Dept. of Military Affairs: Wisconsin Army Guard unit returns from Southwest border mission

Posted on Monday, Nov 21, 2022

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The Wisconsin Army National Guard's 229th Engineer Company has returned to Wisconsin following a mobilization of more than 12 months in support of U.S. Northern Command.

Nearly 130 Soldiers with the unit, based in Prairie du Chien and Richland Center, deployed in support of the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's mission along the nation's Southwest border. Under the direction of U.S. Northern Command and Joint Task Force North, the 229th logged more than 950,000 miles to provide detection and monitoring support to help Customs and Border Patrol agents address security challenges along the Southwest border.

The 229th Engineer Company was awarded the Army Safety Excellence streamer during their deployment, and was a top-five unit in Task Force Legion for safety, physical fitness, training and community service.

The Defense Department in July 2021 approved a Department of Homeland Security request for assistance to support the Customs and Border Patrol mission along the Southwest Border, mobilizing up to 3,000 service members for that mission. The 229th Engineer Company was part of that call-up, and had little preparation time between being notified of its mobilization and its October 6, 2021 sendoff.

The unit returned to Wisconsin in multiple groups, with the first arriving Nov. 9. The remaining troops returned over the weekend.

The 229th Engineer Company deployed to Saudi Arabia in 1990, Iraq in 2003 and

Afghanistan in 2012, earning Meritorious Unit Citations each time. The unit mobilized multiple times in 2020 as part of the National Guard Reaction Force, and provided members for COVID-19 specimen collection teams and polling station workers for several elections during the pandemic when fewer volunteers were available.