

Families feel realities of deployment

By Sgt. 1st Class
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For the families of most members of the Army Reserve, military deployment represents an encounter with a reality that many wishes wouldn't materialize. For the families of Master Sgt. Brenda Towner and Sgt. First Class Arthur Johnson, both from the 8th Battalion, that reality is very much alive.

Master Sgt. Brenda Towner, a former instructor with the 8th Battalion, 5th Brigade, 100th Division, was deployed to participate in the war in Iraq at the beginning of the conflict. She is currently stationed in Kuwait. Meanwhile, her husband Alvin is playing the role of both mom and dad to their two children, Alvin Jr., 16 and Ashley, 14.

Alvin, a truck driver, and Brenda Towner, were married in 1985. Since then, the family has pretty much shared their time together, with the exception when Master Sgt. Towner went out of town with the Reserves for her annual training.

Mr. Towner said that his first impression when he learned that his wife was going to be deployed for the war was, "She has to do what she has to do." He was confident that his wife was well trained and prepared to whatever eventuality, and he trusted that God would take care of her.

When asked what impact this deployment has caused in him and the children, he said, "Spiritually blessed and living on a day by day basis." He said that the children miss their mother a lot, just like he does, but they are dealing with it. He added that they

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Alvin Towner
 Husband of Reservist

communicate with Master Sgt. Towner twice a week via telephone and that their church members and other families are very supportive.

"The biggest impact is missing her presence," said Mr. Towner. "We now have to do many things she used to do." He added that Master Sgt. Towner had been away in the past, but never for this length of time. Mr. Towner said that he is confident about her safety. "At first she was worried, now she is bored. She is looking forward to coming back to the 8th Battalion, her other family."

As a word of the wise, he said, "Anyone who is going to join the Reserves needs to investigate the unit you're going with."

Master Sgt. Towner's daughter, Ashley, said that she is sad because her mother is away and is concerned about her mother's safety. She said that her friends and their families have been very supportive of her, but she still missed her mother very much.

"When she gets back, I'm going to give her a big hug and spend a lot of time with her," she said with sparkles in her eyes.

On the other hand, Alvin Jr., said that he didn't want her to leave and that he was scared for her going to the war. He said that he misses her smil-

ing face and her cooking. "When she gets back, I'm going to give her the biggest hug I can," said the young man.

Sgt. First Class Arthur Johnson was also activated, but he is not deployed overseas. He is a Medical Instructor at Fort Knox, Ky.

However, the separation from his wife Annette and his daughter Jaukell, 16, is still a big factor for the family. Even though he is not in Iraq or any other place overseas, his wife didn't want him to go. "I'm not excited," she said. She said that another impact in the family is that she now has to pick up all the chores Sgt. First Class Johnson used to do.

Johnson comes home once a month. "When he comes home, there are no "Honey Do's." The time is spent with family and friends. Mrs. Johnson said that one of the pluses of her husband's deployment is the Dental benefit. "Jaukell is now getting her braces, and that's big plus." She said that she misses him being at home but that their friends have been very supportive of the family.

One of the duties that Johnson performs from the distance is playing arbitrator over the telephone whenever he is needed. "He is a good mediator and does a good job even from afar," she admitted.

As advice to other military wives, Annette says: "Don't think of the possibility of breaking up the family and keep your idle time occupied."

These two families are both facing the impact of active duty deployment, one close by and the other from far away. However, both families rely on their faith and their sense of family to overcome the challenges that represent a deployment.