

[Today's Issue...](#)

[▶ Page One](#)

[▶ City](#)

[▶ Regional](#)

[▶ Sports](#)

[▶ Weather](#)

[▶ Editorial](#)

[▶ Obituaries](#)

[▶ Calendar of Events](#)

[▶ Photo Gallery](#)

[▶ World News](#)

[▶ Entertainment](#)

[▶ Town Hall](#)

[▶ Stock Quotes](#)

[▶ Health News](#)

[WritePages
directory](#)

[▶ Shopper](#)

[▶ Classifieds](#)

[▶ About Us](#)

[▶ Archives](#)

[▶ Illinois Lottery](#)

[▶ e-mail](#)



KEWANEE
ILLINOIS

Guardsmen get holiday leave

By *DAVE CLARKE* Of The Star Courier

GALVA -- Local National Guardsmen training at Fort Hood, Texas, for deployment to Iraq could use a boost to get home for the holidays.

One charter bus has been filled, and a second bus has been reserved to bring members of Galva's Battery F, 1st Battalion, 202nd Air Defense Artillery, including members from Guard units in Kewanee and Dixon home for the holidays.

Unless there is a change in the schedule, the 120 members of the Galva unit should be on leave from Dec. 20 to Jan. 2 -- making it possible for them to be home for Christmas and New Year's.

According to Gretchen Almquist of Battery F's Family Readiness Group, each member's initial share of the bus cost was \$200, which was lowered to \$150 each as more signed up. Now with the cost of a second bus factored in, that cost has, at least for now, returned to \$200.

Almquist explained the Family Readiness Group is seeking donations from the public, local businesses and organizations to help defray the cost and make paying for the trip easier, especially for members with families already on tight budgets. Spending less on bus fare would also leave more money available for them to spend on their families for Christmas.

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[Lottery Results](#)

[Weather](#)

[TV Listings](#)

[Movie Listings](#)

[Maps/Directions](#)

[Horoscope](#)

[Greeting Cards](#)

Battery F left for Fort Hood on Nov. 2.

The unit is expected to be deployed with the 39th Brigade, 1st Cavalry, around the first of March and is expected to be in Iraq for 12 to 18 months, which means it is not likely they will be home next Christmas.

Donations to help bring the troops home this Christmas may be sent to:

Family Readiness Group (FRG)

c/o Gretchen Almquist

811 N. Center Ave.

Galva, Ill., 61434

[[Home Page](#)] [[City News](#)] [[Regional News](#)] [[Sports](#)] [[Obituaries](#)] [[Weather](#)] [[Editorial](#)] [[Photo Gallery](#)] [[Classifieds](#)] [[Calendar](#)] [[Archives](#)] [[Shopper](#)] [[Illinois Lottery](#)] [[About Us](#)] [[Email Us](#)]
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