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41st Soldiers Arriving to Train for Iraq

Georgia's 48th readying to leave



Striped sleeping bags were strapped to several of the camouflaged-colored backpacks carried in by the approximate 290 Oregon Army National Guard soldiers as they arrived at Fort Stewart's National Guard Training area Monday night. Behind the concertina wire surrounding the site, soldiers from Charlie Troop, 1st Battalion, 82nd Cavalry, 41st Infantry Brigade, signed in, drew their bags and got bunking information from members of their training unit, the "battle ready" soldiers of the 188th Infantry Brigade, First Army Division East. Pvt. Lidolwon Parazoosanders, 24, gave those seated at the "sign-in" table his name and identification number, stopping for a moment to re-grip his belongings.

"I'm just ready to get started. This is my first deployment and both of my brothers were deployed to Iraq. So this will be a learning experience for me," the Klamath Falls, Ore., native said. The 41st IBCT is beginning a 60-day training exercise at Fort Stewart in preparation for a July deployment to Iraq, where they will replace the 56th IBCT, which is part of the Texas Army National Guard. Those soldiers trained at Fort Stewart in 2008, prior to taking their post in the middle-Eastern country. By mid-May more than 3,000 soldiers from the 41st are expected to mobilize at the garrison, bringing the total number of soldiers training at the fort this summer, including the 3rd Infantry Division, to 12,000.

By Frenchi Jones

Staff writer

fjones@coastalcourier.com

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In three separate flights to Hunter Army Airfield, nearly 600 of the Oregon soldiers arrived to Fort Stewart on Monday. The arrivals brought in the last of Lt. Col. William Prendergast's squadron. "The entire task force ended tonight, so we're really going to be able to hit it hard ... and get ready for combat," he said. "We've been training for almost a month and we're ready to start our collective training, which is key to our deployment. It's great to be Title 10 (being on active duty status) and to get started on the path that we are getting ready to take." For the next week, Prendergast said his soldiers will fill out paperwork, get acquainted with the area and work out any kinks that could possibly hinder performance. "If we get the next seven days right, everything else will run smoothly," Prendergast said. During the next 60-days, members of the 41st will be trained by the 188th on combat-related training exercise, including driver's training, rollover training and training at all the ranges.