

# **Sparta, Illinois-based National Guard Firefighting team returns from Iraq and Syria**

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SPARTA, IL - Family, friends and colleagues gathered at the Sparta Army National Guard Armory in Sparta, Illinois, Aug. 16, for an emotional reunion with six Soldiers returning home the Middle East who served in Iraq and Syria.

The 661st Engineer Detachment Firefighting Team, based in Sparta, Illinois, deployed in October, 2017, to Forward Operating Base Al Qayyarah West (FOB Q-West), Iraq in support of Operation Inherent Resolve.

The team was primarily responsible for providing firefighting and emergency services during their deployment, which included some time in Syria. In addition to providing emergency services, the team conducted monthly safety inspections and held fire and safety classes that greatly improved base safety by reducing life safety violations.

Additionally, the team developed a strong working relationship with Iraqi Ari Force firefighters by holding bi-weekly cross-training events to hone their skills and practice tactics, techniques and procedures.

All of the team members were awarded the Army Achievement Medal with "C" device for their service as well as various state awards.