

Wisconsin National Guard: Red Arrow infantry battalion deploying to Afghanistan this winter

Posted on Monday, Sep 24, 2018

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by Wisconsin National Guard Public Affairs

Nearly 400 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry will deploy to Afghanistan this winter in support of the NATO-led Resolute Support mission.

The Appleton-headquartered infantry battalion and its subordinate companies, which are all part of the 32nd "Red Arrow" Infantry Brigade Combat Team, will deploy as a security element for coalition forces operating in the region, who along with the Afghan security forces, are committed to containing and destroying terrorist safe-havens in Afghanistan and reducing the threat they pose to the world.

Soldiers from each company, including Company A in Waupun and Ripon, Company B in Green Bay, Company C from Fond du Lac, Company D, from Marinette, and the Appleton and Clintonville-based headquarters will all deploy as part of the mission.

The 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry has deployed numerous times since the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, including multiple tours in Iraq in 2005-06 and 2009-10 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The 127th has a long lineage of service to Wisconsin and the nation dating back to the Civil War and its origins as part of the famed Iron Brigade made up of three Wisconsin infantry regiments and two from Indiana and Michigan. The 127th traces its lineage to the 1st and 2nd Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry, which earned battle

streamers at places like Bull Run, Antietam, Gettysburg, Fredericksburg, and Chancellorsville among many others. The same units would later serve in the Spanish-American War before reorganizing at the outset of World War I, when elements of the 1st and 2nd Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry were reorganized as the 127th Infantry within the famed 32nd Division.

This year marks the centennial of the 32nd Division, which earned its “Red Arrow” moniker after it pierced every enemy line it encountered in Europe during World War I, including the vaunted Hindenburg Line. The 127th played a starring role in the 32nd’s four major campaigns in World War I and again during World War II, when the 32nd fought in brutal campaigns through the jungles of the Pacific Theater in New Guinea and the Philippines, where it earned the distinction of serving more days in combat – 654 – than any other American division in the war.

In the early 1960s, the 127th and the 32nd Division again mobilized to active duty at the height of the Berlin Crisis before reorganizing into a brigade in 1967. Since that time, the 127th and the rest of the Red Arrow have played pivotal roles in the Global War on Terror and on numerous mobilizations in times of emergency here at home, including in 2017 when the battalion deployed to Florida to assist civil authorities with security, traffic control and humanitarian assistance in the wake of Hurricane Irma.

The 127th’s upcoming deployment to Afghanistan marks the Red Arrow’s first-ever deployment to Afghanistan, opening another significant chapter in the long and distinguished history of the 127th and the rest of the Red Arrow.

The Wisconsin National Guard is planning a send-off ceremony for the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry and will release those details at a later date.

The Wisconsin National Guard continues to maintain a high operational tempo with worldwide deployments in support of its federal mission as the primary combat reserve of the Army and Air Force. More than 350 Soldiers from the Milwaukee-based 1st Battalion, 121st Field Artillery deployed to the Middle East this summer and more than 25 Soldiers from the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade’s Military Engagement Team deployed to the Middle East in March. Meanwhile, a team of Soldiers from the 112th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment deployed to U.S. Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, in March to provide public affairs support there.

Nearly 30 Soldiers from the West Bend-based 248th General Aviation Support Battalion returned from a deployment to the Middle East earlier this month. Wisconsin Army National Guard aviators from Detachment 5, 641st Aviation returned from Afghanistan earlier this summer, and approximately 85 Soldiers with 1st Battalion, 147th Aviation returned from a nine-month deployment to the Middle East in January. Another 35 Soldiers from West Bend's Company C, 1st Battalion, 168th Aviation returned from a nine-month deployment to Afghanistan in November 2017.

Last fall, approximately 270 Airmen from the 115th Fighter Wing returned to Madison from a deployment to Korea, and more than 100 Airmen from the 128th Air Control Squadron at Volk Field returned from Southwest Asia. Approximately 70 Airmen from the 128th Air Refueling Wing in Milwaukee are in the midst of worldwide deployments.

The Wisconsin National Guard simultaneously stands ready to complete its state mission of assisting civil authorities during times of emergency as the state's first military responder.

Earlier this month, Black Hawk medevac crews again deployed to North Carolina to assist civil authorities there in the wake of Hurricane Florence. The Wisconsin Guard has also been busy assisting civil authorities here in Wisconsin. Hundreds of Guardsmen assisted with sandbagging efforts after torrential rains soaked southern Wisconsin in late August and early September, and Soldiers responded on multiple occasions to flooding in summer 2017 in Monroe County and Burlington,

In fall 2017, thousands of National Guard troops mobilized in support of Hurricanes Irma and Maria. Approximately 650 Soldiers from the 32nd "Red Arrow" Infantry Brigade Combat Team's 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry and 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry deployed to Florida where they provided humanitarian relief, security, and traffic control support to communities. Black Hawk medevac crews also deployed to the U.S. Virgin Islands last fall to transport patients in need of medical care to health care facilities, and Airmen from the Wisconsin Air National Guard deployed to Puerto Rico to assist in re-establishing communications on the island and provide mass feeding capabilities to first responders and civilians.