



Photo by Maj. Kevin Hynes



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Finally! 1st Sgt. Hubbard Duranski, 313th Medical Company, hugs his wife Jill while the couple's daughter, Reagan, wipes away tears of joy moments after Duranski landed in Lincoln, Neb., Aug. 6, after a nearly year-long mission to Iraq.

Patriotic Hug: 1st Lt. Franklin Annis receives a huge hug from his 5-year-old son John shortly after Annis stepped off a plane in Lincoln, Neb., Aug. 6, after completing a mission to Iraq.

Guardsmen complete life saving mission

Medical Soldiers welcomed home from Iraq duty

By Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon
Assistant Editor

With the summer sun slowly setting in the western sky over Lincoln, Neb., hundreds of friends and family waving American flags and holding home-made signs cheered as a chartered jet slowly taxied to a halt at the Nebraska National Guard air base, Aug. 6.

On board the jet were approximately 70 members of the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company who anxiously waited to see their loved ones following a nearly year-long deployment to Iraq. One by one the Soldiers filed off of the plane, and after a quick handshake and welcome home from Gov. Dave Heineman, Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons and Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela, they were free to receive the welcome they so deserved.

After Sgt. 1st Class Robert Stokes, a platoon sergeant, was greeted by his wife Jeanne and daughters Katelynd, 6, and Maddison, 3, he did his best to describe the feeling of being home.

"It's amazing. It's green. Things are alive," said Stokes.

Hugging his daughters, Stokes already had what he had been missing. "I've got them," he said. "These two right here."

Sgt. Laura Yeramysheva, a combat medic, estimated she had a mere 35-40 family and friends there to welcome her home—compared to the 50 or more that wished her farewell last October. No matter the number, she said being home was great.

"It's so wonderful being back home and it's so wonderful to have everyone out here – it's just really great," she said. "It's what you look forward to."

"It's huge and we've been waiting for it for a long time," she added. "It's just wonderful to see family and friends again. Be back on soil – Lincoln Nebraska soil."

1st Sgt. Hubbard Duranski said he didn't take leave during the deployment, so seeing his wife, Jill, and daughter Reagan, 12, was almost overwhelming.

"It's the most incredible feeling I've ever had," said Duranski. "I had to stop myself from crying...they're the lights of my life – that's why I do this. It's for them."

Jill Duranski said the family relied heavily on technology to get through the deployment.

"We made it through the deploy-



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Welcome Home Handshakes: Members of the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company file off of a chartered jet at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Aug. 6, to handshakes and a welcome home from Gov. Dave Heineman, Brig. Gen. Judd Lyons, and Command Sgt. Maj. Eli Valenzuela.

ment with 'Skype,'" she said. "We used Skype a lot, which was great – we were able to see each other and talk that way, which helped."

"Technology is awesome now," added Duranski.

Following the hugs and tears, military leaders, officials and dignitaries officially welcomed the Soldiers home during a ceremony that was very brief, as ordered by Governor Heineman. Heineman thanked the Soldiers and family for being there, but made sure they would be released to their loved ones as soon as possible.

"As the commander in chief and governor of this state I just told everybody on this stage this is going to be the shortest ceremony you have ever seen because we want to reunite you with your family," said Heineman. "Let me just say welcome home to the 313th. We are so glad to have you back."

"Thank you for your service to the United States of America, the state of Nebraska. You did an awesome job. You were incredible and I am very, very proud of you," he added.

Lyons also kept his remarks brief and said that even though he had seen the Soldiers a few days earlier when they arrived at Fort Hood,

Texas, nothing compares to when they actually get home.

"We thought it was great then," said Lyons. "I gotta tell you it's even better now that you're here with your families. Welcome home."

Following Lyons' remarks he presented his adjutant general coin for excellence to 1st Sgt. Duranski and then turned the podium over to Maj. Grant Siedenburgh, commander of the 313th.

Siedenburgh thanked the military leaders for their guidance during their deployment and said seeing the turnout of friends and family was humbling.

"To the families and friends," said Siedenburgh, "your daily e-mails, packages, letters and your prayers are a constant reminder of why we as Soldiers do what we do and we truly thank you for all of your support."

While in Iraq, the 313th provided world-class health service support by augmenting 12 different locations and executing five missions at those locations, said Siedenburgh. They provided treatment and evacuation of more than 1,500 patients and supported more than 300 combat logistic patrols totaling more than 60,000 miles.

Siedenburgh said the mission was

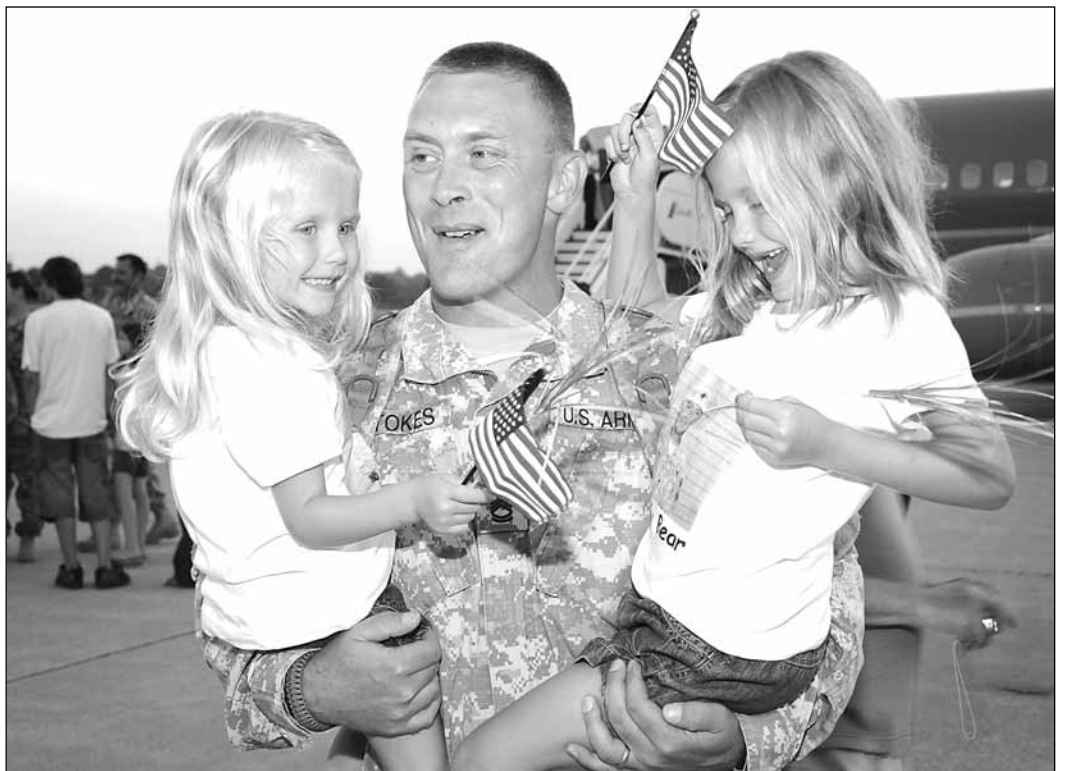


Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Happy Moment: Sgt. 1st Class Robert Stokes holds his daughters Maddison, 3, and Katelynd, 6, at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Aug. 6 after returning from a nearly year-long deployment to Iraq with the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company. Stokes said his family was the biggest thing he missed while he was deployed.



Photo by Tech. Sgt. Alex Salmon

Crowded Hangar: Members of the Lincoln-based 313th Medical Company, alongside their family and friends, are officially welcomed home by military and civilian leaders during a ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility #1 at the Nebraska National Guard air base in Lincoln, Neb., Aug. 6, following their return from a nearly year-long deployment to Iraq.

so successful thanks to the members of the unit.

"Every unit that we supported, every patient that we touched, we ensured that they were given the best treatment possible," he said. "This can only be attributed to the individual and collective efforts of the 313th and the military leaders

within this organization."

Siedenburgh closed the ceremony and the deployment by asking that the families now take care of their Soldiers and then finally gave the order the Soldiers had been waiting to hear for nearly a year.

"313th members on your feet," he barked. "313th, you are dismissed."