

Dept. of Military Affairs: Patching ceremony welcomes deploying Soldiers to 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade

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CAMP RIPLEY, Minn. – The Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) headquarters conducted a patching ceremony to officially induct volunteers from outside of the 157th into the brigade for their upcoming mobilization. The headquarters company will mobilize this fall in support of Operation Enduring Freedom – Horn of Africa to enhance partnership and stability in the region.

On the left sleeve of every Soldier, there resides a patch to indicate the military unit to which they belong. Each unit’s patch is unique and has symbolic meaning associated with the unit it represents.

The Army has a long-standing tradition of formally recognizing new members of an organization through a patch ceremony. The ceremony welcomes Soldiers who have recently transferred to the unit into the organization and represents the integration of new Soldiers into the unit. During the ceremony, leadership explains the symbolism behind the unit’s insignia in order to instill an understanding of its heritage and then replaces the Soldiers’ previous unit’s insignia with the new patch.

First Sgt. Ann Felhofer, the first sergeant of the headquarters company, was charged with explaining the meaning behind the insignia of the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, known as the “Iron Brigade.”

“The yellow and scarlet colors symbolize field artillery,” Felhofer said. “The

arrowhead and gunsight symbolize the unit's basic mission. The blue waves represent the many waterways of the state of Wisconsin, which Native Americans referred to as 'Gathering of the Waters.' And finally, the arrow represents the brigade's long association with the 32nd Infantry Division."

Col. Eric Leckel, the brigade commander of the 157th, addressed the deploying unit upon completion of the ceremony.

"When we arrive to the Horn of Africa, we'll conduct missions that will bring positive change to Africa, and thereby effect change in the rest of the world," Leckel said. "I'm standing in the midst of history makers, a team of world changers, each and every one of us."

Command Sgt. Maj. Duane Weyer, the brigade's senior enlisted advisor, spoke on the Army's "This is My Squad" initiative.

"Envision a triangle, in the middle stands the Soldier," Weyer said. "The three points of the triangle represent the Soldier's leadership, battle buddies, and their families and employers. These people who form our support system create a 'Golden Triangle' around each of us. This team will provide us with the support we require in the times ahead."

Sgt. Christina Miller, formally a member of the 32nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, was asked about how she felt joining the coveted "Iron Brigade."

"Joining this team for our upcoming deployment will be an exciting adventure," said Miller. "It's an amazing opportunity to meet and work alongside Soldiers from other units of the Wisconsin National Guard."

The Wisconsin National Guard will release details of the sendoff ceremony for the 157th Brigade headquarters' mobilization at a later date.