

Fellow paratroopers, glidermen and other friends. Special thanks to Tom Hacker for sharing this letter from Gen. Swannack.

Please continue to remember our troopers and their families in your thoughts and prayers.

AATW!  
Dan McOlvin  
Secretary  
North Jersey "All Airborne" Chapter  
82nd Airborne Division Association

Dear All American Families,

Over the past two plus years our Nation has called on the Armed Forces of the United States to protect our vital interests and security. History shows that when our Nation needs the very best to deploy and fight our battles - they call on "America's Guard of Honor".

59 years ago - almost to the day, our Nation was in trouble at the Battle of the Bulge. They deployed the 82d Airborne Division to fill the "gap." The paratroopers were under-equipped, cold, hungry, and tired. The Germans attacked the thin lines of soldiers and many units broke under intense pressure, but the paratroopers of the 82d Airborne Division held firm.

14 years ago today, "America's Guard of Honor" donned parachutes and departed for Panama to oust the dictator Manuel Noriega. That is what paratroopers do best - answer our Nations call in time of crisis.

Why am I telling you about our great Division and the history of our patriotic paratroopers? As you have heard, our Nation has called again. We are at war. When a nation is at war - it needs the very best to lead from the front. In past wars, our Nation asked troopers to remain until the end of the conflict. Sometimes this required our paratroopers to spend years deployed away from families and loved ones. Today - that is no longer the case, but many sacrifices are still made by our troopers and families.

Our Nation's leaders are keenly aware of this. So am I.

The Department of Defense is concerned about the transition of troopers this spring and sustaining the continuity of effort for stability in Iraq. They need special troops to fill this "gap" in order to smoothly transition troops into and out of Iraq.

As history has shown before, our Nation has asked the 82d Airborne Division to step up and take on this critical mission. Our paratroopers would have it no other way in these times that require the best of the best to give a little more.

Yesterday it was announced that the 82d Airborne Division would remain in Iraq for an additional 30-45 days to help with this transition. Also, the deployment of the 1st Brigade, 82D Airborne Division was announced. 1st Brigade will deploy to Iraq for approximately 120 days to also help with the transition of forces. The Brigade should be home by the summer.

The 2nd Brigade, 82d Airborne Division, with attached Divisional units, will redeploy on time and should be home by February 2004. The Division (3rd Brigade, 82d Aviation Brigade, Division Artillery Brigade, Division Support Command, 82D Signal Battalion, 313th Military Intelligence Battalion, 82d Soldier Support Battalion, 3rd Battalion 4th Air Defense Artillery Regiment, 307th Engineer Battalion, 82d Military Police Company, and HHC Division) will redeploy from Iraq to Fort Bragg around the middle of April 2004.

Your great All American paratroopers understand the expectations for the 82d Airborne Division and will lead the way in our Nation's global war on terror. They willingly accept our Nation's call to duty; that is what paratroopers do. Airborne families understand this too. It is because of you and your unconditional support that allows our paratroopers to remain focused on the mission at hand. We perform better knowing our families are cared for back home. The troopers of this Division understand the daily sacrifices of our families and that long separations are difficult. You are special and your contribution is unique. You all are patriots, and I am so proud of each of you.

Significant progress is being made in this fight against terrorism. Our paratroopers are performing magnificently. I ask for your patience and understanding during this challenging period in our Division's history.

Together, the tightly knit All American family will get through this like our great forbearers. As our chaplain's remind us: "If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it.

Happy moments, praise God.

Difficult moments, seek God.

Quiet moments, worship God.

Painful moments, trust God.

Every moment, thank God."

Happy holidays and a blessed New Year...and May God bless each of you.

**TROOPERS FIRST, MISSION ALWAYS!**

Charles H. Swannack, Jr.

Major General, U.S. Army

Commander, 82d Airborne Division

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