

# Army Announces Close Combat Badge

In response to requests from field commanders and after careful analysis, the U.S. Army announced Feb. 11 the establishment of a new badge for selected combat arms Soldiers in combat arms brigades who engage in active ground combat.

The Close Combat Badge will provide special recognition to ground combat arms Soldiers who are trained and employed in direct combat missions similar to Infantry and Special Forces who will continue to be recognized for their ground-combat role with the Combat Infantryman Badge.

The Army will award the CCB to Armor, Cavalry, Combat Engineer, and Field Artillery Soldiers in Military Occupational Specialties or corresponding officer branch/specialties recognized as having a high probability to routinely engage in direct combat, and they must be assigned or attached to an Army unit of brigade or below that is purposefully organized to routinely conduct close combat operations and engage in direct combat in accordance with existing rules and policy.

The CCB is presented to eligible Soldiers who are personally present and under fire while engaged in active ground combat, to close with and destroy the enemy with direct fires.

The CCB should be available this Fall through unit supply and also for purchase in military clothing sales stores.



Photo by Kurt Gibbons II

*A Soldier from the 11th Field Artillery Regiment, 25th Infantry Division, searches for insurgents who launched mortars at their position near Iskandariyah, Iraq.*

## First Reserve Soldier receives Silver Star for Iraq

As the 724th Transportation Company was welcomed home from Iraq Feb. 25, the first Army Reserve Soldier in the Global War on Terrorism received a Silver Star.

Pfc. Jeremy Church of the 724th was pinned during a homecoming ceremony at Fort McCoy, Wis., with the Silver Star, the Army's third-highest medal for valor.

Church earned the medal when his convoy was attacked April 9 by more than 150 insurgents in an ambush during which Spc. Keith "Matt" Maupin was captured.

Church was the convoy commander's driver in the lead vehicle. The convoy was taking fuel to Baghdad International Airport when the Madr Militia struck. Church's actions are attributed with saving the lives of at least five Soldiers and four civilians.

Church drove aggressively through the "kill zone" to dodge explosions, obstacles and small arms fire, according to his citation. When the convoy commander was shot, Church grabbed his first aid pouch, ripped it open, and instructed the platoon leader to apply a bandage. Church fired his M-16 at the enemy as he continued to drive around barriers.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Chris Farley

*Army Reserve Chief Lt. Gen. James Helmly congratulates Pfc. Jeremy Church after awarding him a Silver Star for valor in Iraq.*

When an improvised explosive device blew out a tire, Church continued driving for four miles on only three tires, all the while firing his M-16 out the window with his left hand. He finally led the convoy into a security perimeter established by a cavalry troop from 2-12 Cav. He then carried his platoon leader out of the vehicle to a casualty collection point for treatment.

Then Church rallied the troopers to launch an immediate recovery mission and escorted them back into the kill zone.

"Pfc. Church identified the assistant commander's vehicle amidst heavy black smoke and flaming wreckage of burning fuel tankers to find two more wounded Soldiers and four civilian truck drivers," his citation reads, adding that after a hasty triage and treating a sucking chest wound, he "carried the Soldier over to one of the recovery vehicles while exposing himself to continuous enemy fire from both sides of the road."

When all the wounded were loaded in the truck, there was no room and Church volunteered to remain behind. He climbed into a disabled Humvee for cover, according to his citation, and continued firing at and killing insurgents until the recovery team returned. He then loaded up several more wounded before sweeping the area for sensitive items and evacuating.

Army Reserve Chief Lt. Gen. James R. Helmly presented Church with the Silver Star. Helmly also spoke with the parents of Maupin, whom was captured in the ambush.

Even though Maupin's Army Reserve unit has returned to its home station of Batronville, Ill., Army officials said other Soldiers in Iraq will never stop the search for Maupin.

# TUSK to update Abrams for urban battle

The Abrams tank is growing a TUSK – that's Tank Urban Survival Kit, a series of improvements, including some still in development.

TUSK will allow Soldiers in the field to improve the Abrams' ability to survive in urban areas off the traditional battlefield for which it was designed.

Lt. Col. Michael Flanagan, product manager for TUSK, said the goal is to help improve the tank's survivability.

The TUSK includes additional protection at the loader's gun station on the turret, the commander's gun station, reactive armor to protect the tank's side from attack by rocket-propelled grenades and slat armor to protect the tank's rear from the same weapon, and the tank/infantry telephone to allow infantry and armor Soldiers to work together in combat.

Flanagan said all the proposed upgrades use "off-the-shelf" technology, and the goal is for the entire TUSK to be applied by units in the field, without requiring a return to a depot for modification.

The first TUSK component to reach the field has been the Loader's Armored Gun Shield, which provides protection to the loader when the Soldier is firing the 7.62mm machinegun on the Abrams' turret. Flanagan said about 130 of the shields have already been purchased and sent to units in Iraq. Incorporated into the loader's firing position is a thermal sight, giving the position the ability to locate and fire on targets in the dark.



*The M1A2 Abrams tank is shown with TUSK improvements that will adapt it for the urban battlefield.*

Also under development are improvements to the commander's station outside the turret, although different systems are necessary for the M1A2 Abrams and its older M1A1 brethren.

Flanagan said the design could also allow the use of the crewed weapon station used on Humvees, but a final determination hasn't been made.

Ultimately, most of these add-ons are incorporated into a kit – installed in the field and removed in the field as a pre-positioned component for the next Abrams unit to take duty in that location. Flanagan said some kits will begin to reach the field later this year. At least some of the kits' components may also be included in new Abrams' production.

## How to get the NCO Journal

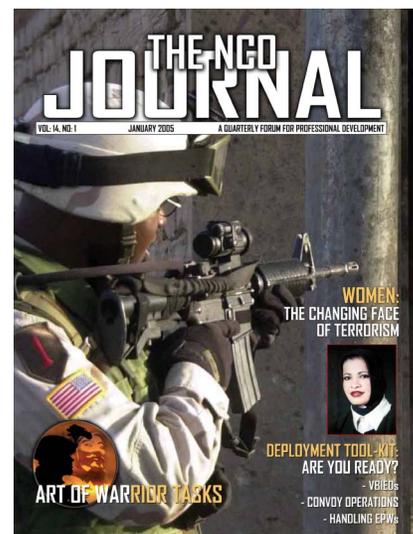
Individual subscriptions to the *NCO Journal* are available through the Government Printing Office at the annual cost of \$16 for domestic and Army Post Office (APO) addresses or \$22.40 for delivery to foreign addresses. The subscription price covers four issues annually. The subscription program is open to all individuals and non-government organizations. Individual copies will also be available for \$5 domestic or \$7 foreign.

To order online, visit the GPO Bookstore at <http://bookstore.gpo.gov>

and type in "*NCO Journal*" at the search field. After the search completes, click on the shopping cart next to the title and follow the instructions provided.

The GPO also accepts orders by calling toll-free at 1-866-512-1800.

Any unit with a publications account can update their 12 series to request the *NCO Journal* using the same procedure they use to request all other publications. They can update their 12 series at the <http://www.usapa.army.mil> Web site. The IDN for the *NCO Journal* is 050041.



## Travel Card info lost, no evidence of fraud, misuse

About 900,000 Defense Department employees may be affected by Bank of America's loss of government travel card information, Pentagon officials said Feb. 25.

The General Services Administration and Bank of America notified DoD that GSA "SmartPay" travel cards are affected. Officials said Bank of America is monitoring the affected accounts and there has been no evidence of fraud or misuse of the accounts.

Bank of America sent letters to affected employees. "Information regarding travel card program accounts for individual card holders has been lost, and it is possible that that information has been compromised, though we don't believe that that is the case," said Teresa McKay, the Defense Department's deputy chief financial officer.

The U.S. Secret Service is conducting the investigation, with help from the Defense Criminal Investigative Service. Officials said that although there has been no evidence of criminal activity, release of details on the circumstances of the loss could jeopardize the investigation.



The information is personal cardholder information — names, Social Security numbers, addresses and account numbers — on magnetic tape. The loss occurred in late December. GSA notified DoD on Jan. 19. McKay said the delay was necessary to protect the integrity of the investigation.

"The bank is in the process of notifying cardholders of the situation," McKay said. "They will be given a special customer service number that has been set

up by the bank specifically for this purpose. If (cardholders) have any questions, they can contact the bank. If they would like, they may request that the bank cancel the card and reissue a card to them."

Bank of America has set up a hotline for those affected. The number is (800) 493-8444. Cardholders who notice irregularities in their accounts should call the Bank of America at the 800 number printed on the back of their cards, McKay said. "If you are an affected cardholder, you may contact Bank of America for information on obtaining a free credit report," she added.

## New policy enables automatic promotion to sergeant

A shortage of sergeants in some specialties has prompted a new Army policy in which corporals and specialists could be automatically promoted without a board.

Under the Army's semi-centralized promotion policy approved Feb. 23, all eligible specialists and corporals (with 48 months in service and a year in grade) will be placed on a promotion list. Then, if a military occupational specialty falls beneath 100-percent strength at the E-5 level, some Soldiers on the list will be automatically promoted.

The new policy could potentially affect about 19,000 corporals and specialists currently in the active component, according to G1 personnel officials.

Commanders will have the ability to remove a Soldier from the Sergeant Recommended List if a Soldier is not trained, or otherwise unqualified. There is a 15-day window after the automatic promotion list is generated for commanders to remove names.

Even under the new policy most promotions to sergeant will still go to those who appear before a promotion board.

The new promotion policy should eliminate specialties that historically have



a shortage of sergeants, known as Star MOSs.

The Army currently has 31 Star MOSs, ranging from 13F (fire support specialist) to 98K (signal collection/identification specialist.) Career fields with STAR MOSs include field artillery, aviation, armor, engineer, communications and information systems, signal, psychological operations, fire control, public affairs, maintenance, chemical, transportation, ordnance, supply and military intelligence.

The Army is currently short 1,549 sergeants in Star MOSs.

In recent months, the number of Soldiers recommended for promotion to sergeant has decreased to just above 10 percent of the eligible population, according to G1 stats. This compares to more than 30 percent of those eligible being recommended for promotion 10 years ago.

The creation of new brigade combat teams and units of action are adding to the shortage of sergeants. New units require senior NCOs, accelerating the promotion of mid-grade NCOs, resulting in more E-5 vacancies.

Soldiers placed on the promotion list automatically, without participating in a promotion board, is given the minimum of 350 points. Purcell emphasized that these Soldiers will not be promoted to sergeant unless an MOS falls below 100-percent operating strength and no other Soldiers with more points are available to promote.

Soldiers who want to receive promotion points based on their actual accomplishments need to go through the promotion board procedures and the processes outlined in AR 600-8-9.

## Safety Center renamed US Army Combat Readiness Center

The United States Army Safety Center has been recast as the United States Army Combat Readiness Center (USACRC) by order of the Secretary of the Army, The Honorable Dr. Francis J. Harvey.

Dr. Harvey directed the change to advance the principles, understanding, and practice of Composite Risk Management.

Combat Risk Management will focus on sustaining readiness and managing all risks – those posed by the enemy, the environment, materiel and systems, and human error – logically shifting from accident-centric to Soldier-centric.

The transformation of United States Army Safety Center to the United States Army Combat Readiness Center supports Army transformation and supports the Global War on Terrorism:

The USACRC will function as a Field Operating Agency of the Chief of Staff,



Army. “Safety” remains a foundational component of the new organization. The Army Safety Office, located in Washington, DC becomes the “front door” of Army Safety by focusing on the compliance aspects and to reinforce the use of Composite Risk Management as a tool to help prevent all loss.

The United States Army Combat Readiness Center will establish new processes leveraging information from Army organizations to collect, distill and distribute knowledge about losses that impact combat readiness. The United States Army Combat

Readiness Center mission includes:

- Primary responsibility for investigation of Army accidents.
- Focal point for instigating the necessary cultural changes and developing the processes, structure, and training necessary to Composite Risk Management Army-wide.
- Development of predictive trend analysis using digital technology and data mining in order to identify loss trends and preventive measures.

Transformation to the United States Army Combat Readiness Center will enhance the roles and functions of safety by providing the Army with a “close-the-loop system” of information about a loss, capturing the analytical expertise of all loss-related professionals – safety and combat – to provide commanders, across the Army, with actionable knowledge about any loss.

## Army misses recruiting goal, raises enlistment bonuses

The Army “is a particularly stressed force” and officials are studying ways to increase recruiting, Pentagon spokesman Larry Di Rita said here today.

The Army missed its February recruiting goals for the active duty, Guard and Reserve forces. It was the first time the service missed recruiting goals in five

years. In February, the active Army’s goal was 7,050 new recruits, and the service fell short by 1,900. All other services made recruiting goals, DoD officials said.

These numbers tend to be cyclical, Di Rita said, and February is not a normal month for young men and women to report for service. But the Army still missed the goal, he said. “The Army has, indeed, increased the incentives,” Di Rita said. “They are hiking enlistment bonuses from \$8,000 to \$10,000.” In some hard-to-fill military occupational specialties, the service has raised enlistment bonuses to \$15,000.

In addition, the Army has increased the number of recruiters on the street by 20 percent. The service has added 950 recruiters to the total recruiting force, Di Rita said.

Working against the military is a solid economy.

Traditionally, officials said, military recruiting does better in bad economic times.

Working both for and against the military is the fact that the nation is at war. Young men and women who enlist probably will go to a war zone, officials said. Many are enlisting to do their duty, said officials. Other potential recruits are shying away from military duty because of that likelihood. “It’s pretty much a wash,” said a Pentagon official. “As many are attracted to service as are repelled.”

Many Americans have a positive image of the U.S. military, and the services are working to get parents – or other “influencers” – to encourage eligible young men and women to enlist. Di Rita said the military is aiming advertising to these influencers. Di Rita said the Army believes it will make up the difference before the end of the fiscal year.

Retention is another story and a bright spot in the picture. In units that have deployed to Afghanistan and Iraq, the re-enlistment rate actually is higher than in units that have not deployed. This is true throughout the total Army – Guard and Reserve retention is higher in units that

have deployed than in those that have not, Di Rita said.



*This article was written by Jim Garamone, American Forces Press Service and appeared on Defenselink, Mar. 3, 2005.*