

Dept. of Military Affairs: Red Arrow soldiers back on US soil after Afghanistan deployment

Posted on Monday, Nov 18, 2019

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Approximately 190 Wisconsin Army National Guard Soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry landed safely on U.S. soil Nov. 17 after a historic deployment to Afghanistan.

Soldiers with the Appleton-headquartered unit returned to Fort Bliss, Texas, where they will de-mobilize before returning to Wisconsin in the coming weeks.

The nearly 400 Soldiers of the battalion mobilized to Afghanistan late last year and embarked on a mission in which they conducted hundreds of missions as “guardian angels,” providing force protection for countless engagements between advisors from the 2nd Security Force Assistance Brigade (SFAB), other coalition forces, contractors, and Afghan troops. The balance of the 127th Soldiers remain in Afghanistan.

The 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry is the first National Guard battalion to partner with one of the Army’s security force assistance brigades, and despite its long and illustrious history in combat dating back to the Civil War, World War I, World War II, and the Global War on Terrorism, the 127th became the first Red Arrow unit to deploy to Afghanistan when it arrived in theater last winter. The Red Arrow’s previous and numerous deployments since Sept. 11, 2001 have all been to Iraq or Kuwait.

Senior Wisconsin Army National Guard leaders — including Brig. Gen. Joane Mathews, Wisconsin’s deputy adjutant general for Army, and Command Sgt. Maj. Rafael Conde, the Wisconsin National Guard’s senior enlisted advisor — were

waiting to greet the unit as it arrived in Texas.

“Thank you for what you’ve done,” Conde said. “I certainly appreciate what you’ve done. You’ve made a difference not just in Afghanistan, you’ve made a difference in our society as well.”

Conde urged the Soldiers to be deliberate in the demobilization process and to take the time now to decompress before they return home to Wisconsin. Mathews echoed that sentiment, but first she welcomed the Soldiers.

“Welcome back,” Mathews said to the Soldiers. “I’m so happy to see you all here. This is the best part of my job is welcoming you home, back in the United States. Everybody looks so wide awake, happy to be home.”

Sgt. Richard Anderson, a team leader with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry, said it felt good to be back.

“This is my second time coming home [from a deployment], so it’s definitely a familiar feeling,” Anderson said. “I know it gets amplified once we actually reach Wisconsin.”

Cpl. Dyllon Palmer, a “guardian angel” also with Company B, agreed that it feels good to be home. This was Palmer’s first deployment.

The 127th was recently joined by their sister “Red Arrow” battalion, the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, after mobilizing for its own deployment to Afghanistan in July. Both Anderson and Palmer said that it was a smooth process transitioning the mission to the 128th.

“It was kind of nice seeing some familiar faces, having familiar things to talk about,” Palmer said.

Anderson agreed, adding that it was a lot easier to connect to everything with the incoming “Red Arrow” Soldiers.

The Wisconsin National Guard continues to maintain a high operations tempo with hundreds of Soldiers and Airmen deployed overseas. Red Arrow Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry and remaining Soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, 127th Infantry are currently deployed to Afghanistan. Nearly 250 Airmen from the 115th Fighter Wing returned from Afghanistan earlier this month, and the 32nd Infantry Brigade

Combat Team headquarters along with approximately 160 Soldiers also deployed to Ukraine this fall where it will oversee a group of multinational “partner and advise training teams” — or PATTs — based at the International Peacekeeping and Security Center in western Ukraine. In addition, approximately 150 Soldiers from the 829th Engineer Company mobilized for deployment to the Middle East earlier this fall.

The Wisconsin National Guard will announce details of a homecoming ceremony for the returning 127th Soldiers when that information becomes available.