168th MEDEVAC returns home from Afghanistan

By Sgt. Mike Getten
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STEAD — The soldiers of C Company, 1/168th (Medical Evacuation) Aviation unit were welcomed home from a year long deployment in Afghanistan by family and friends during a ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility on Oct. 16.

The unit, comprising about 60 soldiers, was in the combat theater since December 2008 and evacuated 1,027 people in 663 missions.

"It's good to be back," said Capt. Darren Chrisman, commander of the unit. "I am very proud of how hard everyone worked, especially the medics and how well they performed saving patients. It was impressive to watch a medic in the back of an aircraft working to save someone's life. All of the men and women in this unit are professionals."

The Guardsmen arrived at the Reno-Tahoe airport early in the morning and were transported by bus to the Reid Armory where they awaited the arrival of their families. Moments before the ceremony began, the unit marched over to the Army Aviation Support Facility where they stood in formation outside the big hangar door.

Maj. Heath Kelly, the 991st Troop Command executive officer, was the master of ceremonies and greeted the guests. Then, the huge hangar door was opened with cheers and shouts from the waiting families. The hangar was filled with emotion as everyone rose to their feet, and the unit marched forward into the building.

Sgt. Ryan Moore reunites with his wife, Elise, on October 16 during the 1/168th Aviation Company's return ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Stead. The aviation unit was in Afghanistan since December 2008, and it evacuated more than 1,000 people during its deployment.
Photo: Sgt. Mike Getten

The speakers included adjutant general Brig. Gen. William Burks and representatives from Lt. Gov. Brian Krolicki's office and Sen. Harry Reid's office. All kept their comments brief in an effort to reunite families in a timely manner.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, the soldiers rushed forward to embrace their family and friends for the first time in several months. The hangar quickly cleared as the reunited families went home to catch up on the past year of life.

The return of Master Sgt. Patrick Moore and his son, Sgt. Ryan Moore, marked a substantial military reunion for the Moore family. Patrick's father is retired Chief Warrant Officer Bobby Moore, who served for 30 years in the Nevada Army Guard. Karla Moore, Patrick's wife, is a first lieutenant in the Army Reserve with A Company, 328th Combat Support Hospital in Sacramento, Calif.

Even with the return of the aviation soldiers, the Nevada Army Guard still has about 600 soldiers deployed in southwest Asia. The majority of the deployed soldiers are with the 1864th Transportation Company in Iraq and the 1/221st Cavalry in Afghanistan. ■

The medical evacuation Black Hawk helicopters used by the soldiers of the 1/168th (MEDEVAC) Aviation unit arrived home at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Stead on October 14, two days before the soldiers arrived in Reno and greeted their friends and families in a homecoming ceremony. Photo by Sgt. Mike Getten