

# TELEGRAPH

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## Rock Falls, Dixon, Sterling residents show support with flags, posters along parade route

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Led by an Illinois State Police District 1 escort, members of Foxtrot 202 Air Defense Artillery Battery traveled Saturday by bus through Rock Falls, Sterling and on their way to the Dixon Armory, where they were greeted with a hero's welcome.

"Welcome Home" and "Welcome Back Foxtrot" were among the many signs people held up along the escort route, which traveled northbound on state Route 40 and First Avenue in Rock Falls, across the First Avenue Bridge into Sterling, then turning east on East Third Street. The escort continued eastbound on Third Street and state Route 2, going into Dixon and traveling to the armory, where the escort stopped.

The troops, who served a year with Operation Iraqi Freedom, were met with a patriotic greeting from residents of the Sauk Valley, despite the cold, rainy and foggy weather.

As the soldiers traveled in a coach bus, they were met with signs, symbols and words of encouragement from hundreds of people who lined the route.

Yellow ribbons were tied to light posts and around trees, as well as ribbons of red, white and blue.



Homemade signs were held up, with messages of "Thank you," "We missed you," "Support our Troops," "Thank You for Protecting Our Freedom" and "God Bless the USA."

Other signs read "Welcome Home! Foxtrot Battery F/202 ADA Hooah!" and "Welcome Foxtrot Battery — Job Well Done."

Some store windows were painted with messages of "USA" and "Welcome Home." A furniture store in Rock Falls listed the names of the Dixon National Guard Unit along with a big "Thank You."

There were parents holding children along the escort route, and children sitting on their parents' shoulders. Many people waved American flags of all sizes. A man on Route 40 in Rock Falls held a large flag in one hand and gave a thumbs-up signal with his other hand.

Groups of children lined sidewalks and major intersections along the way, holding flags and waving as the bus passed by. There also were cars stopped on the side of the road honking their horns in support.

A group of Rock Falls American Legion members stood by and saluted the escort as it passed by their building, just off of the escort route.

The official escort of the state police and the Foxtrot bus was followed by an unofficial caravan of family members who traveled from Galva, where the combined National Guard units of Dixon, Galva and Kewanee were officially dispersed to their families Saturday morning.

The trip took about 45 minutes. Fire trucks used their emergency lights and sirens as they traveled ahead of the soldiers' bus.

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