

## Homecoming for Area Soldiers Unit gets warm welcome back after lengthy deployment.

[By Chuck Hagee/Gazette](#)

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After months of waiting and praying, the U.S. Army Materiel Command at Fort Belvoir welcomed back 38 members of their unit in a special ceremony on Dec. 3.

Soldiers in the all-reserve Logistics Civil Augmentation Program Support unit had been deployed to Iraq, Kuwait, the Republic of Georgia, Jordan and Djibouti.

Their assignments ranged from nine to 15 months. Four reserve soldiers from the Defense Information Systems Agency based at Fort Belvoir were honored at the "Welcome Home Warrior-Citizen" ceremony.

Maj. Gen. Harry "Skip" Philips Jr., assistant deputy commanding general for reserve affairs, AMC presented the Warrrior-Citizen Medals to the soldiers.

"This medal is meant to say thanks in a very special way to the members of this unit," Philips said. "You are a unique organization with special skills critical to the sustainment of our soldiers and our coalition partners."

Philips, who was joined by ceremony host LSU Commander, Col. H. Gary Bunch, also thanked the families and employers of the returning soldiers for their "commitment and sacrifice while your soldiers were deployed."

Contract support has been a tradition in the military since the Revolutionary War. The Logistics Civil Augmentation Program, managed by AMC since 1995, is today's modern version. Its primary goal is to plan for conflicts and other contingency operations.

Members of the LSU are specially trained officers who make sure combat commanders get the level of support required from government contractors. They are responsible for a wide array of life support services for the nearly 150,000 U.S. troops and thousands of coalition forces operating in Southwest Asia, according to AMC.

LSU is the largest program in the Army, with more than half of every \$100 spent going toward their mission.

"We fielded nearly 52,000 contractors with a value of \$18 billion," said Donald Troutner, manager for the program.

"Since 1998 you have been in 22 countries and disbursed throughout the United States. Few units can claim that. Not since World War II have units done that amount of deployment," Troutner told the group.

"We send you into harm's way. I recall a photo of a lone first lieutenant in Uzbekistan, raising the American flag, reminding me of the Marines at Iwo Jima. I am truly privileged to serve with you in these endeavors," he said.

Also welcoming the group home was Lewis Brodsky Northern Virginia Area chairman of the Virginia Committee for Employer Support of the



From left: Maj. Gen. Harry J. Philips Jr., Lewis Brodsky, Northern Virginia area chairman, Virginia ESGR Committee, Maj. Kerrie Stemniski, Mary Pat Schlickemaier, principal, St. Rita School, Alexandria, Va., and Col. H. Gary Bunch, commander, LOGCAP Support Unit. Maj. Stemniski was stationed near Bagram Air Base, Afghanistan, and is a fifth grade teacher at the Saint Rita School in Alexandria. Stemniski said she could not have gotten through the assignment without the support of her boss and the school.



From left: Warrant Officer La Tanya Burton, Warrant Officer Albert Santiago, Staff Sgt. Amadi Bluit

### Guard and Reserve.

"When you left for your overseas assignments as citizen-soldiers, you left behind more than family and friends," Brodsky said. "Most of you temporarily left behind a civilian job, and, hopefully, an understanding, patriotic and sympathetic boss. On their behalf, I add my thanks to what you have done for the Army Materiel Command and the nation." Many of those returning, were the U.S. Army representative in remote locations responsible for everything from laundries, baths, power generation, water and fuel supplies.

In addition to their responsibilities to create and maintain vital area infrastructure, they were also tasked with bringing together senior military and civilian leaders with local nationals to develop livable conditions for soldiers and Marines, as well as their coalition partners.

with his daughter Amari, from the Defense Information Systems Agency, were among the reserve soldiers honored for their service in Iraq and Kuwait at the "Welcome Home Warrior-Citizen" ceremony. While overseas, they made sure communications via satellite, Internet connection and fiber optic technologies were working. "The biggest challenges were keeping troops' morale up and leaving family behind," said Burton of Silver Spring, Md.

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