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CARROLL, IOWA

Thursday, January 15, 2009

Carroll soldiers depart for D.C. security mission

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Fifty-five members of the Carroll Army National Guard unit left this morning for a 10-day mission to assist in the inauguration festivities for President-elect Barack Obama.

1st Sgt. Quinten Christensen said the members of Company A, 1st Battalion, 168th Infantry departed the armory about 9 a.m. They were being bused to Camp Dodge at Johnston for pre-mission processing and training. About half were to be flown to Washington, D.C., but the other soldiers were facing a 22-hour bus ride.

Alpha Company will be based at an abandoned elementary school about four blocks from the Capitol. Christensen said the unit first heard the facility was without electricity and water, but those rumors were unfounded.

The Carroll Guardsmen were expected to receive orientation upon arrival in Washington, then spend two or three days providing security at vehicle and pedestrian checkpoints and participating in roving patrols.

They should return to Carroll late next week.

Alpha Company is among 1,000 soldiers and airmen from Iowa who will be assisting federal, state and local agencies during the inauguration. The National Guard Bureau asked the Iowa Guard to activate units due to increased operational requirements and growing participant estimates. The Iowa troops will be performing transportation, attendee management, traffic control, event ingress and egress, and personnel support.

It's the first time Iowa units have been mobilized for a presidential inauguration. More than 10,000 Guardsmen from 11 states will be assisting.

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