

Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

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Michigan Army and Air National Guard

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PRESS RELEASE

September 21, 2007

Michigan Army National Guard Soldiers return home from Iraq *Soldiers from Kingsford, Owosso, Pontiac and Taylor*

Lansing, Mich. – Following a 14-month tour of duty in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, approximately 165 Soldiers from the 46th Military Police Company, Michigan Army National Guard, headquartered in Kingsford, Mich., will return home Sunday. The unit consists of Soldiers from Kingsford, Owosso, Pontiac and Taylor.

The unit is expected to arrive at the K.I. Sawyer International Airport in Gwinn, Mich., at 10:30 a.m. Following a brief ceremony in the main terminal, the Upper Peninsula Soldiers will depart by bus for the Kingsford Armory for a welcome home reception scheduled for 12:30 p.m.

The Lower Peninsula Soldiers will depart by plane at 2:35 p.m. for the Taylor Sportsplex (13333 Telegraph Road, Taylor). Their welcome home reception is scheduled for approximately 4 p.m.

The 46th Military Police Company mobilized to Fort Dix, N.J., July 2006, for in-processing and mission specific training. They deployed to Iraq in October. Once in country, their mission was to train Iraqi police and security forces to conduct independent operations.

“Our Soldiers helped change the mindset of the Iraqi police,” said Capt. Ken Middaugh, 46th MP company commander. “When we first arrived, the Iraqi police would sit around the station and wait for a call to come in. Now, through our efforts, they understand the importance of proactive community policing and their perception in the eyes of the Iraqi people is beginning to change. They have also learned there is much to be gained by having an open line of communication with other Iraqi leaders within the community. There is a synergy that did not exist a year ago. The 46th Military Police Company has made a positive impact.”

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While serving in Iraq, the 46th MP Company lost three unit members.

Sgt. First Class James Priestap, 39, of Hardwood, Mich., was killed Nov. 23, 2006, by small arms fire while at a dismounted checkpoint in Iraq.

Spc. Brandon Stout, 23, of Grand Rapids, died Jan. 22, 2007, of wounds from an explosive foreign projectile that was detonated near his vehicle in Bahgdad, Iraq.

Sgt. Thomas Wright, 38, of Holly, died May 14, 2007, from a heart aneurysm while en route to Landstuhl, Germany from Iraq.

Today, more than 1,200 Michigan National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are deployed across the globe to locations such as Iraq, Kuwait, Afghanistan, Kosovo and the Arizona, New Mexico and Texas borders. Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 9,000 Michigan Guard members have deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Jump Start; however, as Michigan troops serve the nation, more than 80 percent of the Michigan Guard remains available and ready to respond to a state emergency including a terrorist event.

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MEDIA ADVISORY

Media is invited to attend the welcome home ceremonies. Family and friends of the returning Soldiers are expected to arrive up to one hour early and are available for interviews.

K.I. Sawyer International Airport: 225 Airport Avenue, Gwinn, Mich.

Kingsford Armory: 401 Carpenter Avenue, Kingsford, Mich.

Taylor Sportsplex: 13333 Telegraph Road, Taylor, Mich.

For more information on the K.I. Sawyer and Kingsford activities, contact Master Sgt. Denice Rankin at 517-896-0859.

For more information on the Taylor activities, contact Maj. Dawn Dancer at 517-896-0860.