

New Mexico National Guard
Office of Public Affairs
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For Immediate Release:

New Mexico's 919th Military Police Company Deploys in support of Operation Allies Welcome

by Iain Jaramillo, NMNG Public Affairs

BELEN, N.M. – The New Mexico National Guard hosted a Yellow Ribbon ceremony to say farewell to the Soldiers of the 919th Military Police Company who are deploying domestically in support of Operation Allies Welcome on Friday, Oct. 8, 2021, at the Belen Readiness Center here.

The Soldiers will conduct security operations and assist units that are already providing transportation, temporary housing, culturally appropriate food, medical screening, religious accommodations, and general support for over 50,000 Afghan guests.

The deployment is an opportunity for the 919th to perform their duties in a critical real-world environment.

"As Soldiers, we are always prepared to go wherever the Army sends us," said Maj. Gen. Kenneth Nava, the adjutant general of New Mexico, during his remarks to the troops and their families. "But let me tell you that this is a very important mission."

Looking to the families in attendance, Nava spoke about the reality of a domestic deployment and acknowledged the challenges that Soldiers face, even if their destination isn't overseas.

"These Soldiers were ready to go to the Middle East if that's where the Army wanted them to go," Nava said. "They're ready to do anything that the Army asks them to do. Mobilizations are difficult. It doesn't matter if I send them overseas or across the country, they're still not here with you or with their families. While they're away, please lean on us. We're all family."

Speaking to the Soldiers in formation, Nava said:

"This is a high-profile mission so go do it well," Nava said. "Go complete this mission the way the 126th, your sister company, would expect you to. Do it the way your family expects you to. Represent New Mexico well."

Since August, Servicemembers from across the Department of Defense have mobilized to assist the Department of Homeland Security in providing support to vulnerable Afghans, including those who worked alongside U.S. troops in Afghanistan for the past two decades.

Afghans who are in the process of resettling to the United States are currently being housed at designated military bases while completing the process of obtaining their Special Immigrant Visas.

Belen Mayor pro tem Frank F. Ortega attended the ceremony and provided remarks to the unit and their loved ones.

"First of all, I want to welcome you all to our city," Ortega said. "I joined the Army National Guard here to continue to serve our community when there were Dusters here. On behalf of our city, welcome and good luck on your deployment."

The ceremony concluded with two time-honored military traditions; the tying of yellow ribbons around an evergreen tree and the casing of the unit's colors.

Family members were invited to tie yellow ribbons to evergreen trees to honor their deploying Soldiers. The ribbons will remain on the evergreen tree until the unit returns home.

The unit's guidon was carefully cased by the company's enlisted leader, 1st. Sgt. Melissa Kass, and commander Capt. Rosa Jewell. The casing of the colors ceremony symbolizes the onward movement of a unit and is mirrored by an uncasing ceremony when a mission is complete.

Families and loved ones were invited to enjoy lunch and meet other members of the unit following the formal portion of the ceremony.

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