

Governor's Column – 9/9/01

### **Mississippi's National Guard Is Serving America Well**

This week, nearly four hundred Mississippians will be leaving their friends, families and jobs. These men and women are part of the Mississippi National Guard "Task Force Rifles" division, and they will be spending the next six months in Bosnia as part of the peace-keeping mission now in place in that war-torn region of the world.

A little over a week ago I had the opportunity to travel over to Fort Benning, Georgia, where these soldiers have been training for the past few weeks. I watched with pride as they went through their training in the Bradley fighting vehicles, taking out targets on the range on a sweltering August day.

The soldiers of the Task Force Rifles are officially part of the Task Force 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 155<sup>th</sup> Infantry – the seventh oldest infantry regiment in the United States Army. At one time, soldiers of the regiment were led by Jefferson Davis, and it was under his command that they earned the nickname of "Mississippi Rifles," because of the new, longer rifles designed by Davis.

As part of their deployment to Bosnia, they are being joined by soldiers from Connecticut and Massachusetts. The Connecticut company is coming from the second oldest regiment in the country, and the Massachusetts company is from the oldest regiment in the Army. There's a great deal of history that comes with these soldiers, and I know that history will be strengthened through this deployment.

All of these soldiers will be under the command of Colonel Bill Glasgow of Brookhaven. I had the honor of helping pin the Meritorious Service Medal on Colonel Glasgow at Camp Shelby before the soldiers transferred to Fort Benning to continue their training. His work with them in the past few weeks will serve them well on their mission, and he is just one of many tremendous Mississippians leading this effort.

It is my sincere hope that the training at Fort Benning will never have to be put to use. These soldiers – our brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, husbands and wives – are going to Bosnia to help keep a fragile peace, not to enter into combat. But, we can rest assured that if a situation arises where they are required to take up arms, they will be the best-trained soldiers in that situation.

We are sending these soldiers away at a difficult time – school is starting for their children; they will miss football and hunting seasons; they are going to be away from home during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays. We need to remember them during this time.

We need to remember soldiers like Sergeant Doug Howard of McComb, Colonel Johnny Cahoon of Byram, E-4 Tim Harris of Holly Springs and Sergeant Robert Turner of Petal. We need to remember the soldiers from Connecticut and Massachusetts who will be serving with the Mississippi National Guard. We need to remember all the members of armed forces, wherever they serve, and pray for their safe return.

It's been said that "the more we sweat in peace, the less we bleed in war." After watching members of the Mississippi National Guard training on that August afternoon, I'm confident they will return home to us in the same condition in which they are leaving us. In the end, we have to keep in mind they are indeed going to a foreign land to keep the peace for people who cannot do it themselves, for people who have suffered tragedies we cannot even imagine.

That's why we're proud of them.