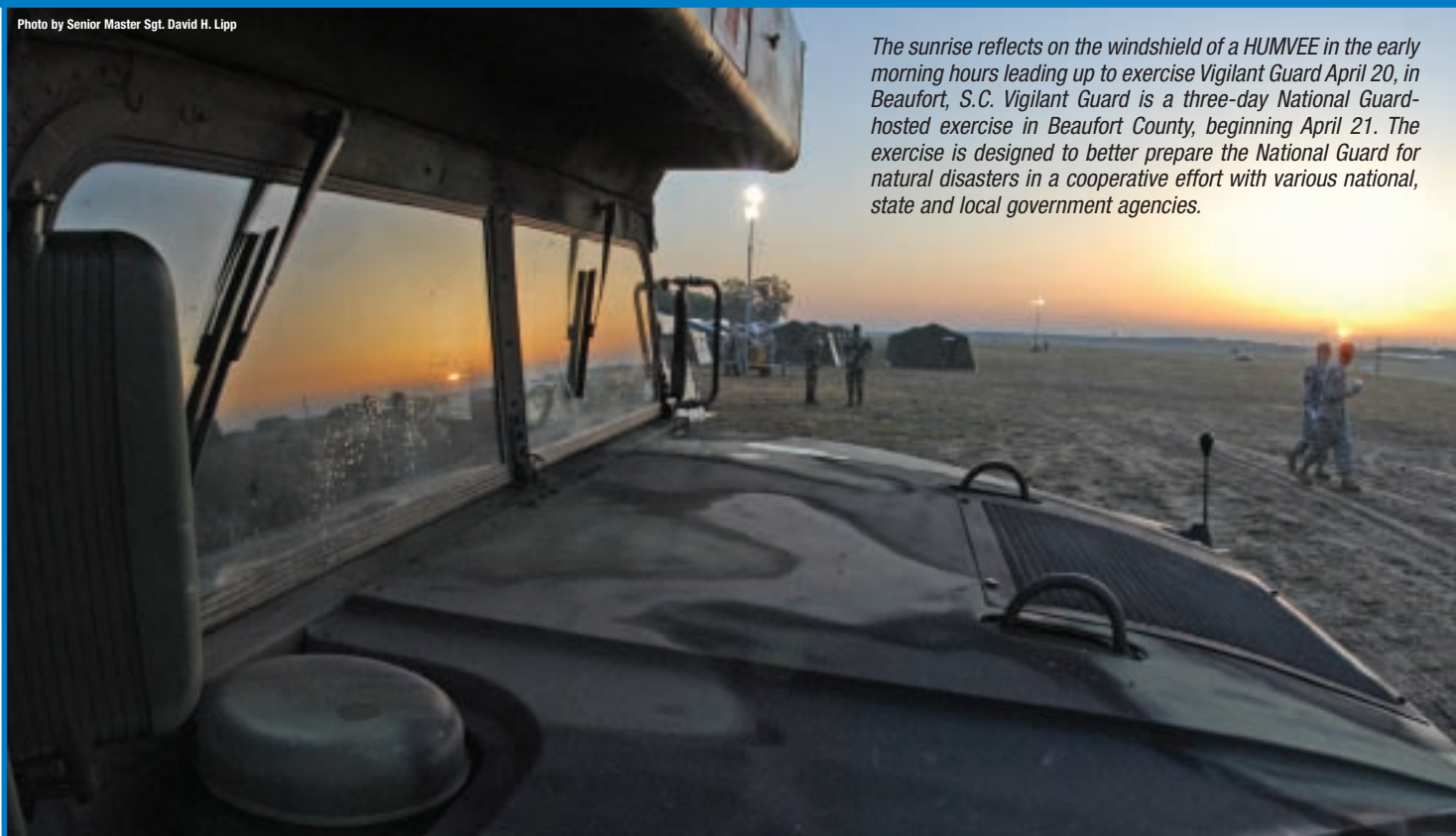


Photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp



The sunrise reflects on the windshield of a HUMVEE in the early morning hours leading up to exercise Vigilant Guard April 20, in Beaufort, S.C. Vigilant Guard is a three-day National Guard-hosted exercise in Beaufort County, beginning April 21. The exercise is designed to better prepare the National Guard for natural disasters in a cooperative effort with various national, state and local government agencies.

Engineers Clear Away Neighborhood Flood Waters

By Staff Sgt. Joe Cashion

Among the many problems created in the wake of a devastating earthquake, flooding is one of the most unpredictable. Homes, property, and roadways can all be severely affected if culverts, trenches or ditches are not properly maintained to handle any additional water.

That's where a portion of the 122nd Engineer Battalion from Saluda swung into action on April 21 during Vigilant Guard 2008 Exercise in Beaufort, S.C.

A team of 10 soldiers, working alongside the Beaufort County Public Works Stormwater Infrastructure, deployed to a residential neighborhood to clear debris and overgrown brush from a trench in order to handle the flood waters.

According to Staff Sgt. Kevin Knowles, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the mission, Vigilant Guard is an opportunity to accomplish a real-world mission in a training scenario that directly benefits the public.

"That's what this exercise is for," said Knowles. "To see how well we work together with civilian authorities in order to help the community."



National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Edward E. Snyder

Operating chainsaws and a wood chipper, two teams of engineers worked from opposite ends of the trench to clear away overgrown trees, weeds, vines and trash that built up over the years.

"We received the call after the (simulated) earthquake hit to come here and clear away a number of areas, with this being one of them," Knowles said. "We needed to give the water somewhere to go other than overflowing the banks."

He said the local population has been supportive of their efforts.

"The community seems very receptive of us so far," he says. "We've had a lot of people thank us for being here and doing what we're doing."

Knowles says that it's important for people to realize that during times of domestic disaster, the National Guard is the first military responder.

"We want to show everyone that the National Guard is not only here for overseas duty, but first and foremost for the community as well." **R&NG**



Master Sgt Mirna Montanez, an Air National Guard airmen from the 7th Civil Support Team (CST) in Missouri, sets up a decontamination site during Vigilant Guard '08, a three-day multi-state exercise designed to enhance the preparedness of the National Guard to perform roles and responsibilities related to Homeland Defense and Military Support to Civil Authorities.

1st Lt. Jason Stockton and Sgt. Gregory Fields take readings at the site of a simulated collapsed building. Both are members of the 45th Civil Support Team, a Tennessee Army National Guard unit based in Smyrna, Tenn. The 45th is one of several Guard units joining state and local organizations participating in Vigilant Guard '08, a Tennessee National Guard-hosted exercise designed to test the National Guard as the first military responder in support of the governor and the Tennessee Emergency Management Agency, in the event of a catastrophic emergency within the state.



Two soldiers from Detachment 1 of the 1221st Engineer Battalion (Route Clearance), a South Carolina National Guard unit from Batesburg, clear debris from a creek that during a training scenario has overflowed the banks in a Beaufort County community. Vigilant Guard 2008 gave these soldiers an opportunity to accomplish a real-world mission in a training environment that resulted in a direct improvement for the community.

National Guard photo by Spc. Tracey Martin