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Galva's Guard unit hopes to be home soon

By DOUG BOOCK

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GALVA - About two months. That's what Galva National Guard unit members are hoping for. But whether or not they'll return home then remains unclear.

"Everyone is ready," unit commander Major Mike Kessel said 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 United States in March. That would end about one year of service in Iraq.

"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 to prepare for the possible return.

"I am preparing a letter for the families and will tell them that we should be in the United States or maybe home by Easter. We will see," he said.

Meanwhile, the public is advised to not send any type of mail to the unit at its current address after Tuesday. Packages are not to be sent anymore.

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."

Doug Boock is editor of The Galva News.