

U.S. Army Reserve/Army National Guard



Update

By Colonel Charles E. Bruce

In April 2003, the world cheered when statues of Saddam Hussein came tumbling down, symbolizing the end to a dictator's reign of terror. In December, we cheered again when Saddam Hussein was captured, cowering in his hole. Similarly, the world cheered as the Taliban fell and Al-Qaeda fled Afghanistan. These victories occurred because of the sacrifices of the brave men and women of the U.S. Army, the U.S. Army Reserve, and the Army National Guard. I am extremely proud to serve with the men and women who are our warriors and soldiers.

Never before have Army Reserve and National Guard soldiers been asked to do as much as they are doing today. Once thought of as a "force in reserve"—one that drilled one weekend a month and two weeks in the summer—that force has now become a critical and vital element, a full partner in today's Army. Army Reserve and National Guard soldiers are increasingly called upon to help carry the weight of fighting and winning our nation's wars.

The numbers tell the story: Army Reserve and National Guard units of today make up 55 percent of the Military Police Corps, and that percentage continues to grow. In order to meet near-term operational requirements, the Army G3, Lieutenant General Cody, requested that the National Guard stand up 15 provisional military police companies and accelerate the activation of 3 military police companies in fiscal year 2004. Their mission is to deploy to Army bases, both in the continental United States and outside the continental United States, and perform law and order operations. Additionally, the Army is

standing up 20 "in lieu of" military police companies to support ongoing Operation Iraqi Freedom rotations. On 14 April 2004, the Army reported 150,289 Army Reserve and National Guard soldiers serving on active duty.

Sadly, 20 of the 33 military police soldiers killed supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom served as citizen soldiers. Each has his own story. They cannot all be told here, but I would like to tell you about one Army reservist. Sergeant Nicholas A. Tomko, 24, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was assigned to the 307th Military Police Company, U.S. Army Reserve, New Kensington, Pennsylvania. Sergeant Tomko was fatally shot in the shoulder and chest on 9 November 2003, after the high-mobility, multipurpose wheeled vehicle (HMMWV) he was riding in was attacked by mortar and small arms fire while escorting a convoy. Sergeant Tomko, who was working as an armored-car driver near Pittsburgh, joined the Army Reserve three years ago, hoping to get a head start on a career in law enforcement. He was deployed to Bosnia for six months and had two months off before his unit was reactivated in February. Speaking of his death to an Associated Press reporter, Jessica Baillie, the mother of their two-year-old son Ethan, stated that she was going to ensure that their son knows his dad was a hero and that he went to Iraq to fight for his country.

Every soldier in our Regiment is a brave member of an agile, highly skilled force—soldiers proud to show their patriotism every day and committed to serving our country during the most turbulent times. May God bless them and their families, and may God bless this great and wonderful land we are privileged to call our home.