

Guard honing skills

3 weeks here before Texas and then Iraq

By Greg Motzko

The Texas National Guard met up for its annual training at Fort Cavazos in Brownsville last week. The 37th Infantry Brigade Combat Team is deployed for six weeks.

Members were taking classes in fire and communications and aviation, biological and chemical warfare. The week they packed and loaded equipment.

The training is intense for the soldiers, but relatively so for civilians in attendance.

"This has been great for me," said retired Army Sgt. Jimmy Williams, 57, and Commander Mike Kessel. "This has people paying a little more attention to things."

The reservists and draftees will go to Baghdad in mid-March to provide "area operations," including guard duty — duties specifically for protected units.

"We're going to help with everything we can and more," said retired Lt. Col. Tommie J. Williams.

Others, who're being called up for the first time, and training is finishing a lot of things going into Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Tracy Fanning, 26, Army of the Air, has been in the Guard for 11 years.

Public can show its support Nov. 1

A national referendum on the Iraq National Guard will run Sept. 29 when the state is called to vote on whether to authorize funding to support the Guard in Iraq.

Beginning at 4 p.m. Monday, Nov. 1 at the Capitol High School in Austin, the state will hold its first public referendum since 1993. The referendum will be held in person, where voters will be asked to vote "yes" or "no" on whether to authorize funding for the Guard in Iraq.

The referendum will be held in person at the state capitol building and county courthouses from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Monday at various locations.

Those who do not appear will appear in person at the state capitol building at Fort Hood, Texas, on Nov. 2 at 10 a.m.

The referendum is held for the public. Information is on:

<http://www.iraqreferendum.com>

for more on the referendum.

"I think it'll be a little tougher than some because of the environment we're going to go into," Fanning said.

Commander Kessel will pay a price for service in the war.

"I probably won't be able to see family while we're in Iraq," he said. "But when we get to Iraq, we'll be able to see them. It's probably the best thing I can do for them." There is a hardship waiver.

"The referendum will be held in person at the state capitol building," said Kessel. "The referendum will be held in person at the state capitol building. The referendum will be held in person at the state capitol building. The referendum will be held in person at the state capitol building."

Kessel, a reservist, and his wife have been in the military since 1980, including in the Vietnam War. He has a son, a daughter, a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law. All are now in the military. He has a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law, a son-in-law, a daughter-in-law.

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"I'm looking forward to going to Iraq," he said.

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