

## **Professional Development**

### **NGAUS Conference 2006**

#### **Albuquerque, NM**

It was quite an honor to be selected to represent the junior officer's from Iowa at the latest National Guard Association of the United States in New Mexico. Being allowed to partake in all of its traditions, business sessions, and social events was an eye opening experience I don't think I will ever forget.

Each day of the conference provided another opportunity not only to grow in my knowledge of legislative struggles the Guard must go through in order to provide the proper training, funding, and resources needed to function, but also to build friendships and ties with all of the states and territories around the U.S. I would like to mention a few key areas that could be of interest fellow junior officers of the Iowa Guard.

First, it is not every day that you get to listen to a three star respond to questions and concerns from junior officers from around the U.S. Not to mention the fact that the opportunity happened twice over the weekend with LTG Blum, the Chief of Staff for the National Guard, being one of those two. The questions and concerns that I have in response to my unit and what my soldiers have problems with are the same questions being presented in these sessions. Being able to express what truly effects us (officers, NCOs' and enlisted at the lowest level) and have someone at that level listen intently and answer with sincerity and honesty was truly amazing.

Second, I was skeptical on the business sessions when I first found out I could go. I was not sure what type of business being conducted at a state level could possibly have to do with a young 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant like myself. Surprisingly, quite a bit: between the local state's opening ceremonies showing it's rich heritage and the award presentations being giving to so many dedicated individuals, the business session was not at all what I expected. Yet, amongst all of this there was still plenty of business conducted. All those times I have sat there and complained about not having equipment, personnel, or money to be able to accomplish the missions I need to prepare my soldiers finally seemed like it was going somewhere. To see TAG's from different states shake hand and hand with one another and talk about the concerns of the future of the Guard, not just the present, was something that every junior officer should see.

Lastly, and possibly the most alluring to junior officers like myself. The social events were extremely entertaining. When I arrived in New Mexico I really didn't know anyone. I had met a few other officers from Iowa that were there but did not really know them. It did not take long before I not only was talking with Majors and Lt. Colonel's from Iowa but from across the U.S. Also, the professional development sessions put on by NGAUS were not only knowledgeable but were some of the best opportunities to meet junior officer's from other states. Each night provided a different type of social event where people from all over got together to have fun and meet somebody new or talk with somebody met from years past. Personally I was given the opportunity to organize and help those attending from Iowa get around to the best opportunities available. I may have relished a little in the fact that officers well superior to my pay grade were following my plan and commands to make sure the night went smoothly, but it was a great time and everyone had fun.

There are many things I didn't mention in this review of my professional development (like all of the vendors there waiting looking for military contracts, the free food everywhere, the honor everyone takes in representing their state) but I do know that if you are given the opportunity by the state of Iowa to send you there, I would definitely take it. I am already planning on going to next year in Puerto Rico and Hopefully the following year in Baltimore.

Overall, going to the NGAUS conference is one of the best things I have done professionally for my military career because of the relationships, experience, and knowledge that I have gained of what and who is fighting for the Guard and it's future.

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