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Galva soldier to be welcomed home in style

By DAVE CLARKE Of The Star Courier

GALVA -- A Galva church congregation is rolling out the red carpet for a member of the Galva National Guard unit returning home tonight after being wounded in Iraq.

SPC Jeff Duncan, of Erie, a member of Battery F, 202nd Air Defense Artillery, has been released to his wife, the former Paula Hannam of Galva, to come home and heal from wounds sustained after he and three other soldiers were struck by shrapnel from a roadside bomb near Baghdad on Feb. 11.

SPC Duncan will reportedly be arriving at the Quad City International Airport at 9:29 p.m. "In order to give him the welcome home that he deserves, the First Baptist Church bus will be leaving the church at 8 p.m. to greet Jeff as he, Paula and his mom, Sandy, get off the plane," said the Rev. Paul Sowden.

"We prayed over Jeff and God has delivered him home to us. Let's come together and welcome him home as brothers and sisters in Christ," Rev. Sowden said.

Duncan returns home with a Purple Heart for wounds suffered in combat.

"Let's honor his service and the many others that served and are serving this country with pride and cheers," the pastor said. "We owe much to our soldiers here and abroad. We plan to welcome this one home in style!"

According to a report from the unit commander, Maj. Michael Kessel, four soldiers -- Duncan, Spc. Nathan Kull of Kewanee, SSG Jon Arneson of Dixon and a SPC Kavran, hometown and unit unknown -- were returning from a patrol around dusk on the evening of Friday, Feb.

11, when an improvised explosive device hidden in a hole left by a previous roadside bomb detonated. "They saw it but it was too late to react," Kessel told the Galva News. After being treated at a military hospital in Baghdad, Duncan and Kavran were flown to Germany for more extensive medical attention.

Kull and Arneson were treated and returned to recover at their barracks. It was SSG Arneson's third Purple Heart since the unit arrived in Iraq last March, Kessel said.

At last report, the 120-man Galva unit is scheduled to leave Iraq next week and about a week later should be departing for Fort Sill, Okla., where they will spend about a week before flying back to Illinois and will hopefully arrive home the week of March 21.

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