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McAlester Army Ammunition Plant For Immediate Release

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Point of Contact: Mark Hughes/918-916-0667

McAlester Native Returns Home after 29-Year Army Career

MCALESTER, Okla.--McAlester native Col. Robert K. Byrd has returned to his hometown following completion of a 29-year career as a U.S. Army officer.

Byrd, 47, was honored June 21 at a retirement ceremony held in the Lee V. Maxwell Center at the McAlester Army Ammunition Plant (MCAAP). Plant commander Col. Timothy D. Beckner presided during the ceremony, which was attended by State Rep. Dr. Brian Renegar, as well as by Byrd's family and friends.

Also honored during the ceremony were his wife, Kelly and the couple's 14-year-old twinx, Alexis and Tyler. The Byrd's have been married for 22 years.

During his remarks to the crowd, Beckner mentioned Byrd's numerous overseas deployments in support of Joint Task Force Bravo (Honduras), Operation Just Cause (Panama), Operation Desert Shield (Saudi Arabia), Operation Desert Storm (Southern Iraq), Operation Iraqi Freedom I (Mosul, Iraq), Operation Iraqi Freedom II (Baghdad, Iraq), Operation Enduring Freedom (Paktia Province, Afghanistan) and Third Army Staff (Camp Arifjan, Kuwait). He said COL Byrd also oversaw security operations at the Pentagon during Operation Noble Eagle following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Beckner noted the eight "hash" marks on the right sleeve of Byrd's military dress uniform, signifying the retiring Army officer's service in various dangerous combat situations.

The base commander presented Byrd with several awards during the ceremony, including a Certificate of Retirement signed by President Barak Obama and a Legion of Merit for meritorious service.

During his address, Byrd outlined three reasons why he decided to end his military career at McAlester instead of at his final active duty station.

First, he got his start in the military here in Pittsburg County with the 445th Military Police (MP) Company, Oklahoma Army National Guard (OKARNG), headquartered in McAlester. Two soldiers who served with COL Byrd in the 445th MP Company, Randy Crone and Jerry Donathan, were on hand for the retirement ceremony.

Second, Byrd said both his mother, Patricia Byrd, and his father, the late William K. (Bill) Byrd, retired from MCAAP with almost 60 years of combined service. And his family's

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service at the base continues today with Byrd's sister, brother-in-law and nephew – Cathey, Vance and Tyce Heddlesten – currently working at MCAAP.

Finally, COL Byrd said Pittsburg County represents the best of small town America and this is the atmosphere in which he and his wife want their children to start and finish their high school years. Alexis and Tyler will begin their freshman year at Savanna High School in August.

Byrd noted that his family has lived in 11 homes during the past 14 years and look forward to a life of stability in McAlester. Beginning with the 2012-13 school term, Kelly will teach first grade at Emerson Elementary School.

Byrd began his military career in 1982 with the OKARNG's 445th MP Company, headquartered in McAlester. In May 1986 he received a Reserve Army commission as a MP Second Lieutenant in the OKARNG. COL Byrd graduated with honors in December 1986 from Northeastern State University and received a Regular Army commission as a MP Second Lieutenant. He ended his nearly 30 years of Army service while working as Provost Marshal for the 3rd U.S. Army located at Shaw Air Force Base near Sumter, SC.

His education includes a Bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, as well as a Master's degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College in Pennsylvania and a Master's degree in international relations from Troy State University.

As a lieutenant colonel, Byrd served as Division Provost Marshal, 1st Cavalry Division; as Operations Officer for the Civilian Police Assistance Training Team; as Deputy Brigade Commander for the 16th MP Brigade (Airborne), and as Battalion Commander of the 503rd MP Battalion (Airborne). After earning the rank of colonel, Byrd served as Provost Marshal, Third Army.

His military education includes completion of the MP Officer Basic Course, MP Officer Advanced Course, Combined Arms Services Staff School, Command and General Staff College, Psychological Operations Course, Joint Psychological Operations Course, Civil Affairs Course, Language School (Spanish), Ranger School, Airborne School, Jumpmaster School and various functional MP courses, including Terrorism Counteraction and Physical Security.

Byrd's awards and decorations include the Legion of Merit, four Bronze Star Medals, four Meritorious Service Medals, Army Commendation Medal, two Joint Service Achievement Medals, Army Achievement Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, two Southwest Asian Service Medals, Afghanistan Campaign Medal, Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, Army Service Ribbon, Overseas Ribbon, NATO Medal, Kuwait Liberation Medal (Saudi Arabia), Kuwait Liberation Medal (Kuwait), Joint Meritorious Unit Award, Valorous Unit Award, three Meritorious Unit Citations, the Combat Action Badge, Ranger Tab, Master Parachutist Wings, Order of the Marechaussee Award (Bronze) and Venezuelan Jump Wings.