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Dixon Guard sendoff set for Oct. 31

BY DAVID HOLSTED

STAFF WRITER

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DIXON — The thought of going to Iraq at this time might cause some to pause and ponder, but SFC Michael Kuba didn't hesitate.





"I'm ready to go," Kuba said. "I'm ready to get it started."

Kuba is one of 34 members of Echo Battery 1-202nd Air Defense Artillery who are being activated to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

"I'm ready to help make Iraq a democratic country," Kuba went on to say.

The National Guardsmen will be leaving Nov. 1 for Galva. They will join the unit there and leave for Fort Hood, Texas on Nov. 2. From there the men will embark for Iraq.

"A lot can happen in three months," Maj. Jerry

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Newman, Commander of the Unit, said, "but for now those are their orders."

Newman expressed his emotions concerning the departure of his men.

"Right now, I have kind of selfish feelings," he said. "That's a third of our unit. The other two-thirds are wishing they could go over there with them and help."

1st Sgt. Eric Brown echoed the wish to be with his comrades.

"Your son, our people, are over there in harm's way," Brown said, "and you're not there to be with them."

To give the activated guardsmen a supportive sendoff, several activities are being planned for Oct. 31.

Newman said the day will begin with a pancake breakfast for the guardsmen and their families beginning at 8 a.m. at the American Legion Hall in Dixon.

Ceremonies honoring the men will follow at 10:30 a.m. at the Dixon High School football field. Guest speakers will include Dixon Mayor Jim Burke, state Rep. Jerry Mitchell, state Sen. Todd Sieben and retired Gen. Henry Dixon. A short parade through town will conclude the activities.

The public is invited to all ceremonies. In the event of inclement weather, the farewell ceremony will be held inside the Dixon Armory.

Kuba, the platoon leader, has been in the National Guard for 15 years. According to Newman, most of the activated soldiers are specialists, have six years of service or less and have a college education.

According to Brown, for the benefit of family members who might wish to take a group photograph of the soldiers, they will be put into formation on the football field at the farewell ceremony.

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