

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Guard unit deploys Battalion to serve in Iraq

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By AMANDA BUCK - Bulletin Staff Writer

Several local members of the Virginia National Guard left Monday on the first leg of a journey that will end with active duty in Iraq.

Members of Company A, 429th Brigade Support Battalion, which has members from Henry County, Martinsville, Patrick County, Chatham, Bowling Green and South Boston, left at 9 a.m. Monday from the National Guard Armory in South Boston.



Staff Sgts. Anthony "Mr. Chuck" Hairston of Martinsville (left) and Darryl Flippin of Preston are among the local soldiers deployed Monday morning as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Company A joined Company E of the 429th in Roanoke and guardsmen drawn from nine other units across the state for the mission, said Tammy Adams, family readiness group chairperson for the South Boston unit.

The 178-person group now will be known as Company E, she said. At least four of the company's soldiers are from Martinsville and Henry County and at least one is from Patrick County, Adams said.

Staff Sgt. Anthony "Mr. Chuck" Hairston of Martinsville and Staff Sgt. Darryl Flippin of Preston are among the local members. Adams could not release the names of the others Monday night. Also, Sgt. Anthony Woody of Martinsville was among those deployed, according to Flippin's wife, Lori Flippin.

From South Boston, the soldiers traveled by bus to Roanoke, where they joined other guardsmen and took part in a going away ceremony, Adams said. Members of the Rolling Thunder motorcycle group led the convoy, which was escorted by police officers throughout the trip.

A family day was held for members of Company A on Sunday in South Boston. The town sponsored a meal, and about 600 people attended, Adams said.

From Roanoke, Adams said the unit will travel to Atterbury, Ind., for extensive training. Members are scheduled to be there for at least two months, she said.

However, a press release posted on the Virginia National Guard's Web site on April 2 says the unit will train at Camp Shelby in Mississippi. A guard spokesperson could not be reached for comment Monday.

After training, “they ship to Iraq” to support Operation Iraqi Freedom, Adams said. The group is scheduled for 13 months of active duty.

Earlier this month, some area residents deployed with the 116th Brigade Combat Team out of Staunton, Adams said, adding that she did not know how many.

A third group that also has some local soldiers among its members is scheduled to deploy June 23, she said.