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## Families of soldiers visit troops

By Dave Kolpack  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FARGO, N.D. — When a recently activated North Dakota National Guard unit got three days off from its training in Colorado, family members back home knew what to do: About 60 of them boarded two buses for a 15-hour trip to visit the troops.

"I've been double-fisting with the cell phone and my home phone trying to make arrangements," said Tammy King, who runs the volunteer family support group for the North Dakota guard's 142nd Engineer Battalion and helped organize the trip to Fort Carson, Colo.

It was a fitting scene for families in North Dakota. The state has had a higher percentage of military-age residents, ages 18 to 64, called from the reserves to active duty or placed on alert than any other state, according to an Associated Press analysis of Pentagon figures.

Of North Dakota's 386,873 military-age residents, 1,495 National Guard and Reserve soldiers have been told to report, the Pentagon said. That's a rate of 38.6 soldiers per 10,000.

"I'm anxious to see [Colorado], but I'm more anxious to see my dad."

— Tyler Matthys  
son of soldier

North Dakota is followed by the District of Columbia, Mississippi, Utah, Alabama, South Dakota, West Virginia, Delaware, Nebraska and South Carolina.

About 645 of the 700 soldiers in the Fargo-based 142nd Engineer Battalion were placed on active duty last month, the biggest call-up in North Dakota. The 142nd handles general construction — everything from carpentry to building roads and air strips.

Among those making the bus trip to Fort Carson over the weekend was the Matthys family — 8-year-old Austin, 12-year-old Tyler and mom Vicky — going to see Lowell Matthys, who is in the 142nd's personnel department.

The Matthys family had never been to Colorado.

"I'm anxious to see it," Tyler said. "But I'm more anxious to see my dad."

Vicky Matthys said a friend surprised her by picking up the cost of her tickets, about \$90 apiece.

"We've had so much support from the neighbors and others," Matthys said, fighting back tears. "My husband and I have never been apart like this, ever."

Terry and Robin Christians drove about 100 miles from Herman, Minn., to get on the bus.

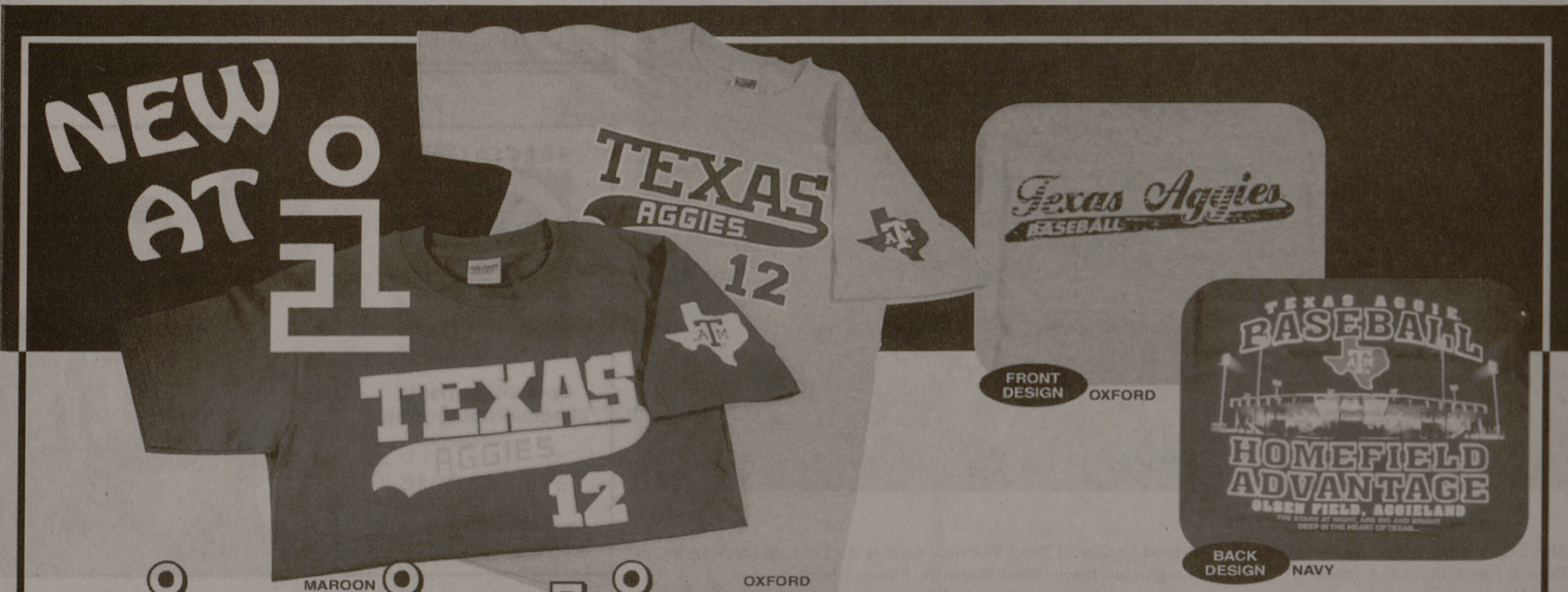
"This bus trip is something we felt we had to do. They are going off to war."

### NEWS IN BRIEF

**Gas prices up again**  
CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP) — Gas prices rose 7 cents per gallon over the past two weeks pushing pump prices to near record levels, but the upward pressure on prices may be easing, an industry analyst said Sunday.

The average weighted price for gas nationwide, including all grades and taxes, was approximately \$1.70 per gallon Friday, according to the Lundberg Survey of 8,000 stations nationwide. That price is within 7 cents of \$1.77, the all-time high recorded by the survey on May 18, 2001.

Gasoline cost about \$1.63 a gallon on Feb. 7, the date of the last Lundberg Survey, an increase of 11 cents over the previous two-week survey.



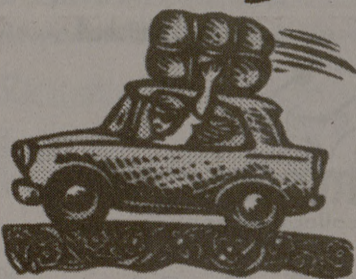
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