



U.S. Army photos by Maj. Michael Tomberlin/Released
Family members and loved ones of Soldiers assigned to the Alabama National Guard's 1st Battalion, 167th Infantry welcome the unit's return to the U.S. at Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center May 8. The unit had just returned after a nine-month deployment in Afghanistan.



Alabama

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leaders, top officials, trainers, advisers and inspectors. The Alabama National Guard Soldiers operated in all six Afghanistan Regional Support Commands in 14 separate locations. The battalion's seven companies played a vital role in the overall mission of NTM-A and the International Security Assistance Force as they move towards handing control of security for the country over to the Afghan National Security Forces. The "Fourth Alabama" made up the single largest entity of NTM-A and enabled

the training and transition of security to Afghan forces, which is set to be completed by the end of 2014. During the nine months, the battalion completed more than 12,000 missions, safely transported nearly 43,000 personnel and traveled more than 142,648 sometimes treacherous and unsecured miles throughout Afghanistan. The "Fourth Alabama" had 190 Soldiers earn their Combat Infantryman Badge, 56 their Combat Action Badge and one their Combat Medic Badge because of their run-ins with insurgent forces during this deployment. Four 167th Infantry Soldiers received the Purple Heart because of injuries suf-

fered during those enemy engagements. The battalion experienced multiple small-arms fire attacks, three improvised explosive device attacks, multiple indirect fire attacks and a suicide bomber attack. The Soldiers of the 1st of the 167th Infantry Battalion must now complete demobilization at the Camp Shelby Joint Forces Training Center before returning back home to Alabama. A series of public "welcome home" events are being scheduled for the companies with details to follow. The "Fourth Alabama" has units based in Talladega, Valley, Anniston, Pelham, Cullman, Sylacauga and Oxford.



Tanks

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first, so they can support their tankers when they get the new vehicles." Despite some obvious similarities, the M1A2 SEPv.2 is vastly different from the older M1A1 tanks, and the crews, maintenance and support personnel have a lot of work ahead, learning new systems, procedures and tactics which will maximize the combat power of the

155th ABCT. "From the ground, the M1A2SEPv.2 still looks like a tank that everybody's familiar with, but once you set foot in that turret, you're in an entirely different world than what these guys are used to seeing," said Kastner. "These guys are coming off of the M1A1 heavy commons, and they're skipping about two generations of technological development, jumping into the latest and the greatest. The learning curve is pretty sharp, but every one of my instructors is a retired maintenance guy. It may be confusing at

first but the new tank is actually more user-friendly and can do so many different things that the older version just was not capable of." After the maintenance personnel complete their new equipment training, the tank crews of the 155th ABCT will begin familiarization with the new vehicles as their units receive them. "There will be several weeks of preparation and processing of the new vehicles," said Lindsey. "We will be issuing the first 36 tanks in June to the gaining units who will kick off their NET training, with the

remaining 22 tanks scheduled to be issued in August. In addition to the training, there will be a lot going on the supply and maintenance arenas, and the turn-in of the old M1A1 fleet is scheduled from May through August." As the new tanks arrive and get transferred to the gaining units, the Operator New Equipment Training will kick off in earnest as the tankers learn the news systems and capabilities of their vehicles during annual training and weekend drills. "Given the amount of information that has to be absorbed by the

units, the operator training is going to take about a year, based on their regular training cycle," said Kastner. "We'll begin training on their annual training time frame for this year, 2013, and it will continue through their drill periods for the rest of the year and into 2014. Then, around June or July of 2014, the entire training will culminate in a live fire gunnery exercise for the tankers to put their new equipment through its paces and use everything that they've learned over that time frame."



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