On Jan. 31 Huntsville/Madison County, Ala., will host a gala grand opening of the Davidson Center for Space Exploration at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center and celebrate the 50th anniversary of the launch of America’s first satellite, Explorer I.

The center is named after Dr. Julian Davidson and his wife Dorothy, who have devoted their careers to space exploration technology and are dedicating this center to the men and women who built the rockets that put Americans in space. Dr. Davidson was an SMDC/ARSTRAT employee from 1960 to 1976.

Starting at 4:45 p.m. and ending around 10 p.m., attendees will hear from Gov. Bob Riley, Walter Cronkite, astronauts Buzz Aldrin and Scott Carpenter and other invited VIPs. Cronkite will receive a Lifetime Achievement Award for Journalism for his coverage of space. The architects of Explorer I celebrate during a 2 a.m. press conference the launch of September 1957.

The need for this training still proves to be vital for Soldiers during the present wartime. Although the climate of Iraq is mostly desert, there are portions of the country that can incur heavy flooding from the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, and since the start of the war, a number of American Soldiers have drowned in the canals that run through Baghdad.

According to Capt. Erich Atkins, the 1st Space Battalion S-4, “We lost three Soldiers to drowning when I was in Baghdad with the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment, and it was because they couldn’t get their equipment off in time.” These tragedies made Atkins realize the importance of water survival training for Soldiers, especially the ones in his battalion. As luck would have it, Atkins ran into an old friend from high school, Janine Disalvatore, who just happened to be the chief of aquatics at the Olympic Training Center here. After some reminiscing about old times, DeSalvatore and Atkins came up with the idea of the battalion conducting water survival training at the Olympic Training Center.
The Command Corner

Lt. Gen. Kevin T. Campbell
Commanding General

CSM Ralph C. Borja
Command Sergeant Major

The first day of the calendar year is one of the world’s oldest holidays. The ancient Babylonians celebrated the concept of the “New Year” more than 4,000 years ago. They also are credited with starting the annual tradition of making a New Year’s resolution. A common resolution during the Babylonian New Year would be to return something borrowed from a friend during the previous year. Today, our resolutions tend to be focused more upon improving ourselves through the cessation of bad habits, or through the strengthening of our good habits. During the past year, I had the pleasure of visiting with many of the Soldiers assigned to our global command. Everywhere I traveled, from the coral sands of Kwajalein Atoll to the frigid tundra of Fort Greely, Alaska, I could not help but note the commitment to duty and the outstanding professionalism of all the personnel assigned to our command. I use the phrase “our command,” because that’s just what it is; an organization of professionals striving for excellence on a daily basis. SMDC/ARSTRAT is a group of outstanding men and women who are focused upon providing space force enhancements and missile defense capabilities vital to the success of the Warfighter in combat and to the overall defense of our great nation.

It’s easy to look back upon the outstanding accomplishments of the men and women of SMDC/ARSTRAT and to be justifiably proud. It might also be just as easy to look back at their accomplishments and become complacent. With this in mind, I would like to urge each of you to add the following to your list of New Year’s resolutions.

COMMITMENT— Both Lt. Gen. Campbell and I are committed to the wellbeing of the personnel assigned to SMDC/ARSTRAT, as well as that of their families. We will do everything in our power to provide each of you with the tools necessary to carry out your assigned mission, and with a strong support structure for your loved ones. In return, I ask that each of you resolve to maintain your current outstanding level of performance and commit to an even higher level of operational success in the coming year.

GROWTH— Professional and personal growth is vital to the overall wellbeing of every Soldier and to their Family members as well. Professional military as well as civilian education helps each of us grow as Soldiers and as contributing members of society. I urge each of you to resolve to grow both professionally and personally during 2008. Start and/or complete the appropriate level of professional military education. Take a civilian course that expands your mind and increases your abilities.

LEADERSHIP— I expect you to continue to lead by example. I also ask that each of you resolve to use your leadership positions to help the other members of SMDC/ARSTRAT to achieve growth and increased commitment. Provide your troops with the time and encouragement necessary to complete their educational goals. Recognize their individual as well as group achievements. Help our Soldiers feel valued by showing your commitment to them as well as to the mission. 2007 was an excellent year. Each of you played a role in the successes we enjoyed, and I believe each of you will play a vital role to our continued success during 2008. Let’s all resolve to make 2008 an outstanding year!

Secure the High Ground!

The Eagle... is an authorized unofficial newspaper published for military and civilian members of the U.S. Army Space and Missiles Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command published under the authority of AR 360-1. The editorial style applies the industry standard Associated Press Stylebook. Contents of The Eagle are not necessarily official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. Government, Department of Defense, Department of the Army, or SMDC/ARSTRAT. This monthly newspaper uses offset reproduction and has a circulation of 2,250. Reader input is solicited and welcomed; however, no payment will be made for such contributions. For more information about SMDC/ARSTRAT or to view The Eagle on-line, visit our Web site at www.smcd.army.mil.
The Eagle asks:
Do you make New Year resolutions?
If so, what are they? If not, why not?

Yes, I made a resolution to start exercising and get in shape even and although round is a shape, I’d like to get into better condition. Am I going to keep it? I’m trying, I’m watching my diet but I so need to exercise. I can’t afford a whole lot of new clothes so I’m working at exercising!

John Upp
Information Management Specialist, CIO/G-6
Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

I don’t make resolutions because they are ridiculous!

Michael Miller
Custodian
Phoenix Services
Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

No, I don’t. I don’t like feeling guilty and depressed at the end of January.

Maj. Seamus Smallwood
Strategy and Policy Division
DCS, G3
Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

Yes, I’ve made a couple of resolutions. One is to lose weight and the other is to do a better job at my work place. I always want to do better at the things I do.

Karen M. Price
Computer Operator
CAMO
Phoenix Services
Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

I do make new year resolutions as I view the new year as a time for renewal. For example, one can focus on renewal of relationships with friends, family and most importantly God. Also, given that we’re usually celebrating the last day of Kwanzaa during the first day of the new year, I look forward to creating resolutions that align themselves with the seven principles of Kwanzaa—these principles are firmly rooted in positive actions. By the way, the seven principles include Unity (Umoja), Self Determination (Kujichagulia), Collective Work (Ujima), Cooperative Economics (Ujamaa), Purpose (Nia), Creativity (Kuumba) and finally Faith (Imani). This year’s resolution is to “live simply in order that others may simply live.”

Karen M. Price
Computer Operator
CAMO
Phoenix Services
Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

I don’t make resolutions because I just can’t keep them. I don’t like lying to others let alone to myself!

Joan McGee
Office Automation Assistant
Technical Center
Redstone Arsenal, Ala.

A note from the Editor

By Diane Schumacher

Attribution was inadvertently omitted:
Lisa Vann, chairperson for the Soldier dedication, led Dorne Combs and Maj. Michael Belton in creating the emotional slide show which was dedicated to the Soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan that was shown during the SMDC/ARSTRAT holiday social on Dec. 7. Vann also coordinated the efforts in gathering the photos of SMDC/ARSTRAT employees which were incorporated into the slide show which made it all the more personal to audience viewers.

AKO site warns: beware of phishing!

All Army Knowledge Online/Defense Knowledge Online users are asked to be vigilant in combating phishing attacks.

Users are reminded that AKO/DKO will never solicit personal or account information by mass e-mail. Recent examples include e-mails appearing to be from AKO and from commercial sources such as Bank of America.

Any e-mail asking you for personal or AKO/DKO account information should always be treated as fraudulent. If you do receive such e-mail, do not respond to it or click any included links found inside. Instead, report the issue to your local information management officer and report it to AKO by sending an e-mail to report.abuse@ us.army.mil. More information about how to protect yourself from phishing can be found by reading the document “What is Phishing?”

This news alert appears on the AKO Web site home page.
Safety

At home: Preparing for a snow storm

While the winter season ushers in outdoor fun, it can bring hazardous conditions that pose a serious safety threat. Ranging from moderate snow over a few hours to blizzard conditions that last several days, a winter storm is not something to mess around with. Your best defense is to be prepared. Plan ahead to keep your family and home safe.

Winterize your house

Don’t wait until the first snow to think about preparing your house for winter weather, do it in the fall. Be energy efficient and keep the cold out by installing storm windows or covering your windows with sturdy plastic. Fill in any cracks around windows and doors with caulk or weather stripping. Insulate pipes and remove hoses from outdoor water faucets. Be sure to have a good snow shovel and keep plenty of rock salt or sand on hand for slippery driveways and walks. Look around the yard to determine if any trees might pose a hazard to the house if they were to fall. Consider having them removed by a professional tree service.

When a snow storm approaches

A severe snow storm could keep you trapped in your home for several days or longer. If you heat with wood, oil or bottled gas, check your fuel supply and call for a delivery before the storm hits. Conserve fuel by keeping your house cooler than usual. Temporarily shut off heat to less-used rooms. Let faucets drip a little to prevent heat loss. Cover windows with blankets at night. Stay nourished and hydrated so your body can produce its own heat.

Protecting your pets

Dogs

No matter what breed your canine is, a pair of doggie boots is essential when there is snow or ice on the ground. Many dogs have sensitive foot pads, and snow or ice can make walking very uncomfortable. Just imagine being forced to walk through snow barefoot!

In addition to the frost factor, ice balls can develop in between the pads and toes on your pet’s paws, causing pain with every step. Another winter element to be cautious of is salted streets and sidewalks. For pups with sensitive or injured foot pads, the salt can be very irritating and cause the pads to become sore and swollen. Boots are the best way to prevent damage to your dog’s paws. However, if you opt not to use them, make sure you gently wash and dry your pet’s paws after every walk. This will help to remove salt, excess ice, and sand stones and twigs that can get caught and cause discomfort.

Dogs with long hair are better suited for the cold weather. They can be outside for short intervals, but make sure to pay attention to signs that they are getting too cold. Some signs include: shivering, whimpering, repeated lifting of paws, and lethargy. If the temperature dips below freezing, do not let your pet outside unsupervised.

Short-haired dogs can be allowed out in snow and freezing temperatures for just short intervals, but make sure to pay attention to signs that they are getting too cold. Some signs include: shivering, whimpering, repeated lifting of paws, and lethargy. If the temperature dips below freezing, do not let your pet outside unsupervised.

Cats

While most dogs need to get out every day, cats are often content to curl up inside especially when the temperatures are low and the snow is blowing. Try keeping your cat inside for the winter, but if your feline is the adventures type, there are a few precautions you should take. One is to make certain your cat has a warm place to sleep if he does not come back in time to be let in. Be sure to create a bed with dry straw or blanket strips in a sheltered area such as the garage or under the porch.

Driving Safety

If you’re out of the office and on the road when you’re on the job, keep in mind that you are still at risk for a work-related injury, a traffic accident. Roughly 2,000 people are killed each year in work-related highway driving accidents. From 1992 to 2001, nearly 14,000 civilian workers were killed in roadway crashes. In fact, roadway crashes were the number one cause of death for U.S. workers, accounting for 22 percent of all fatalities.

Accidents that most people consider to be the most common work-related are falls, they made up 10 percent of worker injuries during that same period.

With over 210 million vehicles registered in the United States, it shouldn’t be surprising that a large number of them are used for work-related driving. Also consider that 4.2 million people work full-time while on the road. For these people, most accidents while on the job can only occur in one way, a traffic accident. Many of these people are in jobs other than trucking or transportation.

Roadway crashes are the number two cause of death among executives, sales workers and technicians.

These tragic accidents have an economic cost to employers as well as employees. An injured employee may lose wages he/she could have had if he/she wasn’t injured, which means an employer loses productivity from that employee being off the job.

In 2000, lost wages and benefits alone cost employees $61 billion dollars. Employer costs were in excess of $4 billion dollars, including lawsuits that stemmed from work-related driving accidents. The good news is that there are ways to minimize these accidents.

Both employers and employees need to be proactive. An employer should design, implement and monitor strategies that combine traffic safety principles and sound driving practices. Safe vehicle operation begins outside the vehicle with the employer and carries over inside the vehicle with the employee. Together, they can make our roads a much safer place.

See Driver Safety on page 5

Employers:

• Promote safe driving behavior by providing safety information.
• Set and enforce driving safety policies.
• Assign a manager to monitor and enforce safety policies.
• Enforce mandatory seat belt use.
• Do not require workers to drive irregular hours: extended hours or irregularly extended hours.
• Provide safe vehicles: perform regular vehicle maintenance.
• Ensure workers have a valid driver’s license for class of vehicle.
• Make sure your employees are insured.
• Provide training for specialized vehicles.
• Teach workers how to recognize and manage driver fatigue.
• Maintain records of employee driving records.

Breathe easy. Winterize your house and protect your pets.

Drivers, take the necessary precautions.
Armored officials are empowering Family members to take an active role in implementing safety practices to protect their Families and loved ones returning home from deployments. The Army recognizes that Army Families are a highly powerful group, capable of positively influencing how Soldiers and Family members think.

The Army’s new Family Engagement Kit raises Families’ awareness of the leading indicators in accidents while passing along the “what” and “how” of best practices. Armed with these newly created tools, Family members are afforded active involvement in their Soldiers’ safety.

The U.S. Army Combat Readiness/Safety Center study of accident and associated statistics, indicates when Soldiers return from a deployment-controlled environment, the rigors and oversight provided by leaders is diminished. Between fiscal years 2002 and 2007, 186 Soldiers died within one year of returning from deployments. Approximately 30 percent of the deaths occurred within the first 30 days of post-deployment and 63 percent within the first six months. Of the 186 fatalities, 145 involved privately owned vehicles during off-duty hours. Army safety officials are convinced that increased oversight control and structure are beneficial to achieve an accident-free environment. The USACRC’s collective challenge is to formulate tools that target safety and risk management as a “way of life” for application when Soldiers are off duty.

“As leaders, we know that direct engagement with our Soldiers makes a positive difference in their safety,” said Brig. Gen. Bill Forrester, director of Army safety and the Army’s chief of Safety. “No one knows Soldiers better than their Families and there are few organizations better positioned than Families to influence Soldiers to make safer choices and take fewer risks.”

Forrester added that the USACRC believes it is extremely difficult to look a spouse or child in the eye and tell them you are not going to wear your helmet or a seat belt because you don’t care enough to stay alive for them.

“The Family Engagement Kit features tools that Family members can use to encourage their loved ones in best safety practices in order to help protect them,” said Forrester. “Many take very little time or effort, and the payoff is huge.”

In all, the kit includes six tools for post-deployment best practices. One such tool is the Travel Risk Planning System, better known as TRiPS. The aim of TRiPS is to “reduce the risk of accidents when traveling by P0V, the No. 1 killer of Soldiers. Another potentially life-saving tool included in the kit is the Motorcycle/ATV Agreement. This tool encourages Families and their Soldiers to discuss the hazards and safety measures associated with riding motorcycles or all-terrain vehicles.

These web-based tools are self-explanatory, self-supporting with PowerPoint briefs containing associated talking points.

The Army’s goal is to put these tools into the hands and empower Army Family Team Building trainers, Family Readiness Group leaders, brigade-level safety professionals, BOSS leaders, parents, and individual Family members to keep our Army team safe. Forrester added.

Families are encouraged to embrace the Family Engagement Kit as another tool supporting one common desire – safer Soldiers and Families. “Family involvement is essential,” the Army’s chief of Safety said. “With your help, we can better protect our Nation’s most precious assets – our Soldiers.”

For more information about the Family Engagement Kit, visit the USACRC Web site at crc.army.mil/familyengagement.

Driver Safety continued from page 4

Employees:

• Attend/complete all driver safety training offered by employers.
• Wear seat belts at all times.
• Keep a reasonable and safe distance behind other vehicles.
• In the event of a developing hazard, apply brakes gradually.
• Be aware of road conditions: heat, rain, snow and ice.
• Keep track of traffic by looking far down the road.
• Be attentive to surroundings; keeps eyes moving to spot problems before you reach them.
• Check rearview mirrors frequently.
• No cell phone use while driving, pull over to side of road to make phone call.
• Signal lane changes early as well as any turns.
The ‘end of the screwdriver’

By Capt. Tim Brower
49th Missile Defense Battalion, (GMD)

FORT GREELY, Alaska — The “stars” were out at Fort Greely Dec. 15 as a host of distinguished visitors joined the installation for its annual Holiday Ball.


Lt. Gen. Campbell was the guest speaker for the event. He emphasized that the missile defense program at Fort Greely was an enduring mission that would last as long as U.S. Army Europe and U.S. Forces Korea last. Campbell described the Soldiers, Families, and contractors at Fort Greely as being at “the end of the screwdriver” at the remote Alaskan base.

He thanked all involved saying, “I appreciate from the bottom of my heart what you’re doing up here.”

Also visiting Fort Greely were Kathy Campbell, wife of Lt. Gen. Campbell and Nguyet Borja, wife of Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Borja received U.S. Army Garrison – Fort Greely’s Quality of Life Plan to better understand the challenges at Fort Greely and to provide feedback to the Garrison Plans, Analysis and Integration office.

The Quality of Life Plan is an integrated effort between the Garrison and its customers. It is a working, living document that serves as a baseline report on the current quality of life and highlights Garrison’s plans for the future.

When asked about the Quality of Life Plan at Fort Greely, Mrs. Campbell replied, “I was happy to see that there is a plan in place. In my view, the plan addresses needs that will improve the quality of life for the current residents and for those who will come to Fort Greely over the next years. “I was also impressed with the recent establishment of the quality of life council,” she said. “I think this Plan to better understand everyone’s voice is heard. I realize that some of the initiatives will take years to complete, but having a plan is the first step, and without the first step, progress would be difficult.”

Overall, the Soldiers, Families, and contractors at Fort Greely were thrilled to have this group of leaders visit during this frigid time of year where temperatures dip to minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit and the sun shines for little more than four hours.

Experiencing Fort Greely at this time of year gives these leaders a better appreciation for life at “the end of the screwdriver.”

Shantel Mathison, wife of Military Police Officer Staff Sgt. Richard Mathison, is awarded the Molly Pitcher award by Lt. Gen. Kevin T. Campbell during the 2007 Team Greely Holiday Ball on Dec. 15. The Honorable Order of Molly Pitcher recognizes women who have voluntarily contributed in a significant way to the improvement of the Air Defense Artillery community.

Among the more than 230 attendees at the ball were the senior leaders of the missile defense mission at Fort Greely. Alaska which included, left to right: Command Sgt. Maj. Sylvia Laughlin, Fort Greely Garrison command sergeant major; Command Sgt. Maj. Maj. Gordon Choate, Alaska National Guard State command sergeant major; Brig. Gen. Craig Christensen, assistant adjutant general Space and Missile Defense; Brig. Gen. Thomas Katkus, assistant adjutant general — Alaska Army National Guard; Maj. Gen. Craig Campbell, adjutant general, Alaska National Guard; Col. Michael Yowell, commander, 100th Missile Defense Brigade; Command Sgt. Maj. Ralph Borja, command sergeant major, SMDC/ARSTRAT; and Lt. Col. Gregory McClinton, Fort Greely Garrison commander.
The holidays are a time of celebration and joy. It is a time to spend with family and friends; but also to remember those who are in harm’s way, unable to enjoy the happiness of the season. Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 53rd Signal Battalion, embraced the season of celebration, hosting a Dining Out for the Soldiers, Families, and friends of the unit.

The Dining Out was held at the Doubletree Hotel in Colorado Springs. It was a snow filled evening as spouses, escorted by their Servicemember husbands and wives, made their way to the lobby for pre-dinner cocktails. Formal photos were available for those who wanted to catch the grandeur of the evening as dress uniforms and fancy evening gowns were the proper attire. At exactly 6:30 p.m., mess call was trumpeted throughout the building, signaling that the formal ceremony was about to begin.

Members made their way into the dining room, quickly finding their seats. The March of the Sergeant Major began to play, letting everyone know that the official party was about to enter. Capt. Michael Euperio, commander of HHC, was the presiding official of the event. The President’s number two, “Mr. Vice,” was Capt. Gary Kelly and the guest of honor was 53rd Signal Battalion’s Command Sgt. Maj. Terence Farmer. After the official party made their way to their seats, Euperio opened the mess (dinner).

The evening was filled with much celebration and entertainment. The grog ceremony is a time-honored tradition, allowing noncommissioned officers of the unit to mix a special drinking concoction for fellow members of the unit to drink and “guaranteed” to keep them warm. 1st Lt. Bryan Blocklinger and Sgt. 1st Class Michelle Waychoff did the first tasting of the mixture, declaring it fit for human consumption.

The various squads within HHC provided entertainment for the group. Performing skits, they elicited much laughter from the crowd. Sgt. Jose Mosquera performed a realistic impersonation of Euperio, giving a week-end safety brief. In addition, he was able to pull off the commander’s determined attitude for perfection when dealing with the haircuts he gets. Staff Sgt. Stephen Bahn told the tales of many temporary duty assignments, shedding some light on what happens during those trips. He was able to realistically demonstrate Chief Warrant Officer 2 James Henry’s uncanny ability to wake up from a dead sleep to give directions and then just as quickly fall back into his deep slumber.

The highlight of the evening was the guest speaker, Command Sgt. Maj. Farmer. Speaking of the history and future of the unit he presented guidance on the path that the 53rd Signal Battalion will be traversing in the upcoming years. Receiving much applause at the conclusion of his speech, he was presented an engraved pen set for taking the time to join the celebration.

The evening drew to an end as Euperio closed the ceremony, allowing for dancing and more celebration through the night.

The holidays are a time for togetherness and the Dining Out fit that bill exactly for HHC, 53rd Signal Battalion.
Salaries and wages

The President has signed an Executive order to implement the January 2008 pay adjustments. The Executive order authorizes a 2.5 percent across-the-board increase for the statutory pay systems under the provisions of 5 U.S.C. 5303 and locally pay increases costing approximately 1.0 percent of payroll under 5 U.S.C. 5304, reflecting the overall average pay increase of 3.5 percent required by section 740 of Division D of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2008. Under 5 U.S.C. 5318, Executive Schedule (EX) rates of pay will be increased by 2.5 percent (rounded to the nearest $100). The 2008 salary tables are posted on the U.S. Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM’s) Website at http://www.opm.gov. The 2008 pay rates became effective on the first pay period beginning Jan. 6, 2008.

Senate approves whistleblower protection bill

The Senate on Dec. 17 adopted by unanimous consent a bill to strengthen the Whistleblower Protection Act (WPA) for federal government workers, despite threats of a veto from President Bush. The bill, S. 274, provides a government accountability loophole created last year when the Supreme Court’s Garcetti v. Ceballos decision restricted due process rights for government workers carrying out their job duties. A similar version passed the House with a veto-proof margin. In addressing the court decision, the bill makes it clear that the WPA applies to all lawful communication of misconduct. The bill also strengthens the due process enforcement structure for WPA paper rights, and applies them to a broader set of harassment scenarios, such as security clearance actions, retaliatory investigations and gag orders, said the Government Accountability Project (GAP), a watchdog group that supported the bill.

Healthier federal employees

HealthierFeds provides information and education to Federal employees about healthy living, greater individual responsibility for personal health, and best-treatment strategies. Through the 2007 initiative, the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) worked with Federal agency fitness and wellness leaders to promote healthy behavior decisions among Federal employees. HealthierFeds fully supports President Bush’s HealthierUS initiative for a healthier America. The “Four Pillars,” or key elements, of this initiative were:

- Be physically active every day;
- Eat a nutritious diet;
- Get preventive screenings;
- Make healthy choices.

As envisioned by HealthierFeds, effective worksite health promotion programs in Federal workplaces have the potential to influence a number of important factors:

- Reduce increases in health care costs;
- Enhance employee productivity;
- Shift health care from a “treatment” paradigm;
- Reduce absenteeism and presenteeism;
- Help employees take responsibility for lifestyle choices.

While the HealthierFeds Fitness Challenge occurred and completed during 2007, there’s no reason why anyone can’t and shouldn’t carry on with a health program during 2008. Ongoing consultation and support for Federal agency health and wellness programs continues. For further information about HealthierFeds contact the OPM Work/Life group at worklife@opm.gov.

Cost-of-living adjustments to civil service retirement benefits - how is COLA determined?

The U.S. Department of Labor calculates the change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for urban wage earners and clerical workers from the third quarter average of the previous year to the third quarter average for the current year. For Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or Organization and Disability Retirement System (ORDS) benefits, the increase percentage is applied to your monthly benefit amount before any deductions, and then added to your next check. For Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) or FERS Special benefits, if the increase in the CPI is 2 percent or less, the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) is equal to the CPI increase. If the CPI increase is more than 2 percent but no more than 3 percent, the COLA is 2 percent. If the CPI increase is more than 3 percent, the adjustment is 1 percent less than the CPI increase. For further information, go to the OPM Web site: www.opm.gov/retire.

Bill to help Vets through mortgage crisis

House Committee on Veterans’ Affairs Chairman Bob Filner (D-CA) introduced a pair of bills to address the needs of veterans during the ongoing subprime mortgage market crisis. The current VA home loan program is irrelevant because fees for the loans are too high and equity requirements are overly restrictive. As a result, veterans are forced to turn to the commercial mortgage market, which is risky and volatile,” says Chairman Filner. "Loan products in this market offer non-traditional features that have recently lead to the rise in delinquency and foreclosures in the subprime market among the veteran population." H.R. 4883, the Veteran Home Loan Guaranty Improvement Act of 2008, will make home loans more accessible to veterans by easing restrictions on the home loan guaranty programs administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The bill eliminates the equity requirements for refinancing in response to the declining home values which prohibit many veterans from qualifying for the benefit. The bill also reduces the VA guaranteed home loan funding fees to one percent and eliminates the funding fees for veterans seeking to refinance a home loan, among other things. H.R. 4883 will prohibit foreclosures of property owned by a servicedenue for one year following a period of military service. For many of our returning servicemembers and veterans, the stress of what they have gone through in war is still prevalent when they return home,” continued Chairman Filner. "Unfortunately, many of these heroes, subprime loans are the only option when they do not have the best credit score, and more often than not, their low credit score is a direct result of their service to our country. These bills protect veterans from predatory lending, increase opportunities for homeownership and protect veterans from foreclosure for a whole year after their military service."
Arch rival’s startling success spurs
America’s entry into long space race

By Mark Hubbs, SMDC/ARSTRAT Historical Office

Although Oct. 4 is seldom recognized as a significant day in history by most people, the events of that day in 1957 forever altered the course of Soviet and American history. On that day, the Soviet Union surprised the world with the launch of the first “artificial moon” or satellite. Sputnik (Russian for “Traveling Companion”) was a 184-pound aluminum satellite, 23 inches in diameter. It had a radio transmitter and four antennas which broadcast a clear series of “beeps” to the earth’s surface. John Gibson, who was an Army scientist lent to the American-Made Redstone Arsenal, was assigned the duty of monitoring Sputnik’s orbits and transmissions. The satellite was at an altitude of 560 miles and was making an elliptical orbit every 96 minutes. Gibson noted that it had “two radio transmitters on wavelengths of 7.5 and 15 meters ... sending a continuous alternating telegraph like signal with pulses being about 0.3 seconds apart.”

The American satellite program and its American counterpart grew out of the International Geophysical Year (IGY) of 1957-1958. The IGY was conceived by the International Council on Scientific Unions in 1952 and was intended to provide an internationally coordinated series of observations of various geophysical phenomena. Although 67 countries eventually became involved with the IGY, only the Soviet Union and the United States committed to developing artificial satellites as part of the program.

The Sputnik radio transmission served only one purpose, to broadcast Soviet success and to prove to the world that the satellite was indeed in orbit. Sputnik’s career was short — it fell back to Earth only three months after it was launched. Despite its short life and limited ability, its affect on the world was immediate and long lasting.

Although the United States had been developing its own satellite, it was unaware that the Soviets had achieved so much, so soon in their own research. The Soviet technical achievement caught the world’s attention and the American public completely off guard. Congressional and public outrage resulted with the correct perception that the Soviets had surpassed the United States scientifically.

Before the shock of Sputnik subsided, the Soviets launched Sputnik II on Nov. 3. At 1,100 pounds this satellite was six times the size of Sputnik I and carried “Laika” a small dog. Laika survived the launch but perished when his capsule failed to separate from its booster on reentry. The Soviets touted Sputnik as a great achievement because none of its engineering tasks for this larger satellite had been started until after the launch of Sputnik I.

The continued success of the Sputnik program further inflamed public opinion on the government’s lack of a space program. Some scientists also suggested that the Soviet’s ability to place an object in orbit translated to an ability to accurately target the United States and Europe with nuclear tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles. G. Mennen Williams, the Governor of Michigan, wrote a poem about the Sputnik crisis:

"Oh little Sputnik, flying so high With made-in-Moscow beep You tell the world it’s a Commie spy And Uncle Sam’s ashes!

Senate Majority Leader Lyndon B. Johnson recalled of Oct. 4, 1957, "Now, somehow, in some new way, the sky seemed almost alien. I also remember the profound shock of realizing that it might be possible for another nation to achieve technological superiority over this great country of ours.”

As a result, Sputnik, Johnson opened hearings of the Senate Armed Services Committee in late November 1957 to review the entire scope of American missile defenses and the space program. The Committee found serious underfunding, redundancy and chaotic organization in America’s space efforts.

George Reedy’s (one of Johnson’s Senate staffers) comments were typical of most Americans, “The simple fact is that we can no longer consider the Russians to be behind us in technology. It took them four years to catch up to our atomic bomb and nine months to catch up to our hydrogen bomb. Now we are trying to catch up to their satellite.”

Although the White House had announced plans to place a satellite into orbit in July 1955, these efforts had received no serious attention or funding. After reviewing several proposals, the Navy’s Vanguard program had been chosen over the Army’s Explorer project based at Redstone Arsenal under Dr. Wernher von Braun. This changed after Sputnik, when the Defense Department responded to the political storm and concurrently funded the Army’s program.

Vanguard exploded on the launch pad on Dec. 6, 1957, much to the embarrassment of the Navy and the Defense Department. However, von Braun’s Army team did what Vanguard could not. With only about six weeks of preparation time, the Army’s Explorer I lifted off the launch pad on top of a Jupiter-C rocket from Cape Canaveral, Fla. on Jan. 31, 1958.

The U.S. Army had put America into space for the first time, and Redstone Arsenal would forever be changed as it became the center of Army, and later NASA, rocket and missile technology development.

Explorer I’s orbit around the Earth ranged from 220 miles to 1,563 miles. The satellite was equipped with radiation detection equipment.

Explorer I continued from page 1

first and second section and the development of a new third stage to deploy a satellite.

Although preliminary tests had proved promising, the first complete Vanguard test, on Dec. 6, 1957, exploded seconds after lift-off.

In the interim, on Oct. 4, 1957, Secretary of Defense designate Neil McElroy was at Redstone Arsenal for an inspection visit of the Army’s rocket and guided missile capabilities. That evening, with the news of the Sputnik launch, Dr. Wernher von Braun announced that the Army Ballistic Missile Agency could launch an American satellite within 60 days. Maj. Gen. John Medaris, ABMA Commander, concurred only modifying the time span to 90 days.

Five days after the launch of Sputnik II, on Nov. 5, McElroy ordered the Army to modify two Jupiter-C missiles and attempt to place a satellite into orbit in March 1958. Just 84 days later, the Army was ready to go. Modifications made to the Jupiter-C and its satellite payload were completed. The weather however proved poor.

The countdown at Cape Canaveral began on Jan. 29 but was halted, by Medaris, due to high winds. The next day, the launch was postponed, just before the liquid oxygen stage of the rocket, due to gales in the upper atmosphere. On Jan. 31 the launch go-ahead was given and the Army achieved another first. At 10:55 p.m., the Army had launched the first American satellite into orbit.

Footnotes:
1 Modeled after earlier coordinated international studies, the IGY went from July 1957 through December 1958.
2 Ultimately 67 countries participated in this opportunity to study geophysical phenomena across the globe. Areas to be studied included: auras, aurora and airglow, cosmic rays, geomagnetism, glaciology, gravity, microparticle physics, longitude and latitude determination (precision mapping), meteorology, oceanography, rocketry, seismology, solar activity. The NRL was viewed as a scientific research facility to apply to a joint Army-Navy-Air Force concept which used already developed Ordnance Department weapons technology. The Jupiter-C was a modified Redstone ballistic missile lengthened by eight feet to include additional propellant, with a boosted stage consisting of a ring of 11 scaled-down Sergeant rocket engines, a third stage with a cluster of three scaled down Sergeant rockets and a fourth stage was a scaled down Sergeant rocket with the Explorer I.
UNIT REPORTER, CHARLIE COMPANY 53RD SIG. BN.
LANDSTUHL, Germany — Early in the month of December, Santana and his family Santana took a small trip to check his mail at Landstuhl Medical Center, Germany (the mail room). Upon his arrival, he noticed that there was a small slip that indicated a package in his mailbox. Thinking nothing of it, Santana retrieved the slip and waited patiently for his mail, hoping that he had received something he might have ordered from Amazon.com.

A couple of minutes went by and the mail clerk came back with an unexpectedly big and regrettable, heavy package. The package had none of the wrappings that denoted any affiliation to anything that Santana would buy online, and to make matters worse, he did not recognize the sender.

Caution quickly turned to annoyance as Santana made his way to an open area of the hallway to inspect the package. “I kept picturing the long walk back to the car with the box in front of me, as I looked from left to right, wondering if it would look weird if I just walked away from this box,” joked Santana. Still, he knelt and opened the box, all the while entertaining the fleeting notions of escape. Curiously, various items of different colors glanced back at him.

As Santana made his way back to his car, he remembered correspondence he had with Spc. Nathaniel Housley’s mother, Judy Housley.

“Back in February, she had taken it upon herself to reach the unit and inquire about the number of personnel that we have here and the type of weather that we have in Germany for a project that she had back at home,” said Santana. “I gave her the information and thought nothing of it.”

Nevertheless, they kept in touch and Housely updated Santana periodically on the progress of her project.

Months passed, and various tasks came and went; all the while, Housely taking it upon herself to continuously e-mail Santana and update him on the progress of her project.

The colors in the box were from 60 hand-crocheted or knitted winter neck scarves that we were able to pass along to each controller at the Charlie Company Thanksgiving dinner,” Santana said. Fortunately, Housely’s kind words and attentiveness to the welfare of Charlie Company’s Soldiers came at a time when they needed it the most — when they were about to celebrate the holidays far away from home.

The great care and effort that each volunteer took in making the neck scarves was much appreciated as it helped remind the Soldiers of Charlie Company of the goodwill and support of everyone back home.

DELTA COMPANY CELEBRATES ‘MOST WONDERFUL TIME’

By Spc. Richard Taylor
Unit Reporter

CAMP ROBERTS, Calif. — Members of Delta Company, 53rd Signal Battalion, gathered together Dec. 13 to celebrate “the most wonderful time of the year” with its annual Christmas party. It was held at a local pizza parlor as a casual get together of co-workers where the mood was calm and attendance was high.

The local Family Readiness Group helped plan the event that included a live jazz band and a white elephant gift exchange. The jazz band added a festive atmosphere to the beautiful backdrop of the Italian-like pizza parlor and everyone enjoyed dinner as the band played in the background.

After the dinner the company commander gave a speech that included a toast to the many Soldiers deployed overseas. The commander also included advice and reminded attendees to take safety precautions that are normally needed with an event where alcohol is served.

The participants, aware of the need for safety, had made plans long in advance to obtain a safe alcohol-free ride home from among one of the many individuals who chose not to drink.

Soon after the heartfelt speech a white elephant gift exchange began. Participants were given numbers and began taking prizes one by one from the prize table. As one prize was opened, the participant with the next number had the option of getting an unopened prize from the table or taking a prize from someone who had already opened one. A prize could only be taken from another person three times before it was “dead” to trading. Anyone whose prize was just stolen was able to go and obtain a new prize from what was left on the prize table. The prizes included assorted gift certificates from local business vendors and plenty of wine from the abundant like of local vineyards.

The evening was a good and well-deserved break from the day to day chores of the operations floor with which the Soldiers have become accustomed.
WASHINGTON — President Bush used his weekly radio address [Dec. 22, 2007] to thank America’s Servicemembers who will spend Christmas far away from their homes and loved ones.

“America is blessed to have men and women willing to step forward to defend our freedoms and keep us safe from our enemies. We are thankful for their courage and their dedication to duty,” Bush said.

Families of the nation’s Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines and Coast Guardsmen serve their country too, Bush said.

“America is also blessed to have military Families willing to sacrifice for our country. And this Christmas, many will sit down to dinner thinking of their loved ones half a world away,” the president said.

Bush also praised the Families of wounded warriors who help their loved ones recover from injuries suffered in combat.

“Through their encouragement and devotion, they help heal the body and spirit, and they remind our wounded warriors that our nation stands behind them,” he said.

For the military Families who have lost loved ones in battle, Bush commended them for turning their grief into acts of compassion and love.

“One such inspiring example is the Family of Army Spec. Michael Rodriguez, of Knoxville, Tenn. During his deployment in Iraq, Michael often wrote home to his Family about the children he met on patrol. In April, Michael was killed by a suicide bomber,” Bush said.

Bush added that Rodriguez’s Family honors his memory by helping to collect school supplies for students at an Iraqi school for girls.

“At this time of year, we acknowledge that love and sacrifice can transform our world,” he said.

While thousands of military Families are apart this holiday season, Bush expressed his hope for all of America’s Families to tighten their familial bonds.

“As Christmas approaches, Laura and I extend to all Americans our best wishes, and we hope every family is brought closer together during this season of reflection and rejoicing,” the president concluded.
One nation … Raider nation

By Staff Sgt. Jason Avila
Unit Reporter

CAMP ROBERTS, Calif. — Early on a Sunday morning, 1st and 3rd squad of Delta Company met up here for a two and a half hour ride north to the Oakland Coliseum. The 12 Delta Diablos, even those not a part of the Raider Nation, were decked out in silver and black. In a convoy that started with two vehicles, the group headed up Highway 101. With each city passed, a new vehicle joined the Raider convoy. In the 30 degree weather and with windows down, each vehicle had its own music blasting, ramping up the atmosphere in preparation for the party drivers and occupants were about to join. As the group pulled off the 65th Street exit with the Coliseum on their right, all that could be seen was a sea of Black.

Pulling into the parking lot, a banner reading “65th Street MOB Raider Nation” was immediately seen. Driving through the parking lot more of the same was everywhere. People were getting into their costumes, painting their faces, getting the grills going and throwing footballs around. Although the Raiders were sitting at 3-8, it was easy to tell that didn’t phase diehard Raider fans.

And this wasn’t just any game, this was a division rival. This was Mike Shanahan, and this was a Denver “Pony” (Broncos) team that the Raiders had not beat in three years.

Regardless of the records, one knew this was going to be a street fight. Walking through the different areas of the parking lot it was hard to tell that most people were strangers to one another. Once one entered the gates, as long as a person didn’t lose his mind or wear the opposing team’s colors, all were considered family. Everyone was welcome to eat, drink and party with everyone else throughout the parking lot. It was hard to tell that most people were not from their own city, as long as a person didn’t lose his mind or wear the opposing team’s colors.

Anyone could expect to talk to, high five, even hug at least four times before getting to his or her desired destination. The game did not start until 1:30 p.m., and with the tailgate party starting at 8 a.m., it was expected that all would be tired by the time they entered the stadium. But as fans walked through the gates, a rumour could be heard as one “genius” thought it would be a good idea to wear a John Elway jersey and had to deal with jeering from the fans, and even from his own wife, as she denied any relation to him.

The 12 Diablos had seats about four rows from the stadium lights in the South End Zone, also known as The Black Hole. If anyone had a voice after tailgating, it was definitely gone by the end of the first quarter with the score locked at seven apiece. In the second quarter the Coliseum erupted as the number one overall draft pick stepped foot on the field for the first time. You could hear the excitement of a promising future as JaMarcus Russell hit Jerry Porter for a 16-yard strike on his first pass as a professional football player.

At half-time with the Raiders up 14-7, the few “Pony” fans that made an appearance displayed their disappointment, fear and shame. When the game clock hit double zero the count was 34-20 Raiders, but the Diablos counted the points differently … nose bleed seats $40, gas $80, losing your voice … priceless!

By Pam Rogers

Missile Defense Agency
Public Affairs Office

The U.S Army Corps of Engineers has awarded a $221.2 million contract to Archer Western Contractors, Ltd., headquartered in Atlanta, for design and construction of the third and largest phase of the Von Braun Complex on Redstone Arsenal, Ala. for the U.S. Missile Defense Agency.

The building will accommodate 2,649 positions and will be the largest single building on Redstone Arsenal. The 839,873-square foot facility will house 2,248 Missile Defense Agency positions that were realigned from the Washington, D.C., area as a result of the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) recommendations in 2005, as well as 240 positions from Huntsville and 161 Army Space and Missile Defense Agency positions from the Washington, D.C., area.

The building will include approximately 750,000 square feet of administrative space, an 800-seat auditorium, a cafeteria, a fitness center and a central mechanical plant. The facility will be constructed in two phases.

Phase I will be completed in the spring of 2010, allowing the move-in of 1,000 workers that summer, Phase II will be completed in early 2011 with move-in of the remaining workers in the summer. When the building is completed, the entire Von Braun Complex, including buildings that were completed in 2004 and 2007, will house approximately 4,500 personnel.

The project, which will be constructed via a design-build contract, will be incrementally funded over three years with initial funding in FY08 of $867 million.

The funding plan calls for an additional $1.77 million in FY09 and $27.8 million in FY10. Groundbreaking and construction are expected as early as spring of 2008.