

DECEMBER 13, 2003

# TALON



## Sunday stroll

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## Military personnel's basic pay in line with civilian counterparts

By Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample  
*USA American Force Press Service*

WASHINGTON, – Military personnel will see their basic pay more in line with that of civilian counterparts in the private sector in 2004 thanks to an increased pay and benefits compensation package included in the 2004 Defense Authorization Act approved by Congress this year.

Air Force Col. Virginia S. Penrod, director of military compensation for the Defense Department, said the 2004 military pay and benefits plan provides for a 3.7 percent across-the-board pay increase and further targets pay increases for noncommissioned officers and warrant officers.

In addition, service members will see 2004 increases in housing allowances and special incentive pay.

Penrod said the average basic pay raise, which is equal to a little over 4 percent, helps to close the gap between military pay and civilian pay.

“Everyone receives a 3.7 percent pay raise across the board, this is by law,” she said, adding that the pay raise is a half percentage point more than the average private sector worker will earn. “The NCOs, E-5 through E-9, will receive targeted pay raises from 4.6 to 6.25 percent. And we’re also paying a targeted raise to our warrant officer grades.”

Penrod also noted that part of the pay incentive is to help retain senior noncommissioned officers. The highest pay raises, 6.25 percent, will go to E-9s with 26 years or more service.

Also included in the package is an average increase of almost 8 percent for military basic allowance for

housing — money given to military personnel to help defray the cost of housing expenses.

Penrod said the increase is part of the Defense Department’s effort to reduce — and eventually eliminate — out-of-pocket expenses for military personnel, which Pentagon officials hope to do by fiscal year 2005.

She said that the average out-of-pocket expense for housing is down to about 3.5 percent for January 2004 and “should be at zero in 2005.”

Another area of increased pay will be special and incentive pay, such as imminent danger pay and family separation pay.

Penrod explained those pay increases were made possible in part due to President Bush’s supplemental funding request this year. That request authorized funding for increases in imminent danger pay from \$150 to \$225 per month, as well as an

increase in the family separation pay and support allowance from \$100 to \$250 per month.

Other new measures in the 2004 compensation package allow for services to offer incentive pay to get officers to extend overseas tours. “Previously this was only offered to enlisted members,” Penrod explained.

She said the compensation policy has two principal thrusts, the first of which is to have an overall level of military compensation that is at least equal to the 70th percentile of the pay of civilians with comparable levels of education. The other is to target special and incentive pays and bonuses to address retention problems that are specific to various occupations and recruitment problems.



**About the cover: Maj. Perry Malcolm, TFME, and special agent Andrea Luhman march up a hill during the 14K Ruck March Sunday. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood, 135th MPAD**

# Deployed brothers

Story and photos by Spc. Jeremiah Wickenhauser 135th MPAD



Phillip Kazmierczak (left) and his brothers Jeffrey and Paul pose on a Bradley Fighting Vehicle in front of Task Force Bearcat headquarters. Jeff said having his brothers here has assisted him in the deployment.

Three Task Force Bearcat soldiers share a common bond in Bosnia and Herzegovina – the bond of true brotherhood.

“We’re all brothers here,” said Sgt.

Phillip Kazmierczak, an assistant vehicle and squad leader.

Phillip, 24, and his twin brother, Spc. Paul Kazmierczak, are the younger brothers in the trio. Sgt. Jeffrey Kazmierczak, 30, is the oldest. The three all work in different sections but meet about three to four times a week, depending on what the mission dictates.

Jeffrey, also an assistant vehicle and squad leader, said the brothers have time to sit down and talk with each other periodically. At that time, they share information with each other, staying informed of back-home activities.

“Having two brothers is easier than being here by myself,” Jeffrey said.



“My brothers are someone I know I can trust and fall back on.”

Paul, a humvee gunner, admitted there was some pressure to join

from his older brother. “But college was the biggest reason,” he said. “I didn’t have enough (money for tuition) to go on my own.”

Phillip of Thief River Falls, Minn., said, “Our parents were proud of our decision to join up.”

When not drilling with the Guard, Jeffrey is employed by Arctic Cat, Phillip works for UPS and Paul is an auto body technician.

*“My brothers are someone I know I can trust and fall back on.”*

– Sgt. Jeffrey Kazmierczak

Jeffrey also of Thief River Falls added that their mother had the typical “mother attitude” and didn’t want them joining the National Guard.

Their father on the other hand asked where he should sign the enlistment contract.

“He was really for it,” said Jeffrey.

Even though the three are here

together, family is still the thing they miss the most.

Jeffrey, who has been married for 11 years and has three children ages 11, 9, and

4, said, “The hardest part is being away from my family.”

Paul of tiny Macintosh, Minn., noted that his wife, who is taking care of his twin 9-month old sons, has had some trying times.

# First-time winner

## Avid ruck runner wins Red Bull Ruck March

Story and photos by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood  
135th MPAD

The first time was a charm Sunday on foggy Eagle Base for Sgt.

Brandon Lolkus of the Multinational Brigade (North) Joint Military Affairs section.

He won the Red Bull 14K (8.68 mile) Ruck March in 1 hour, 26 minutes, 27 seconds with the mercury just dipping below 32 degrees Fahrenheit.

The rucksacks, loaded with whatever one

wished to carry, had to weigh 35 pounds.

"I go rucking all the time so I wanted to prove to my team I could beat everyone," Lolkus, a terrain and movement driver for JMA, said as sweat streamed down his cheek and steam rose from his head and battle dress uniform.

He said the most difficult section of the course was the hills around the base's perimeter. The 120 competitors, with and without rucksacks, ran or walked the course twice.

Lolkus, a nearly five-year Guard member whose average finishing time in the Army Physical Fitness Test's annual 2-mile run is 11-and-a-half minutes, said he likes running with a rucksack the best.



Chaplain Capt. Jerome Fehr with Capt. Michael Wied SJA, to the finish line.



Sgt. Brandon Lolkus, JMA, won the 14K Red Bull Ruck March in 1:26.27.



Capt. Robert... road... ring... rial... can

The plumber back home in Chandler, Minn., noted he made his best time on this course around the base's airfield runway.

Spc. Amanda Weeks of Task Force Med Eagle was the first female finisher in the ruck march with a time of 2:09.08.

Making the best time in the run was Maj. Luke Charpentier, also of JMA. This Minnesota National Guard marathon team runner won in 54:55.

Charpentier said he liked the course but the hills also were tough.

"There were a couple steep ones," he added.

Charpentier of Stacy, Minn., who has competed in 14 marathons, said he runs five to six days weekly.

"I love (running)," he said. "You get to meet a lot of people."

Charpentier also uses running as a tool to see more of a city or country.

"(Running) allows you to see everything," he said.

He noted while stationed with the 29th Infantry Division in Hawaii, his running allowed him to see tourist attractions like Diamond Head.

1st Lt. Carrie Hanson of Task Force Renegade won the female run in 1:10.08.

The winning team in the ruck march was the 86th Medical Company Dust Off of Sgt. Benjamin Hernandez, Capt. Adam Ledwell, Staff Sgt. Sean Brassil, Sgt. Brook Marsh and Staff Sgt. David Nash. Their average finishing time was 1:43.05.



An MNB (N) Analysis and Control Element G2 team carried an Ace Hardware flag during the march. A team member said the flag was given to them by an Ace Hardware store they visit each year while attending warfighter school in Kansas.



1st Lt. Jason Good, TF Eagle, (left) and Spc. Stephanie Bertson, 34th MP Co., run down Eagle Base's main road. Good was saying, "Seems like old times," referring to being photographed during the Bataan Memorial Death March, an annual event where soldiers also wear rucksacks in Brainerd, Minn.



2nd Lt. Lyudmila Bakayeva (left) Sgt. Kristin Schwarze and Maj. Ted Ellefson, all of the 634th MI Bn., march up one of the steep hills on the course

# Common bonds

## High school grads rely on each other

Story and photos by  
Sgt. 1st Class  
Clinton Wood  
135th MPAD

CAMP MORGAN, BiH – Spcs. Nicholas Peterson and Chris Tetrault share common bonds.

Both are stationed with Task Force Iron at this small outpost, they are roommates and they both graduated from Forest Lake High School, Forest Lake, Minn., in 2002.

“Honestly, if Tetrault wasn’t here, I would be losing it,” Peterson, a humvee driver, said.

Tetrault, an assistant humvee gunner, commented, “It makes things a lot easier.”

Things could even get easier for this pair. Fellow graduates deployed to Bosnia

include Spc. Joshua Brown, Task Force Iron, Pvt. John Kasper, Task Force Iron, Camp McGovern, and Spc. Kelly Bibeau, 34th Military Police Company, Eagle Base.

Tetrault said he has known Brown since he was 5 years old. Peterson moved to Forest Lake in eighth grade.

Tetrault said he and Brown dreamed of being in the Army when they were youngsters. Peterson said Tetrault convinced him to join the Guard.

Brown joined the Guard in December 2000, Tetrault joined in September 2001 and Peterson joined May 2002.

*“Nothing is going to come between our friendship.”*

– Spc. Chris Tetrault

Tetrault said he and Brown corresponded with each other while they were in basic training.

Tetrault said he joined to learn about the M1-A1 Abrams main battle tanks. Back in Minnesota, he is a tank crewman for the Minnesota Army National Guard’s A Company, 2nd

Battalion, 194th Armor. Peterson, who is tasked to a Minnesota Guard petroleum, oil and lubricants unit, joined to “travel the world.” He intends to transfer to the active duty in the Army.

Brown was the first to volunteer for the deployment. Tetrault followed. Peterson was so determined to deploy, he called his unit while at Advanced Individual Training.

Peterson said he made the deployment at the last minute.

Peterson and Tetrault did admit as roommates, sometimes they do disagree.

Peterson said these disagreements

are like those between a big brother and little brother: they don’t last long and within a few minutes the problem is forgotten.

Tetrault and Peterson both noted there is one thing that could cause a rift in their friendship with Brown.

Brown, who was the first of the trio to be promoted to specialist, could be promoted as a noncommissioned officer or sergeant first. This means as a NCO, he would be in charge of Peterson and Tetrault.

Tetrault said this wouldn’t concern him. “We’ll know when to put our game face on,” he said. “Other than that, nothing is going to come between our friendship.”



Spcs. Nicholas Peterson (left) and Chris Tetrault, roommates at Camp Morgan and 2002 Forest Lake, Minn., High School graduates, reminisce about their high school.



Spcs. Chris Tetrault (left) and Nicholas Peterson play a X-box game in their room at Camp Morgan.

# Hockey scores big

Story by Spc. Jeremiah Wickenhauser  
135th MPAD

For the majority of the soldiers on Eagle Base there is no family here. There also is no deer-hunting season or ice hockey. We're not in Minnesota anymore. Despite the lack of most of our home state's pleasures, a small group of soldiers have created a piece of our natural habitat here in Bosnia.

Several soldiers at Eagle Base have



Sgt. Aaron Eastman, the Diablos goalie, lets one slip in during the tournament at the Air Force gym.

Photos by Chief Warrant Officer Daniel McGowan, 434th FLE

taken it upon themselves to create a 5-on-5-hockey tournament. They

dropped the puck by coordinating with the MWR to start a hockey league.

The first hockey tournament took place Dec. 7 where the Diablos won a hard-fought game against the Wild. The Rug Rats placed third.

The winning team consisted of Lt. Col. William Lieder, Staff Sgt. Bradley Gerten, Staff Sgt.

competed in the 5-on-5 tournament. A total of 10 teams completed.

Sgt. Eric Hanson organized the tournament and refereed most of the game. He said he did this to spark other soldier's interest in the upcoming hockey league.

"The tournament went so well that we didn't have to call any penalties for the entire tournament because the players were well informed of the rules and the refs kept control of the games," said Hanson.

"Hockey is big in Minnesota because of the weather and the Minnesota Golden Gophers are consistently a good hockey team," said Gerten of the Multinational Brigade (North) G6. "Minnesota also has a large number of division one hockey schools, Duluth, St. Cloud, and Mankato."

Gerten a member of the Diablos has also played for the Fort Bragg Dragoons hockey team and has been skating for over 25 years. He began coordinating pick-up hockey games on Eagle Base a couple of months prior to the first hockey tournament.

"I like how hockey is one of the roughest sports that can be played," commented Gerten.

Daniel Bari, Sgt. Erika Lee, Sgt. Aaron Eastman, and Spc. Tanya Gaylord.

Hockey players from a variety of sections showed up to play in the first hockey tournament at Eagle Base in four years. Players from the rank of lieutenant colonel to specialist



Sgt. Erika Lee winds up for a power shot during the Diablos second game of the tournament.

 **In our sights** 



Photo by Master Sgt. Edwin Holt, 135th MPAD

**Spc. Jesse Wiemer, Task Force Bearcat, unloads a box of donated clothes at a displaced persons' camp near Sapna last week.**



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood, 135th MPAD

**UH-60 Black Hawk pilot Chief Warrant Officer Wayne Keeton, TF Renegade, does a preflight check before a Quick Reaction Force flight Sunday.**



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood, 135th MPAD

**TF Med Eagle flight medic Sgt. 1st Class Bill Russel (left) and his crew chief Staff Sgt. Dave Nash give firefighters directions during a mass casualty exercise.**



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Clinton Wood, 135th MPAD

**Sgt. Brian Beto, Task Force Bearcat, holds an AK-47, one of the many rifles and machine guns his fellow task force soldiers stationed at FOB Connor collected during Active Harvest. The rusted weapon in the foreground is a homemade shotgun.**

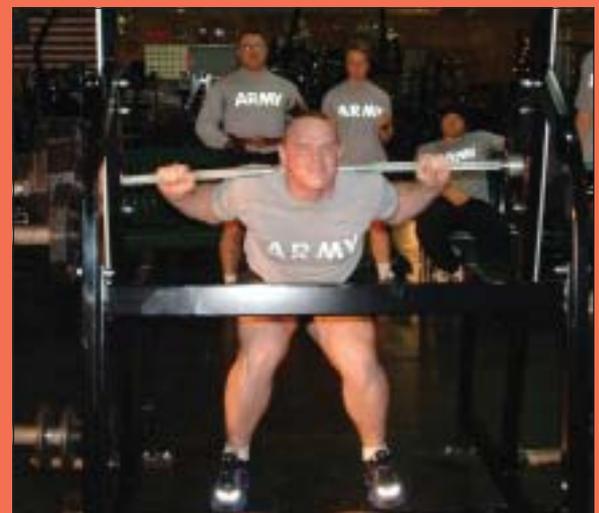


Photo by Sgt. Brian Taylor, TF Iron PAO

**Staff Sgt. Brandon Crotteau, TF Iron, puts on a mean face as he competes in the Camp McGovern Squat Competition.**