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KEWANEE  
ILLINOIS



## Galva Guard unit training in Louisiana; next stop, Baghdad

By *DAVE CLARKE* Of The Star Courier

KEWANEE -- The Galva National Guard unit is one step closer to Baghdad.

The Battery F of the 202nd Air Defense Artillery, now attached to the U.S. Army's 1st Cavalry Division, has transferred from Ft. Hood, Texas, where it has been training since Nov. 1, to Ft. Polk, La., for additional training in preparation for its upcoming mission in Iraq. The unit, based at the National Guard Armory in Galva, arrived at Ft. Polk on Feb. 1.

The 121-man Galva-based battery, which also includes members of Kewanee and Dixon National Guard units, is part of the 39th Enhanced Support Brigade, headquartered in Little Rock, Ark., and will be supporting the 1st Cavalry's mission to provide a safe and secure environment for the people of Iraq and protect America in the War on Terror. The commanding officer is Maj. Mike Kessel of Champaign. The executive officer is Capt. Greg Reinhardt, a former Kewanee resident now living near St. Louis.

Capt. Ron Jeanblanc of the 202nd Air Defense Artillery's Headquarters Battery in Kewanee, which includes "Foxtrot" Battery, said Sunday that several members of the local unit are already on their way to Kuwait by ship, escorting equipment. An advance staging party will also be leaving for Kuwait later this month.

Most of the unit will continue to train at Ft. Polk in preparation for deployment to Iraq in early March. The

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week of March 1-5 has been set aside to give families an opportunity to visit service members before departure.

The 17,000 members of the 1st Cavalry out of Ft. Hood, along with a contingent of 3,000 National Guard members, will replace the 1st Armored Division, which has been in Iraq since the invasion one year ago.

According to the Associated Press, the U.S. Army plans to cut back on the number of garrisons in Baghdad and conduct fewer armed patrols after the 1st Armored Division hands over control of the capital to the 1st Cavalry and turns over more responsibilities for security to the new Iraqi police force. The 1st Cavalry will billet most of its forces outside Baghdad, according to the AP report, closing 19 bases.

Contrary to reports that Battery F will be based at the Baghdad Airport, Capt. Jeanblanc said exactly where the Galva unit will be stationed in the Baghdad area will not be decided by the Army until they reach Kuwait.

According to the AP, the 1st Cavalry will occupy a larger piece of territory around the capital, not just the inner city, through 2005. To prepare for their duties in Iraq, troops have been training at Ft. Hood and now Ft. Polk in urban warfare and peacekeeping.

The 1st Cavalry includes seven brigade-sized units plus an air defense artillery battalion, signal battalion, military intelligence battalion, chemical company and military police company.

A heavy-armor division, the 1st Cavalry employs M1A2 Abrams tanks, Bradley fighting vehicles, artillery and AH-64 Apache Longbow attack helicopters.

The division is the Army's largest and its only armored contingency force. It also served in the 1991 Persian Gulf War and was last deployed as a whole to Bosnia in 1998.

The Galva National Guard was last activated for combat duty in 1952 during the Korean War.



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