

Joy and tears greet troops back from Iraq

AFP, Washington Mothers cried and children squealed with delight as a company of US troops arrived back from Iraq on Saturday, after a yearlong tour marked by desert heat and monotony.

A crowd of families roared as 124 soldiers from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment, arrived marching in formation, part of a wave of homecomings as President Barack Obama scales back the US role in Iraq.

The welcoming ceremony at Fort Myer, outside Washington, was a joyous event for the soldiers and their loved ones after 12 months of separation, even if the legacy of the US invasion of Iraq remains a subject of bitter debate at home and abroad.

"It has been a very long year," said a tearful Charlotte Thompson, whose 25-year-old son had volunteered for the Iraq assignment.

The unit spent most of its time guarding a prison with about 300 Iraqi detainees in Taji, and carried out combat patrols as well, officers said.

The troops' work in Iraq was a long way from their customary job as part a regiment known as "the Old Guard" in the US capital, where they perform ceremonial duties at funerals, visits by foreign dignitaries and other official events.

Specialist Charles Thompson said he was braced for a culture shock as he would soon be marching in honor cordons at the Pentagon and the White House.

"It's really a big change," he told AFP. "I

could do without the ceremonial stuff."

The company returned without any casualties, in a war that has claimed the lives of more than 4,000 US troops and with roughly 50,000 forces still on the ground facing lethal threats.

Thompson said he got used to the intense heat in Iraq, but the work was "kind of boring at some points," with troops playing basketball or video games to ease the monotony.

After spending the weekend with his family, Thompson will be returning to duty at Fort Myer, but said he was looking forward to a 30-day leave coming up soon.

He said he would head back home to north-eastern Kentucky and "go fishing."

"I've been thinking about it for about 365 days," he said.

Unlike previous generations of warriors, these soldiers did not have to wait for letters from home but instead spoke directly via web video to their loved ones through laptops at their base in Iraq. Thompson's mother said she was able to sleep a little better after her weekly chats by Skype with her son.

Jo Daniels, the mother of Sergeant John Rhoten, 28, watched her son come home Saturday from his third combat tour, and preferred not to "go into detail" about how she had worried during his deployment.

She said she avoids news reports about Iraq to keep her emotions in check while her son is away.

But she said hearing criticism and questioning of the war upsets her.



A memorial honouring Vera Smith, the Katrina victim who was killed by a hit-and-run driver in the hours following Hurricane Katrina, is seen on Saturday in New Orleans, Louisiana. Smith's body lay uncovered at this spot for days before neighbours finally buried her in a makeshift grave there. Yesterday was the fifth anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

GULF CONFLICT

Tens of thousands missing in 30 years

AFP, Baghdad

Tens of thousands of people are still missing in the Gulf from Iraq's past 30 years of warfare, with families still living in hope of news, the International Committee of the Red Cross said yesterday.

"The impact of war is still being felt by people in the greater Gulf region years or even decades after the guns fell silent," the ICRC said in a statement on the eve of the International Day of the Disappeared.

"Thousands are still hoping to receive news of their relatives who went missing in connection with the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war or the 1990-1991 Gulf War (over Kuwait), or after armed conflict broke out in Iraq in 2003," it said.

The Iran-Iraq war is estimated to have cost one million lives on the two sides, while tens of thousands more Iraqis were killed in toppled dictator Saddam Hussein's other two conflicts.

19 killed in Caucasus shootout

AP, Tsentoroi

A shootout between the Chechen president's personal protection detail and suspected separatist insurgents left 19 people dead early yesterday, including five civilians, officials and media reports said.

At least 12 suspected insurgents and two security officers were killed when the rebels entered Tsentoroi, Raza Kadyrov's home village, his spokesman Alvi Karimov told The Associated Press. TV reports said five civilians were killed in the crossfire.

Kadyrov, who is thought to regularly supervise security operations in the field, was in the village at the time and directed the counter-offensive, Karimov said.

"We let them into the village so they couldn't escape," Kadyrov told Channel One television, which showed him examining the bodies of the suspected militants strewn across a road. "We forced them into a place where they could be eliminated," he said.

An AP reporter at the scene saw fire-ravaged

and bullet-ridden homes, with body parts lying among the rubble.

Resident Vargan Edelgeriyeva, 48, said the gunbattle started at about 3:00am at a construction site about 150 meters away from Kadyrov's residence.

Militants entered local homes but were quickly surrounded, Edelgeriyeva said. In one house an insurgent detonated explosives, perhaps a grenade, killing himself and a 30-year-old resident, she said.

Police in 2009 averted a possible assassination attempt on Kadyrov, shooting dead the driver of a car suspected of containing explosives before he could reach a construction site where Kadyrov was due to make an appearance.

In a separate incident Sunday, security forces in nearby Dagestan province shot dead four suspected militants travelling in two cars when they refused to stop at a police checkpoint, according to police spokesman Magomed Tagirov. He said weapons were later found in the cars.

7 US troops killed in latest fight

AP, Kabul

Seven US troops were killed in weekend attacks in Afghanistan's embattled southern and eastern regions, while officials found the bodies Sunday of five kidnapped campaign workers for a female candidate in the western province of Herat.

Two servicemen died in bombings Sunday in southern Afghanistan, while two others were killed in a bomb attack in the south on Saturday and three in fighting in the east the same day, NATO said. Their identities and other details were being withheld until relatives could be notified.

Karzai wants change in Afghan war strategy

AFP, Kabul

President Hamid Karzai said yesterday Washington's war strategy for Afghanistan needed a rethink, as a Taliban-led insurgency gathers pace and foreign forces casualties surge.

Karzai made the comments to the visiting Norbert Lammert, president of the German parliament, the Afghan president's office said in a statement.

"Speaking about Afghanistan and regional security (Karzai) said that the strategy of the war on terrorism must be reassessed," the statement said.

"The experience over the past eight years showed that fighting (Taliban) in Afghan villages has been ineffective and is not achieving anything but killing civilians."

Rethinking counter-insurgency strategies in Afghanistan was the war-torn country's most pressing need, Karzai said.

"This has become a serious need in the current situation," he was quoted saying.

Earlier in the week, the Western-backed Karzai told American officials that Washington and its NATO allies must shift their military focus to insurgent hideouts on the Pakistani side of the border.

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Vacancy Announcement United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh announces a vacancy for the post of Procurement Assistant (Service contract - SB2) for the 'Police Reform Programme' Project, Phase II. The duration of the Service Contract is one year initially, subject to renewal on an annual basis upon satisfactory performance and availability of funds.

Table with 2 columns: ডেসকো'র আওতাধীন প্রধান সড়ক সমূহ and Overhead তার/ক্যাবল অপসারণের তারিখ (সংশোধিত). It lists specific road locations and their corresponding work dates.