

Sparta-based 661st Engineer Detachment Firefighting Team mobilizes for Iraq

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SPARTA - A mobilization ceremony was held Oct. 18 for a group of Soldiers who will deploy to Iraq this fall. The ceremony for the 661st Engineer Detachment Firefighting

Team based in Sparta, Illinois, took place at the Sparta Fire Station in front of dozens of family, friends and colleagues.



The six-Soldier team will train for a brief time at Fort Bliss, Texas, before deploying overseas.

This is the first deployment for this detachment. They will be responsible for aircraft rescue firefighting operations and structural firefighting operations in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

"The six-six-one, the firefighters. You guys are it," said Maj. Gen. Michael Zerbonia of Chatham, Illinois, Assistant Adjutant General – Army, Illinois National Guard. "You're ready to deploy and I have no doubt in my mind that you will go do great things. Be safe, be careful and most importantly, take care of one another."

For most of the Soldiers, this is their first deployment. The team's commander, Staff Sgt. James Cissel of Evansville, Illinois, said he his team is ready to get the job done.

"It's not going to be easy," said Cissel. "The team is trained and ready. They may be newly put together, but we work together like we've been at it for years."

The unit is expected to be deployed for approximately 10 months, returning during summer 2018.