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Star Courier City

KEWANEE
ILLINOIS



Congressman to visit Galva troops

By Star Courier staff

FORT POLK, La. -- Cong. Lane Evans will meet with members of the Galva National Guard and attend a flag casing ceremony today at Ft. Polk, La., home of the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC) where the local unit has been training since Feb. 1.

Also attending today's ceremony will be Brig. Gen. Charles Fleming, Assistant Adjutant General of the Illinois National Guard, a Kewanee native.

More than 120 members of Battery F of the 202nd Air Defense Artillery, Illinois National Guard, left Galva Nov. 2 for Fort Hood, Texas, where they spent three months training for deployment to Iraq. Some members of the unit have already left with equipment and in an advance team, all headed for the Army staging area in Kuwait. Most of the Galva unit is scheduled to leave as early as next week and are expected to spend at least a year stationed near Baghdad.

Members of Battery F were joined by volunteers from elements of the 202nd ADA in Kewanee and Dixon to fill out the unit. They are now assigned to the 3,000 member 39th Infantry Brigade of the Arkansas National Guard and will be serving with the 1st Cavalry Division.

Evans said the Galva unit is being retrained at Fort Polk for a new mission as a military police company in Iraq.

The flag casing ceremony signifies the end of the training period. Soldiers are retiring their colors and will re-post them when they arrive in Iraq.

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The unit is carrying a City of Galva flag presented to the troops by Mayor Don Hagaman at the mobilization ceremony in the Galva High School stadium on Nov. 1.

"I want to salute and honor the service of the men and women of the Galva unit of the National Guard," Evans said. "They will be leaving their families for an extended period of time. They all will be in our thoughts and prayers every day." Evans is the ranking Democrat on the House Veteran's Affairs Committee and a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

The families of many members of the Galva unit are traveling to Fort Polk this weekend for Family Visit days.

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