

## U.S. Army Europe and 7th Army

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### Army Reserve Soldiers back home in Wiesbaden after 400 days of deployment

By Sara Goodeyon

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**WIESBADEN, Germany** -- Soldiers of the 209th Army Liaison Team wrapped up their tour of duty in Iraq as they were welcomed home here, May 5.



KARL WEISEL

Capt. Ben Samuel of the 209th Army Liaison Team plays with his 9-month-old son Jeremy during the welcome-home event for the 209th at the Wiesbaden (Germany) Fitness Center, May 5. The 7th Civil Support Command unit served for more than a year in and around Baghdad, Iraq, in support of Multi-National Force - Iraq.

The 26th U.S. Army Reserve Soldiers provided support and augmentation to Multi-National Corps – Iraq during their deployment. An element of the Kaiserslautern-based 7th Civil Support Command, the 209th deployed for 400 days, including its pre-deployment and post-deployment.

“We did a lot of stuff,” said 209th commander Lt. Col Steven Zephir. “We

provided a personal security detail for the director of the Combined International Operation, liaison to the Iraqi military and provided staff augmentation.”

“We spent the first half there in the Green Zone,” said staff officer Maj. Ralph Groves of the deployment. “We spent the second half at Victory Base on the outskirts of Baghdad near the international airport at the Al-Faw Palace.”

“There was always the danger of the enemy firing at us in the international zone,” said Groves. “The guys in the security detail were in the red zone and they had some close calls with improvised explosive devices.”

Since the unit was right in the middle of things, Groves said, they hosted some important visitors, including a couple of U.S. presidents and a lot of military brass. “I shook President Bush’s hand. It was after the election,” said Groves. “I shook President Obama’s hand. He was very charismatic. It was like meeting a celebrity.”

Family members, friends and members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars and USO greeted the returning troops for the welcome ceremony at the Wiesbaden Fitness Center.

Col. Ben Loney of the 7th CSC expressed the “thanks of a grateful nation” for the service of the 209th, praised the love and support of their families and then told the Soldiers to “enjoy this time of reunion.”

For Groves there’s a full schedule ahead, but his homecoming smile seemed to say he doesn’t mind. “All my kids want me to do something with them,” he said. “One wants to go to see a soccer game, another wants to go to the beach and another one wants to go fishing.”

The Soldiers will spend some down time reintegrating with families and friends and will then move on to their next assignment. Zephir said the next mission will likely take the 209th to Romania, where they will support exercises in December.



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