintain.

“As we were working with Zvi, we guided the research with our expertise in military textiles — it must be flame resistant, abrasion resistant, etc.,” said Hampel. “We added that knowledge to make sure we ended up with a product that would work in a military environment.”

NSRDEC and Federal-Fabrics-Fibers also overcame the big challenge of preventing air leaks through seams by creating seamless airbeams.

Bracha Horovitz serves as president and CEO of Federal-Fabrics-Fibers and continues the company’s dedication to serving the needs of both the military

and commercial sector.

“Zvi was an innovative guy who generated the idea, and Bracha has kept the technology alive and made many improvements,” said Hampel.

“We feel exceptionally fortunate to have a successful relationship with NSRDEC and are proud to make such an impact in the world of military shelters in creating an automatic-deploying tent that fulfills the needs of our warfighters on expeditionary operations,” said David Retter, director of sales and marketing at Federal-Fabrics-Fibers.

Hampel has seen impressive developments in airbeam technology over the years. One application, in particular, stands out most in her mind.

“The Chemically and Biologically Protected Shelter, which incorporates Federal-Fabrics-Fibers airbeam technology, is the first type of medical facility that a Soldier would see in the field,” Hampel said. “These shelters were used during the first Gulf War and saved lives as they provided an environmentally conditioned environment, which prevented shock and provided a capability for advanced medical care.”

“It was a great experience to work with Quoc and the program,” said Cody Langlois, who is majoring in plastics engineering at UMass Lowell. “Quoc was always focused on the final goal of the project but made sure that the different team members understood the individual steps to reach that goal. He was always friendly and helped give me a look at what a career at Natick Labs looks like.”

“By being at the university, we have access not only to the professors, but also a pool of students,” said Truong. “Many of them are very bright, and they really work hard.”

The relationship between the university and NSRDEC also fuels brainstorming. NSRDEC organized a Human Augmentation Roundtable. The event was an open and welcoming venue for discussing ideas and presenting differing perspectives. The aim of the Army’s human augmentation effort is to merge human and machine to enhance endurance, speed,

agility and accuracy, while reducing potential injuries faced by Soldiers.

“HEROES is a win-win for all: win for NSRDEC Scientists to tap into UML faculty, students, expertise and facilities to create new solutions to Soldier needs; Win for UML faculty to apply their valuable academic research and expose their students to real-world military problems; and most importantly, a win for our Soldiers, who will be the benefactors of cutting-edge research and innovation to improve their safety, agility and sustainability in the field,” said Samuelson.



Photo: Edwin Aguirre

Black History Month

“THE ULTIMATE MEASURE OF A MAN IS NOT WHERE HE STANDS IN MOMENTS OF COMFORT AND CONVENIENCE, BUT WHERE HE STANDS AT TIMES OF CHALLENGE AND CONTROVERSY. THE TRUE NEIGHBOR WILL RISK HIS POSITION, HIS PRESTIGE, AND EVEN HIS LIFE FOR THE WELFARE OF OTHERS.”

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.



Join us for NSSC's Black History Month observance in Hunter Auditorium on February 19 at 10AM, featuring Tuskegee Airmen Veterans sharing their personal WWII and Korean War experiences.

