

INSCOM Journal



Spring 2010

The U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command continues to be the Army's operational intelligence force while supporting the warfighter. On average, a thousand INSCOM Soldiers are deployed worldwide every day. (Army photo)

Top Stories

[Making memories](#)

When Pvt. Samuel Najac and Pvt. Yanixa Hayes left their Advanced Individual Training in Texas and headed home to Florida for the holidays, they had no idea that their trip would drastically change their lives forever...

[More](#)

[Bearer of bad news](#)

One of the most challenging additional duties a Soldier can have is casualty notification and casualty assistance. Long gone are the days of a telegram informing a family member that their loved one is gone... [More](#)

[Like a good neighbor](#)

Wherever Soldiers are deployed, INSCOM is ready and able to provide the necessary intelligence support. And one of the reasons that statement holds true is the INSCOM logistics section... [More](#)

[A purpose in life](#)

After eight different boards, Maegan Unthank was selected as the INSCOM Soldier of the Year. Throughout the process, Unthank learned a lot about herself, helping others and being a better leader... [More](#)

[A birthday tradition](#)

Kyle and Bryce Craig are 10 and five, respectively. Those who know these two young men know that what they

lack in age, they more than make of for in heart. .. [More](#)

INSCOM Journal

Making memories

Spring 2010
BY Brian Murphy
INSCOM Public Affairs



Najac and Hayes were traveling home for the holidays when they were involved in the accident, Dec. 20, 2008. (photo by 2nd Lt. Julianne Barcia)

Pvt. Samuel Najac and Pvt. Yanixa Hayes were just two 20-year-olds heading home to Florida for Christmas break.

Hayes had family in Orlando. Najac was heading to his hometown of Winter Haven. Since Orlando was on the way, two Soldiers who didn't know each other all that well agreed to jump in Najac's 2006 Subaru and split the driving from their Advanced Individual Training in San Angelo, Texas, to make the trip more manageable for both parties.

After driving through most of the night, Najac turned the keys over to Hayes and was looking forward to nothing more than closing his eyes and getting some rest. Just a few short hours into his nap though, Najac abruptly awoke to the sound of screeching tires.

"I was asleep in the passenger seat when I heard the loud noise," Najac said. "I started to sit up to see what was going on, and the next thing I know, we were hit really hard and I was out again."

The Soldiers were traveling east on Interstate 10 in Tallahassee on Dec. 20, 2008, when a woman lost control of her Toyota Corolla, crossed over the 50-foot median into oncoming traffic and hit them head on at an estimated 80 miles per hour. The impact was so violent that her Corolla then swung around and caved in the driver's side of their car.

"When I woke up there was blood all over my face," he said. "I didn't know where it was coming from. I wiped as much off as I could, just so I could see what had happened, and stepped out of the vehicle."

Najac passed out immediately.

When he came to, Najac found himself off to the side of the road in a grassy area. With blood still covering his face, he looked back to his wrecked car and immediately noticed three individuals trying to help pry Hayes out of the vehicle.

His natural instinct was to go help Hayes. But before he even got to his feet, Najac passed out again.

As he regained consciousness Najac heard a voice that, even while he was still groggy, immediately caught his attention.

“Someone started screaming that the car was on fire and everyone needed to back away,” he said.

Najac looked over to the vehicle and saw Hayes was still stuck in the car. She was crying and repeating “Oh my God, I’m going to die. I’m going to die” over and over.

A fire had started underneath the hood of the Subaru and as it grew, the individuals who were attempting to free Hayes gave up and backed away from the car. Without giving it a second thought, Najac got to his feet and made his way towards the burning vehicle.

Two gentlemen attempted to stop the bloodied Najac, but he had made up his mind. He hurried to the driver’s side of the car in an effort to pull her out through the window, only to discover that the dashboard had pinned both of her legs.

“I tried to rip open the driver’s side door that was caved in and I managed to break it open, but the dashboard was completely pinning her legs,” Najac said. “I went around to the passenger side, and by that time, smoke began to fill the car. While Private Hayes was still yelling ‘I’m going to die. I’m going to die,’ I began punching the dashboard as hard as I could.”

Najac felt his knuckles pop, but remained undeterred. Eventually, the dashboard gave and he was able to summon enough strength to pull the dash off of Hayes’ knees. Just when it seemed as though he was able to pull her free from the smoke-filled vehicle, they discovered her foot was pinned under the break pedal.

As the flames grew and more people tried to convince Najac to step away from the vehicle for fear of the impending explosion, he put everything he had into one last effort.

“I told her I was going to get her out of there,” he said. “I put both of my hands under her arms and just tugged as hard as I could until she finally came free. When I did, I felt her leg pop. At the time I didn’t know I had broken it, but I felt it as I pulled her out of the car.”

At that point, Najac threw Hayes over his shoulder and got away from the wreckage as quickly as possible. Once he got her to safety and two people helped her off his shoulder, Najac lost consciousness yet again. The next time he woke up, he was at Tallahassee Memorial Hospital.

Both Soldiers walked away from the accident with a severe case of whiplash, as well as various other bruises. Hayes suffered a broken fibula. Najac had two broken ribs and his eyebrow was split open by the impact from the airbag. Both were extremely lucky, considering they were traveling at about 70 miles an hour when hit head on by a car going 80 miles an hour.

The other driver wasn’t as fortunate. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

Battle buddies

Prior to leaving Texas on what was supposed to be a 26-hour trip, Najac and Hayes barely knew each other. The main

reason they ended up in a car together was because it was highly encouraged that any Soldiers driving home for the holidays use the “buddy system” and travel in pairs.

Initially, Najac was supposed to ride home with someone else, but that plan fell through. He scrambled to find a replacement and that’s how Hayes became his “battle buddy.”

“She was a nice person who seemed easy enough to get along with,” he said. “She was kind of shy and wasn’t very talkative, so I knew I wouldn’t be annoyed the whole trip home.”

That was Najac’s assessment of Hayes when they first hit the road together. Not exactly a ringing endorsement. Little did he know how much would change by the end of their trip.

“Hearing her cry like that, there was no way I could sit back and do nothing,” Najac said. “And on top of that she’s a Soldier. At the time, I didn’t really think about it. I just knew I had to do something. I wouldn’t have been able to live with myself if I didn’t.”

For his actions, Najac, now a signals intelligence analyst with the 500th Military Intelligence Brigade, was awarded the Soldier’s Medal during a ceremony in Kunia, Hawaii, Nov. 17, 2009.

“I was shocked when they told me the news,” he said. “I don’t feel like I did anything special. Honestly, I feel like I was doing what a Soldier is supposed to do when something like that happens. It’s a great honor and I realize that this isn’t something that many people are awarded.”

While the Soldier’s Medal was an unexpected surprise, it wasn’t even the best part, according to Najac.

After completing AIT, both Soldiers ended up stationed in Hawaii. They talked on a daily basis. They hung out whenever they had free time, and a few short months later, Najac and Hayes were married.

“As soon as I got there, we were together pretty much every single day,” he said. “We were hanging out all day, every day, and her family was still calling me every other day to check in on me after the accident. You know, now that I think about it, her mother was kind of pushing for it too. But after that first month together, that was it. I knew she was the one.”

The happy couple walked down the aisle, Feb. 19, 2009.

“I married my hero,” Yanixa said. “I married my knight in shining armor. There were definitely times when he first got to Hawaii when I had to pinch myself to see if this was really happening.”

When asked how they spent their one-year anniversary, Najac didn’t hesitate.

“We just wanted to enjoy a great night together,” he said. “As long as we didn’t have to get in a car, we knew we’d be happy.”

Najac can’t help but smile when thinking back over just how much they’ve been through together.

“I guess you could say it was fate,” Najac said. “I’m not sure.”

Fate or not, the happy couple definitely feels that everything happens for a reason.

“I believe in a higher being,” Yanixa said. “I believe we were meant to be together.”

They went through a lot to end up at this point, but now that they're together, the Najacs wouldn't change a thing.

[Back](#)

INSCOM Journal

Bearer of bad news

Spring 2010

BY Staff Sgt. J. TaShun Joyce'

704th MI Brigade



Maj. Dennis Villarreal, 704th MI Brigade chaplain, speaks with a casualty assistance officer. (photo by Staff Sgt. J. TaShun Joyce')

As one of the largest commands on the Fort George G. Meade, Md., installation Soldiers from the 704th Military Intelligence Brigade are frequently called upon to assist in one of the most challenging additional duties that a Soldier can have – casualty notification and casualty assistance.

“It’s very hard to have to knock on someone’s door and tell them their loved one is no longer here,” said Antoinette O’Connor, chief of Fort Meade Casualty Assistance Center, Personnel Operations Branch.

To qualify to be a casualty assistance officer or casualty notification officer a Soldier must be a sergeant first class or above on the enlisted side or captain and above for officers. That said, simply having the required rank doesn’t mean a Soldier is automatically ready to handle such heavy responsibilities.

“Everyone attends a mandatory 16 hours of training,” said Axel Gonzalez, assistant personnel officer, 704th MI Brigade. “There’s no grey area. It’s all black and white. There’s no time for errors.”

In the event that a Soldier is called to perform the duty they are briefed all over again, Gonzalez said. When a Soldier has to perform a notification a chaplain accompanies them. Even after the training requirement is satisfied, they don’t have to handle the situation alone.

“Chaplain professionals are acquainted with grief and the specific help that can be provided during that moment make the chaplain an extra advantage for the family and the casualty notification officer,” said Maj. Dennis Villarreal, the brigade’s chaplain. “We provide the care that chaplains are traditionally called to perform – the care that families usually expect from a minister.”

Having a chaplain on hand is also beneficial to the casualty notification officer.

“I felt nervous having to tell someone their kid was dead,” said Sgt. 1st Class Patrick Leonard, a platoon sergeant with the 741st MI Battalion.” When we first got there the mother invited us in for a drink. She was in denial for about 10 minutes. It was very uncomfortable.”

There is an initial shock factor so the upmost consideration is given to the family and its needs with sensitivity consistent with the traditions of the U.S. Army, Villarreal said.

Leonard prepared for his first notification by visiting the Casualty Assistance Center to receive the Soldier’s enlisted records brief along with the circumstances of death.

He carefully reviewed the available information with the chaplain that accompanied him and followed the standard procedures when he arrived.

“Casualty notification is very critical,” Gonzalez said. “You have specific timelines and guidelines that you must follow. Sometimes you receive very little reaction time. It could be a matter of receiving a phone call, putting on your uniform, and heading to notify the family while picking up the chaplain on the way.”

It is expected that all casualty notifications be made in the same day, Villarreal said. However there may be times that a notification becomes more difficult.

“You would be surprised how many times we’ve done notifications and the address was a vacant lot or they’ve moved years ago but the data on their forms isn’t current,” O’Connor said. “We then become police detectives when we can’t locate the primary next of kin. We have a great relationship with the police departments in the five states we are responsible for. They’ve been very helpful in helping us locate family members.”

O’Connor stressed the importance of carefully reviewing all available information – especially the Department of Defense Form 93, Record of Emergency Data, and the Servicemembers’ Group Life Insurance form to ensure that the right individuals are contacted in the event of a casualty.

“There have been instances where the Soldier has not updated his information, something happens to him and his former spouse is notified and receives the survival benefits that are intended for the Soldier’s current spouse,” Gonzalez said.

Although the situation is corrected promptly, a Soldier providing their most current information on the DD 93 and SGLI form prevents unneeded confusion in the wake of his passing, Gonzalez said.

After the primary next of kin is notified they are contacted by the casualty assistance officer within 24 hours. The casualty assistance officer is knowledgeable of the kind of support the Army can provide to the next of kin and helps to coordinate delivery of that service.

“The Army has changed the way they take care of Families,” O’Connor said.

“There’s no telegram saying we’re sorry that this happened and nothing else. Now a Soldier is there to personally inform you and the casualty assistance officer is there to help for as long as the process takes. Five years from now there will still be someplace where the family can get assistance,” he said.

When Master Sgt. James Eskelsen, of the 742nd MI Battalion, 704th MI Brigade, was assigned as a casualty assistance

officer last year, he quickly realized that this was no ordinary extra duty.

“I was very apprehensive,” he said. “I tried to put myself in their shoes. I thought about what I would be feeling and the questions I would have. Under the circumstances, the training I received prepared me well. It’s absolutely the right thing to do for the families of our comrades and our peers.”

While the mission might be time consuming, casualty assistance officers and casualty notification officers wouldn’t have it any other way.

“It’s an honor to the deceased,” Gonzalez said. “The Army must show that we are taking care of our own. In this case we are taking care of the family as a whole and making sure that everything the Soldier did while serving wasn’t in vain.”

[Back](#)

INSCOM Journal

Like a good neighbor

Spring 2010

BY Staff Sgt. Daniel Balda

INSCOM Public Affairs



Sgt. Maj. Concordio Borja, INSCOM logistics section, has been involved with the LNO program since 2005. (courtesy photo)

The U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command has become the Army's one-stop shop for intelligence, sending Soldiers and Civilians downrange to provide expertise to commanders on the ground while simultaneously supporting the warfighter.

In theory, it's simple. Wherever Soldiers are deployed, INSCOM is ready and able to provide the necessary intelligence support.

But it's a little more complex than that.

Who helps those linguists, intelligence analysts and other INSCOM Soldiers when they need equipment or assistance of their own? In short, who helps the helper?

The INSCOM logistics section (G-4) provides all this and more, and not just from some air-conditioned office half a world away.

At any given time they have a dozen or so Soldiers and/or Civilians deployed as liaison officers to the Central Command area of responsibility providing support to the entire deployed intelligence community with reach-back capability to INSCOM, said Bill Hudson, logistics management specialist, Plans and Programs Division.

One of the more remarkable aspects of the program is that each participant volunteers to be involved.

Take Sgt. Maj. Concordio Borja for example. Borja joined the LNO program in 2005, initially providing support for INSCOM units stationed at Fort Gordon, Ga., but wanted to do more for his comrades-in-arms.

“Send me out there, let me see what you guys are doing and let me help,” he said.

Borja was tasked to bring equipment for a unit deploying from Korea. Once he signed the gear over he asked for another mission, thinking he was done.

“They told me to keep helping,” Borja said.

So help he did. Despite the fact he had never been to Camp Bucca, Iraq, he jumped into his good samaritan role without hesitation.

“I ended up becoming their supply guy,” he said.

Borja obtained food, lodging and transportation for the unit. Shortly after they settled in, they received orders to move to Abu Ghraib. He assisted in that movement as well, including getting their vehicles armored.

“I had no idea what I was doing, but I knew that I needed to assist them,” Borja said. “The thing that saved me was having the ability to call back to INSCOM and say, ‘I need some vehicles uparmored,’ and getting the help I needed.”

This is just one example of why Soldiers like Sgt. Maj. John Latham, another logistics LNO alumnus, thinks the program is an invaluable combat multiplier.

“Because we’ve worked with so many people back at INSCOM, they know that if we’re calling, asking for help, there’s a real need for the Soldiers downrange,” Latham said. “If they don’t have an answer, they’re going to do whatever they can to get help to us as quickly as possible.”

Having senior noncommissioned officers working with the intelligence units downrange doesn’t just assist the warfighter, it also helps the INSCOM Civilians deployed.

When Dennis Ryan, an INSCOM Civilian, deployed, Latham took him around to introduce him to his contacts.

“Civilians don’t have the same access a sergeant major does,” Latham said. “I took him around with me and once people got to know him and what he could do, they had no problem accepting him. You can walk in as a sergeant major and get that access just because you’re a sergeant major.”

Ryan admitted the situation was easier having that extra support.

“It helps having senior enlisted folks because they can open doors,” Ryan said.

The only difference between the job an INSCOM Civilian does in Iraq or Afghanistan and the job an INSCOM senior NCO performs is the uniform.

But regardless of which category LNO personnel fall into, they all agree on why they’re involved in the program.

“If I wasn’t helping Soldiers I wouldn’t be doing this,” Ryan said. “That’s why I went there.”

[Back](#)

INSCOM Journal

A purpose in life

Spring 2010
BY Brian Murphy
INSCOM Public Affairs



After eight different boards, Maegan Unthank was selected as the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command's Soldier of the Year. (Army photo)

While some are fortunate enough to know as a kid what they want to do when they get older, more often than not, it takes a while for folks to figure out what they hope to achieve in life.

That was the case for Maegan Unthank.

The 21-year-old grew up in Apple Valley, Calif., and after high school, headed off to further her education like countless other teens.

However, after two years of college, Unthank decided she needed a change. She wanted to break away from the pack and do something different.

"For years I thought about joining the military, but I wasn't sure which branch I wanted to join," Unthank said.

She can't necessarily put her finger on what first caught her eye about the military; she just knew it would provide the shakeup she was searching for. After careful deliberation, she settled on the Army and enlisted as a signals intelligence analyst in March 2007.

"It sounded very in-depth and engaging," she said. "It sounded like something I wanted to do."

In college, Unthank felt like she was going through the motions. She was doing something because she was supposed to be doing it. Not because she wanted to do it. That all changed once she raised her right hand and repeated the Oath of Enlistment.

“I quickly realized that the Army teaches you how to be the person that you’re going to become more than any other job or profession in this world,” said Unthank, who is a sergeant with the 743rd Military Intelligence Battalion, 704th MI Brigade at Buckley Air Force Base in Denver, Colo. “During my time in, I’ve learned to be myself and be confident in who I am. I’ve learned how to be a leader and how to lead others.”

While many Americans spend their days waiting for the clock to set them free, Unthank is grateful for the opportunity to show up every day and do a job she genuinely enjoys.

“Every day presents a new challenge,” she said. “There is so much new information that you have to keep up with. Sometimes it feels like if you’re gone for one day, you miss an entirely new platform of information. You really have to utilize every resource possible to keep yourself engaged in the world around us.

“The most rewarding part of my job is getting to teach others,” Unthank said. “I really feel like that aspect of the job is directly contributing to the future of this job and our mission worldwide.”

As Unthank continued to grow in her profession and handle increasing responsibilities, it became clear to those around her that she was ready to join the ranks of the noncommissioned officers.

Before sending her off to a promotion board, her chain of command felt it was best to get her some experience by participating in the unit’s Soldier of the Month board.

“My leaders are tasked to instill motivation in Soldiers they identify with potential - Soldiers like Spc. Unthank,” said 1st Sgt. Michael King, first sergeant, Company A, 743rd MI Battalion. “She was shy at first, but now she’s one of our best Soldiers. She’s a natural leader people want to follow. I’ve never seen one Soldier grow so much over the span of a year”

Like her Army career in general, Unthank completely embraced the new challenge and committed to giving her best effort.

“Even if I accomplished nothing, I knew I’d still be able to take so much back to my unit,” she said.

Unthank started out with that first unit-level Soldier of the Month board and eight boards later, was named the U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command’s Soldier of the Year.

“It became a job,” Unthank said of the time commitment involved. “You’re talking about eight hours of studying a day. Countless hours practicing land navigation or working on your uniform. Something like this can’t be a fly-away kind of thing. You really have to put your heart and your soul into something like this. That’s the only way you’ll ever get through.

“This entire process has been so rewarding,” she said. “I’ve had so many quality NCOs help me along the way – showing me how to be a part of a team and how to lean on other people. This has been a huge honor, but I’ve also learned so much. Knowing that I now get to represent all of those Soldiers who helped me out along the way, it just means so much.”

[Back](#)

INSCOM Journal

A birthday tradition

Spring 2010
BY Tina Miles
902nd MI Group



Bryce Craig, along with his brother Kyle, was recognized in a ceremony in appreciation for his support to the 902nd MI Group. (photo by Craig Thoburn)

Just when it looks like all hope is lost and the world is being overrun by a generation of self-centered, “me-first” types, a heart-warming story comes along and restores hope.

Take, for example, Kyle and Bryce Craig – brothers who, at the age of 10 and five, are already setting a standard that many grown-ups would be wise to follow.

Both boys share the same birth month and therefore often share birthday celebrations. Rather than receiving birthday presents for them, the boys ask their party guests to bring an item that could be shipped to Soldiers who were deployed.

While this might be a tough pill to swallow for many young kids, this is something the Craig boys were on board with right away.

The boys began having fundraisers for their birthday parties two years ago. The initial idea was presented to the boys by their parents, who have always tried to instill appreciation into their children. Both Laurie and their father, Phil Craig, wanted Kyle and Bryce to understand there are others who are less fortunate.

The birthday concept came while going through the kids’ rooms to clean out old toys in preparation for new birthday gifts. Laurie realized they had too much “stuff.” Laurie and Phil sat the boys down and asked what they thought about doing a fundraiser for their birthdays. She promised that “mommy and daddy, and their grandparents, would still give them gifts.”

Laurie said, “Surprisingly, they agreed to it without hesitation.”

And according to their mother, Laurie, party-goers have also embraced this unique concept.

“Most guests think it’s a great idea,” she said.

Initially some worried that the boys wouldn’t be receiving any gifts whatsoever. But once the parents explained to the guests that the kids still receive gifts from family members, the idea was a hit.

“Now it’s expected, when you receive an invite to Kyle and Bryce’s birthday party, there will be a fundraiser involved,” Laurie said.

The Craigs have been involved in charitable work for five years, including collecting toys for needy kids at Christmas, teddy bears for the fire department, little bags of goodies for the pediatric department at Harbor Hospital, food for the hungry, various items for the Society For The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and donations for deployed Soldiers.

Laurie and Phil love the fact that they are helping others as a family effort and hope Kyle and Bryce will carry the idea of helping others and being thankful for their blessings, no matter how small, throughout their lives.

“It would be very satisfying to see our boys carry the tradition to their families one day. Phil and I also like having less toy clutter in the house,” Laurie said.

Kyle and Bryce’s parents and grandparents are very proud that the boys are so mature about giving up a few gifts.

“I believe another reason why the boys react so well to the fundraising is that they get to choose who they want to support each year. I come up with a list of fundraisers I believe the kids would be interested in, and Kyle and Bryce make the final decision,” she said.

The 902nd Military Intelligence Group was the lucky recipient of this year’s birthday fundraiser. Soldiers from the group went to Linthicum Elementary School, where the Craig boys attend, to pick-up the donations and personally thanked Kyle and Bryce for their generosity and selfless service.

“Kyle and Bryce demonstrate through their actions qualities we expect out of Soldiers and Army employees with much more maturity and self-awareness,” said Lt. Col. Bruce Johnson, commander, 308th MI Battalion.

“Their personal sacrifice, selfless service and care and concern for our Soldiers is simply amazing. We will forever be tremendously grateful to these boys for their support. Kyle and Bryce make us proud and humble to serve the likes of them,” Johnson said.

The fundraiser wasn’t the only thing these Soldiers should take away from this experience, according to Command Sgt. Maj. Marion Travis, command sergeant major, 902nd MI Group.

“It is truly inspirational that these two young boys could perform such a selfless act of love and compassion for their fellow man,” Travis said. “Kyle and Bryce are an example for all of us, young and old, and their parents should be especially proud. They are our leaders of tomorrow making positive contributions in a sometimes cruel and selfish world today.”

[Back](#)