

Soldiers getting restless

Potential March return making it hard to focus

By Doug Boock

About two months. That's what Galva National Guard unit members are hoping for.

But whether or not they'll get it — "it" being a return home from Iraq — remains unclear.

"Everyone is ready," said Major Mike Kessel, unit commander, Jan. 14. "The strain is starting to show."

The 120-man unit — F Battery 202nd Air Defense Artillery — is tentatively scheduled to return to the U.S. in March. That would end about one year of service in Iraq — something soldiers and their families are anxiously hoping for.

"We are all ready to come home, and we have a daily countdown going," Kessel said. "I keep reminding everyone to stay focused on the mission — not going home — but I know that is

hard."

Officially, there's been no recent announcement of the Guard's chances of coming home in March. But Kessel is taking some steps preparing for the possible return..



Kessel

Packages are not to be sent anymore (as of Jan. 15). (See Page 3 for further details).

A recent move to Taji, Iraq has the Galva unit handling duties similar to what it did at its

former location near Baghdad.

"We are manning a station north of here in an effort to maintain coalition presence and prevent the terrorists from taking over the community like they did in Fallujah. Two platoons do that, while another platoon is attached operationally to another unit and are keeping the main route secure and open," he said.

"The bad news is that we haven't been together since we got here and won't be until we get ready to leave. The good news is that we have now packed and sealed some of our stuff and they are ready to head home."

Kessel said his unit's been unaffected by the south Asia tsunami tragedy. But he sees a military connection of sorts.

"I guess it probably did get rid of some terrorists down in that area, along with the innocent," he noted.

"Too bad that it could not have just picked out the bad guys and saved us all of the trouble of finding them."