

## MORE SOLDIERS HEAD TO IRAQ

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*The Pentagon has announced the upcoming deployment of 43,000 Reserve and National Guard troops, leaving families and employers preparing to say goodbye.*

A second wave of U.S. troops could be on its way to Iraq as early as next spring, according to an announcement from U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Of the 128,000 new soldiers who could face deployment, a majority of them will be part-time soldiers in the Army Reserves and National Guards.

The announcement could put a strain on the men and women, many of whom have full-time non-military jobs and who so far have only been expected to devote one weekend per month to military duties.

Rumsfeld said the Pentagon had already begun alerting about 43,000 soldiers in order to prepare them for deployment.

“We’ve tried to give people the longest notice possible so ... that they, their families, their employers will have time to prepare,” Rumsfeld said.

### **Who are National Guards and Reserves?**

The Army National Guard and the Army Reserves are two of three components that make up the U.S. Army, the largest military group in Iraq. The third component is the Active Army, full-time military personnel and the first to be sent into combat situations.

The National Guard is a group of civilians who serve two weekends per month and who receive two weeks of training during the summer. National Guards are often called into action for local and state emergencies such as storms or forest fires. At the federal level, the president can call on National Guards to serve as stabilization units in areas of conflict, as he did during conflicts in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

Army Reserves also serve on a part-time basis, but are considered the reserve force for the Active Army. Reservists are trained in the same manner as the Active Army and can be called on short notice to replace depleted forces and to provide transportation services, medical services, administrative services and other back-up support for troops in combat.

### **What they are leaving behind**

Many troops leaving for Iraq will be leaving full-time jobs. Under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, their employers must keep their jobs for five years and must offer them the same salary, benefits or promotions they would have received had they stayed.

Some returning Reservists and Guards, however, have faced discrimination as a result of their absence. Since 2002, 1,300 Reserves and National Guards have filed complaints against their employers. The soldiers claim that upon returning from duty they received pay cuts, demotions and some even lost their jobs.

In the current issue of Newsweek Magazine, the wife of one Army Reservist said that she worries about how long her husband's employer will keep his position open.

"They're supposed to hold their jobs for five years, but they can let them go if they downsize," said Candance Robison. Her husband Mike, a steel salesman, has been away from their home in Texas since February. "His boss needs someone who can be there."

West Virginia state police Chief Howard Hill told Newsweek that four of his 17 state troopers have been called to National Guard duty in Iraq, putting a strain on his unit.

"These call-ups are killing me," Hill said. "If we have a flood in West Virginia now, that unit with all its know-how is gone."

### **Serving in Iraq**

For Mary Sabage-Ward, the knowledge that her daughter Nicole is serving in Iraq fills her with pride as well as anxiety. Among the first wave of Army Reservists to go overseas in May, Nicole's unit is in charge of setting up showers and laundry for the combat units.

Before being deployed Nicole, 20, was a student at John Jay College in Manhattan and spent one weekend a month, as well as two weeks in the summer, at Fort Totten in Queens, N.Y., as part of her military duty. Her reason for joining the Reserves was to get money for school, according to her mother.

"It's weird. The realization didn't really sink in until we went to her base and all the families had to get together," Sabage-Ward said. "That's when the reality set in that these kids were actually going over there."

Currently more than 154,000 National Guard and Reserve members are serving in foreign countries. Of those, about 60,000 are in Iraq or Kuwait.

There have been casualties. At least 33 National Guard troops have died as a result of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Casualty figures for the Army Reserves are released as part of the Active Army. So far, 297 Army personnel have been killed in Iraq, according to the Army Public Affairs Office.

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