

## Families Welcome Illinois Army National Guard Unit Home from Egypt

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Nearly 440 Illinois National Guard Soldiers Return from a Yearlong Deployment; Story by Spc. Chasity Johnson, Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office

MILAN, IL (05/15/2011)(readMedia)-- The Illinois Army National Guard held ceremonies May 14 in Milan, Galesburg and Macomb, to welcome home approximately 440 Soldiers who spent a year serving in Sinai, Egypt.

The sky was overcast, rain was drizzling and the temperature was approximately 50 degrees, but that didn't discourage family, friends and supporters of the servicemembers from attending the outdoor event in Milan.

"I'm so excited to see my son that I can hardly stand it," said Debbie England of Milan, mother of 1st Lt. Drew England of Milan, with Battery A, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery in Milan.

"We are so proud of him and what he does," said England, as she stood smiling in the rain surrounded by members of her family who were holding colorful signs in honor of their Soldier's arrival home. "We're excited to welcome him back."

The Soldiers mobilized in May 2010 as a part of the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO), the international peacekeeping force oversees the terms of the 1979 peace treaty between Egypt and Israel.

"My Soldiers were observing, reporting and verifying the compliance of the treaty," said Lt. Col. Maurice Rochelle of Flossmoor, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery commander.

A sergeant in the 123rd said he enjoyed the opportunity to serve overseas with Soldiers he enlisted during his time as a recruiter, but he he wasn't prepared for the emotional toll the separation from his family would have on him.

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"It was really hard being away from my family," said Master Sgt. Brian Habel of Milan, with Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 2nd Battalion, 123rd Field Artillery in Milan. "I never knew how hard it was on other people who have deployed until I did it myself. Being greeted by my family at this ceremony is all I could have asked for."

Maj. Gen. Dennis Celletti of Springfield, the Assistant Adjutant General-Army, Illinois National Guard, was in attendance at the ceremony in Milan to greet Soldiers and their families.

"Every time I participate in a welcome home ceremony it makes me proud to see all of the families come together," said Celletti. "It didn't matter that it was a rainy, cloudy day. The families were overjoyed as they greeted their families."