

# MISSOURI NATIONAL GUARD

Public Affairs Office

Good (morning, afternoon, evening) ladies and gentlemen, friends, Families and Veterans.

This Veterans Day we are gathered to recognize our Air Force, Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard Veterans who have sacrificed, both in war and in peace, to protect America. Today, we are a nation at war. October 7 marked the 10th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan after 9/11. We honor our brave men and women who have proudly served and continue to serve this great country.

Armistice Day, as this commemoration was first proclaimed, recognized the signing of the World War I ceasefire on November 11, 1918. During the Great War, 156,232 Missourians served in the Army – including the National Guard - in addition to 14,132 in the U.S. Navy and 3,721 in the Marine Corps.

Tens of thousands of Missourians have served in uniform since then. Today, more than 1,000 Missouri National Guard Soldiers and Airmen are serving overseas. In the past 10 years, our Soldiers and Airmen have served in Afghanistan, Kosovo, Qatar and over Libya. Next month, thirty Airmen with our 139<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing Security Forces will leave Baghdad. They will be the last of the thousands of Missouri National Guard troops who have served in Iraq since 2003.

Today, hundreds of Missouri Guardsmen are serving in Afghanistan. Our 548<sup>th</sup> and 1138<sup>th</sup> Transportation Companies are delivering much needed supplies throughout the country – theirs is a dangerous mission, and one of the war's most critical. Our joint Agri-Business Development Team is helping the people of Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province secure their independence by teaching farming and business skills crucial to economic freedom.

In Libya, B-2 Bombers with from our 131<sup>st</sup> Bomb Wing and its active duty associate unit, the 509<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing, played a key role in removing a tyrant from power.

We have nearly 500 Soldiers from the 175<sup>th</sup> Military Battalion, 1137<sup>th</sup> and 2175<sup>th</sup> MP companies and the 3175<sup>th</sup> Chemical Company providing security at bases in Qatar. About 100 Soldiers from the 835<sup>th</sup> Corps Sustainment Support Battalion and 229<sup>th</sup> Multifunctional Medical Battalion more are helping with peace keeping operations in the Sinai Peninsula. Charlie Company from our 1-106<sup>th</sup> Aviation Regiment is currently awaiting an overseas assignment.

When you look at those missions, it gives you a snapshot of what your Missouri National Guard is doing. We are the first into battler. We are providing security. We are delivering supplies. We are fighting insurgents. We are helping a people build a better future for themselves.

We are standing ready.

As the only branch of the armed forces with a dual and state federal mission, we have another kind of Veteran: Veterans of stateside emergencies.

Since January, we've had a blizzard, two major floods, and the worst tornado in American history. Your Missouri National Guard has literally been operating on emergency orders from the governor since April.

Many of us performed our normal, military duties. Military Police and Security Forces manned checkpoints and protected property. Engineers designed and built sandbag walls. Transportation Soldiers brought tens of thousands of sandbags across the state. Air crews conducted crucial personnel and equipment transport and reconnaissance.

But many more of us did something outside our training.

In Northwest Missouri, every member of the 139<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing, regardless of rank or skill set, banded together to save their base and community. In nearby counties, field artillerymen from the 1-129<sup>th</sup> supported local authorities and served as a quick reaction force for at-risk towns.

In Joplin, our Soldiers and Airmen followed search and rescue missions and support to law enforcement missions with entirely new mission sets. They provided state oversight for the federal debris removal program and later helped oversee Gov. Nixon's Disaster Recovery Jobs Program.

As we honor our Veterans, it is hard not to notice how young many of them are. Today, for the first time since the Vietnam War, we have a sizable population of young Veterans. Almost half of those serving in the military are between 22 and 30 years old.

As a nation, we have a pretty good track record of honoring our returning Veterans - but it's not perfect. Today, we make sure all our National Guard units are received with the honors they deserve when they return to the states. Most, if not all, of our service members have had the experience of being approached by a complete stranger and thanked for their service.

Today, less than one percent of the nation serves in our all volunteer military. We owe our volunteers support before, during, and after deployments.

National Guard and Reserve troops face unique challenges when they return. With the active duty, all the resources they need are on a self-contained post. For the part-time Soldier or Airman, unit members are spread across the state. When they return, their nearest battle buddy or VA medical center could be hundreds of miles away. It is important, then, that we all look out for each other when we return from war.

In the Guard, we have a reintegration program that starts before our Soldiers and Airmen even deploy. During every step of the program, these Soldiers and Airmen are surrounded by two key groups: their Families and their battle buddies. Their Families know if they're different from before they left. Their battle buddies can tell if they are struggling since returning home. Our goal is that today's troops return stronger and more resilient.

Throughout reintegration and deployment, there is another group of Veterans who we all owe a debt of gratitude. These are the unseen Veterans. The Family members – the wives, husbands, kids, parents, and siblings who take on extra duties at home. During an overseas deployment, service members know what their mission is, where they're going, what they're doing. Those we leave at home have the harder job – they have to deal with the uncertainty that comes with not knowing. Too often, that service is overlooked. If you see a man or woman in uniform and want to thank them, please thank their Families, too.

Our Veterans have given everything to our country. It is important that we do what we can to help them. Gov. Nixon, our state commander-in-chief, has established the Show Me Heroes job program to help Veterans in these tough economic times. Through the program, which is administered by a National Guard member, employers pledge to hire Veterans. It's a win-win for both sides. The Veteran gets a job and is able to support his or her Family, while the employer gets a dedicated, disciplined employee with leadership experience and skills that often cannot be learned in the civilian world.

There is one special group of Veterans to whom we can never repay our debt. These are our thousands of wounded warriors. If you know of an organization that wants to help Veterans, encourage them to register with the National Resource Directory so wounded, ill and injured service members and their Families can access information about the services you provide.

You can also get involved on a personal level. Volunteer with local organizations in your hometown to make a difference in the lives of wounded warriors and their Families. This is Missouri, after all – don't just say "thank you" to our Veterans and their Families. Show them that you mean it.

To our Veterans—our service members of all ages—who have engaged in combat, stability, and humanitarian operations—we honor you. To those service members who

paid the ultimate price or who are still missing or unaccounted for—we honor you by remembering the sacrifices you and your Families made for our great Nation.

Today is a day of Honor and a day to Honor. On this day of celebration and reflection, I thank everyone who has worn a U.S. military uniform for their honorable service and for our freedom.

Thank you