SPRINGFIELD, IL (08/28/2011)(readMedia)-- Out of the 10,000 Soldiers in the Illinois Army National Guard, less than 700 Soldiers are active duty National Guardsmen. The rest are part-time Soldiers that attend drill weekends once a month, perform two-week annual training periods and work-full time civilian jobs or attend college.

Citizen-Soldier, weekend warrior, and in the past the State Militia. These are all terms used to describe the oldest component of the Armed Forces of the United States and one of the nation's longest-enduring institutions ... the National Guard.

For some Soldiers, service has been taken to a new level. These Soldiers serve, not only their country, but their community and the state. From holding important positions in state and federal government to being elected to serve in a county position, there are National Guard Soldiers striving to serve others.

"Citizen-Soldiers are not only committed to protecting others but to serve as well," said Capt. Jonathon Monken of Chatham.

Monken, an Iraq war veteran, has been with the Illinois Army National Guard since July 2007, and is assigned to Joint Force Headquarters in Springfield as the Intergovernmental Affairs and Plans officer.

In his civilian job, he was recently appointed the director of Illinois Emergency Management Agency.

"I swore to defend, as a Soldier and civilian," said Monken.

In both roles there are similar responsibilities.

"Principles of leadership don't change," explained Monken. "It's a great deal of team work and discipline. Though the military and civilian world is different, we work well together. We understand the mission, our capabilities and understand each other."

Maj. Tammy Duckworth, of Hoffman Estates, is another Soldier who has been to war defending the freedoms she swore to protect. But she is more than just a Soldier. She is someone who overcame the odds after being severely wounded in Iraq and continued to serve the military and the public.

"Being a citizen-Soldier is the deepest commitment to the nation," said Duckworth. "It is a way to give something back, which I wanted to do when I returned."

In early 2009 Duckworth was appointed as the Assistant Secretary of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs for the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, D.C; a position she recently resigned to pursue even greater aspirations. After her resignation, she announced plans to run for Congress.

"I wanted to set the example for what can be done no matter what has happened to you," said Duckworth.

Duckworth has been a member of the Illinois Army National Guard since 1996.

The National Guard has seen the nature of its mission change, with more frequent call-ups since September 2001.

"People called us weekend warriors and never thought of us as front line Soldiers," explained Col. Tony Libri, of New Berlin, who recently retired from the Illinois Army National Guard after 30 years wearing the uniform.

"Now half of the nation's Army is made up of National Guard Soldiers," Libri said.

When Libri retired he was part of Joint Force Headquarters in Springfield. However, Libri continues to serve his community as the Sangamon County Circuit Clerk, a position he also held while serving as a part-time Soldier with the Illinois Army National Guard and through a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan.

"Being a citizen-Soldier taught me to be a strategic thinker and a better elected official," Libri said.

As a life-long public servant, Libri has a lot of experience helping others. Libri was the senior mentor to the Afghan National Police and commander of the Police Mentoring Teams in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2009. He also helped the Hungarian Army get into the United Nations in 1997 on a deployment to Bosnia, Hungary and Croatia.

One of his greatest accomplishments came when he helped establish an all boys orphanage in Afghanistan.

"I swore an oath in the military to defend and now I continue that oath by serving the people," Libri said.

Another Soldier has used his position with the Illinois Army National Guard to educate the public on how to help veterans returning home from deployment.

Capt. Dan Grant, of Springfield, is the Inter-Governmental Officer with Joint Force Headquarters in Springfield. He works on interagency projects within Illinois and abroad, such as the Illinois National Guard's state partnership with Poland. His service however goes beyond just the military interaction.

Grant was also the director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs for two years before recently deciding to pursue a Master's Degree in Business Administration with Harvard University Business School.

"I'm able to serve my country and assist other countries in establishing systems to serve their returning troops," said Grant. "At the same time I am able to preserve a career outside the service doing something that I love - supporting our own troops as they return from harm's way."

A 2002 West Point graduate, Grant has seen what a war can do to Soldiers.

"West Point helps prepare you for the military and civilian life ahead of you."

From Ballad to Tikrit, from force protection to ordnance collection and disposal, he has seen his training come full circle.

"Deployments are the time when you put it all together and you pour everything into your mission," Grant said. "It's where you go from theory to practice."

Serving one's country is a service to others. From defending freedoms abroad to defending the freedoms at home, citizen-Soldiers will always be here.

"The military teaches us invaluable lessons and values," said Grant. "From the ethic of service that we are taught, to putting the mission first; our time in the service carries us much further in life, regardless of where we go."

Photo 1: **Photo courtesy of Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs**/ The Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs have had three well-known veterans serve as director in recent years. (From left to right) Illinois Army National Guard Capt. Dan Grant of Springfield served as director from February 2009 to August 2011; Illinois Army National Guard Maj. Tammy Duckworth of Hoffman Estates served from December 2006 to February 2009; and just recently Army veteran Erica Borggren of McHenry was appointed to replace Grant who resigned to further his career at Harvard University Business School.

Photo 2: Photo by Spc. Brian Vorce, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment/ Illinois Army National Guard Maj. Tammy Duckworth of Hoffman Estates speaks at the statue unveiling June 18 in Mount Vernon. A statue sharing her likeness was uncovered at the ceremony.

Photo 3: Photo submitted by Capt. Jonathon Monken/ Illinois Army National Guard Capt. Jonathon Monken of Chatham (middle) talks to Gov. Pat Quinn (right), Phil Anello with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) (left) and Illinois State Representative John Bradley (back left) while assisting with flood response efforts in Olive Branch this spring. Monken, IEMA Director, was demonstrating the capabilities of the IEMA mobile command center during the flooding in southern Illinois.

For high resolution photos and additional photos, please contact the Illinois National Guard Public Affairs Office at ngilstaffpao@ng.army.mil

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