

# Wisconsin National Guard: Troops conclude historic mission to support security efforts at presidential inauguration

Posted on Tuesday, Jan 26, 2021

>> **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.](#)**

MADISON, Wis. — More than 550 Citizen Soldiers and Airmen from the Wisconsin National Guard arrived safely back in Wisconsin Jan. 22-23 after completing their mission to support security efforts in Washington D.C. during last week's presidential inauguration.

The troops returned via bus to their home station armories around Wisconsin after approximately a week on duty supporting security efforts in the nation's capital.

The contingent of Wisconsin troops – known as Joint Task Force Wisconsin – integrated with approximately 25,000 other National Guard troops from all 54 states and territories to assist with safety and security efforts for the 59th presidential inauguration.

Throughout the duration of their time in Washington D.C., Wisconsin National Guard troops lodged in hotels while off duty and had hot catered meals. While most worked at least 12 hour shifts, Wisconsin troops took breaks every few hours and had access to several warming areas during their breaks at places like the Capitol Visitors Center, the Library of Congress, and in nearby parking garages that also served as staging areas, according to Lt. Col. Matt McDonald, the commander of Joint Task Force Wisconsin.

The task force was screened for COVID-19 prior to embarking on the mission as well as each day thereafter and upon their return from to Wisconsin.

Sullivan resident Spc. Derreck Surlak with Fort Atkinson's Troop A, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry, who works as a landscaper in Oconomowoc, said he and fellow Wisconsin National Guard troops helped form a perimeter on the northeast side of the Capitol building.

He and fellow Wisconsin troops played a key role in the overall security footprint for the inauguration.

Wisconsin National Guard troops were initially slated to be part of a large reserve force a few miles from the capitol, but were ultimately reassigned to provide security in the immediate vicinity of the capitol building during the inauguration, which allowed many of the Soldiers and Airmen to catch glimpses of the official proceedings, McDonald said.

"(Command Sgt. Maj.) Rothbauer and I are fiercely proud of how you, the Soldiers and Airmen of Joint Task Force —Wisconsin, conducted yourselves not only while on duty as a highly professional, visible force securing the perimeter of the nation's capitol, but also while off-duty resting and preparing for the next mission," McDonald wrote in a letter to the task force. "We established high standards of conduct for this historic mission and despite coming from five battalions and (the headquarters) of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, the 128th (Air Refueling Wing), 115th (Fighter Wing), and Volk (Combat Readiness Training Center), this team coalesced rapidly, communicated and upheld the standard, and each of you exceeded our lofty expectations. We cannot overstate how impressed we are by your performance, positivity, and professionalism in this volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous environment."

The general manager of one of the hotels at which Wisconsin National Guard troops lodged penned a note of appreciation to the Soldiers and Airmen of Joint Task Force Wisconsin.

"As I have gotten to know you and those in your command, it quickly became apparent to me that during all my years in hospitality, I have never encountered a more professional, dedicated, respectful, and courteous group of individuals," he said. "Every encounter with a member of your group has been nothing but pleasant and engaging. It has truly been one of the greatest highlights of my career.

"You have made a lasting impression on our hotel team and provided us with an experience we will never forget," he added. "I hope that you will share our

sentiments with your command, and please extend our thanks to them with appreciation and gratitude for the sacrifices they have made for our country.”

Sgt. Christopher Phillips, a Delavan resident assigned to Fort Atkinson’s Troop A, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry, said he had the opportunity to explore the Library of Congress and saw many of the dignitaries enter through his area during the inauguration ceremony.

“I’ve deployed to Kuwait, the southwest border, and lots of times in Wisconsin for state emergencies, but it was surreal being at the U.S. Capitol building to be part of something in the Constitution,” he said. “We had lots of new Soldiers on this mission who have never mobilized before. They did a great job and their morale was really good.”

Pfc. Victoria Chen, a medic with the Headquarters Troop, 1st Squadron, 105th Cavalry, said it was an incredible experience to be inside the barrier and see the inauguration unfold.

Now a biology and philosophy major at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the mobilization to Washington represented her first activation and just her second visit to Washington D.C.

Many of the troops got visits from much of Wisconsin’s Congressional delegation while on duty at the U.S. Capitol. Some received a Capitol tour while other members of Congress observed promotion and awards ceremonies for Wisconsin National Guard troops on the Capitol grounds.

The troops’ return over the weekend marked the end of another busy stretch for the Wisconsin National Guard. Hundreds of Wisconsin National Guard troops also mobilized to support public safety and security efforts earlier this month at the state capitol in Madison after receiving a request for assistance from State Capitol Police. That mission concluded Jan. 18 just as other Wisconsin National Guard troops were arriving in Washington D.C.