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HANAU WELCOMES U.S. ARMY EUROPE BRIDGING COMPANY HOME FROM EXTENDED DEPLOYMENT IN IRAQ

By Sgt. Aimee Millham

U.S. Army Europe Public Affairs Office

HANAU, Germany -- For 15 months, Nadine Brown kept herself busy with things other than the absence of her husband, but when she spotted him on the bus that brought him home, it finally hit her.



SGT AIMEE MILLHAM

Staff Sgt. Tarrance Brown of U.S. Army Europe's 502nd Engineer Company plays with his 9-month-old son Naiveo at the 502nd's welcome-home ceremony at Pioneer Kaserne in Hanau, Germany Dec. 11. The ceremony welcomed Soldiers of the multi-role bridge company back from their 15-month deployment in Iraq.

"It doesn't seem real. I was fine this morning, but ...," said Brown, family readiness group leader for U.S. Army Europe's 502nd Engineer Company, choking back tears.

Brown and the Hanau community welcomed home some 160 Soldiers from the 502nd Dec. 12, after the company's extended deployment to Iraq. A squad-sized element of the unit is still in Iraq, but is slated to return Christmas Day.

Remarks at the ceremony, held at the Pioneer Kaserne gym here, were kept brief. Col. Matthew Russell of USAREUR's 18th Engineer Brigade thanked the Soldiers and their Families for their service.

Company Commander Capt. Adam Florkowski did the same, and, through what sounded like a sigh of relief, started his remarks with, "It's good to be home after 14-and-a-half months."

Like many other units, the 502nd got word in May that its 12-month tour would be extended, but the separation was nothing these seasoned Soldiers and Families weren't used to.

"We've been together six years, and he's been gone (on deployment) for more than three of those," said Janina

Moreno, who coped with the absence of husband Spc. Ruben Moreno by not watching the news.

This deployment in particular involved more than 100 missions "outside the wire," Florkowski said, but the multi-role bridge company returned without any fatalities.

Once the unit was dismissed, Families rushed to their Soldiers, breaking up the monotony of the formation with red, white and blue balloons, and welcome-home banners. Single Soldiers without families to welcome them celebrated with each other.

"It's like a dream," said Staff Sgt. Tarrance Brown, embracing his teary-eyed wife Nadine and their two children, 4-year-old Jevon and 9-month-old Naiveo. They had spotted Brown, and made a beeline to him once given the go-ahead.

Channell Enriquez and 3-year-old son Moses also rushed to their Soldier, Staff Sgt. Moses Enriquez.

After three deployments, Chanell isn't naïve to the challenges of reintegration, but for now she said she looks forward to enjoying Christmas and taking advantage of the short "honeymoon" period that follows most redeployments.



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