



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

News Release

Governor Bill Richardson Leads Ceremony Honoring New Mexico Guard Troops Headed For Afghanistan

NM Guardsmen to train Afghan troops

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SANTA FE- Governor Bill Richardson today praised a group of 59 New Mexico National Guardsmen preparing to deploy to Afghanistan on a mission to train Afghan military forces. The Governor joined the soldiers from the Guard's 93rd Troop Command Forward Detachment, and more than 300 of their friends and family for a "Yellow Ribbon Ceremony", an emotional send off for the troops as they prepare to depart.

"On behalf of all New Mexicans, we honor your sacrifice, your dedication, and your courageous service to your nation. In return, we offer our thanks, our gratitude, our respect, our prayers, and our eternal debt," said Governor Richardson. "The soldiers being deployed today represent different units and diverse communities from around our great state, and exemplify New Mexico's longstanding history of valiant military service."

Troops being deployed are National Guard Officers from various units and communities throughout state, and are being deployed to Afghanistan for 15 months to train and mentor military/security personnel there as part of Task Force Phoenix. They will first go to Ft. Carson, Colorado for 4-6 weeks of training before heading to Afghanistan.

Since 9/11, more than 1, 600 men and women from the New Mexico National Guard have been deployed in the global fight against terrorism. Currently, more than 340 New Mexico troops from five different units are deployed around world, with missions including Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Noble Eagle. Some of the troops in the 93rd are being deployed for the second time.

“When it comes to our troops and their families, words are not enough,” Governor Richardson said. “We must act. And I am proud that New Mexico is leading the way and continuing its commitment to the men and women of the National Guard, and their families.”

New Mexico was the first state in the nation to provide \$250,000 in life insurance for deployed active duty National Guard troops. In addition, New Mexico has taken other steps to show deployed troops how their service and sacrifice are appreciated here at home:

- A new tax check-off, so every New Mexican can donate part of their tax returns to a support fund to help military families,
- A commitment to provide a transitional bridge between employers and their employees who serve in the Guard and Reserves,
- Extension for active duty Guard personnel to file state taxes,
- Grace period for expired drivers’ licenses,
- Tuition refund or credit for Guard personnel currently enrolled,
- Free hunting and fishing licenses for one year when they return to New Mexico, and
- Free tuition to any New Mexico public university for the children of a New Mexico Guardsman killed in the line of duty.

The Governor had one final statement for the troops. “To the brave soldiers here today, I have two things to ask of you: The first is that you serve your state and your country with pride and honor, and I have no doubt you will do just that. The second is equally important, and that is to come back home safe—to your families, your communities, and to the eternal debt of a grateful state, and a grateful nation.”