

Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs

Michigan Army National Guard Michigan Air National Guard Veterans Affairs

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PRESS RELEASE

January 3, 2012

Michigan Army National Guard Soldiers deploy in support of Operation Observant Liberty

LANSING, MICH.—Friends and family bid farewell to Soldiers from the Michigan Army National Guard, on Sunday, Jan. 6 at 10 a.m in the Fort Custer Training Center Auditorium as they depart for Fort Benning, Ga., and then Liberia for a 12-month tour of duty.

Soldiers from several Michigan Army National Guard units will deploy to Liberia where they will be part of a Traveling Contact Team responsible for teaching the Armed Forces of Liberia everything from drill and ceremony to basic infantry tactics. Operation Observant Liberty is a joint service effort of Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines who will all participate in the training of the AFL.

The Michigan National Guard's involvement with the AFL is part of a rapidly growing "State Partnership Program" developed by the National Guard Bureau and the Department of Defense. When the Michigan National Guard provides trainers for these important missions it contributes greatly to building enduring civil-military relationships and long-term international security.

Liberia offers a distinct set of challenges to our Soldiers. The country has been torn apart by a 14-year-long civil war and in-fighting amongst the 16 indigenous tribes that inhabit the West African nation. A fragile peace was formed in 2006 when Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected as president. The years of conflict left the country with more than 100,000 dead, a complete lack of reliable electricity, clean water or waste disposal, and a large refugee population. Poverty is rampant and shocking; the United Nations World Human Development Index ranks Liberia 174 out of 175 countries when it measures health and living conditions.

Today, more than 1,200 Michigan National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are deployed across the globe in support of the global war on terrorism; however, as the Michigan Guard Serves the nation abroad, more than 90 percent of the force is available, trained and ready to respond to a state emergency, including a terrorist event.

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MEDIA ADVISORY:

The departure ceremony will be held Saturday, Jan. 5th, at 4 p.m. at the Lexington Hotel, 925 South Creyts Road, Lansing, Mich., 48917. Media is invited to attend the deployment ceremony. Soldiers and family members will be available for interviews approximately one hour prior to the ceremony. For more information, contact Staff Sergeant Jason Boyd at 517-481-8141.