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Shelby County Sheriff's deputies deploy with Tennessee National Guard

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – When the Tennessee National Guard's 268th Military Police Company left for a yearlong deployment to the Horn of Africa last month, the 80-member company had the additional benefit of experienced local law-enforcement officers in their ranks. Among them were three deputies from the Shelby County Sheriff's Office: Daija Brunson, Jonathan Jones, and Christopher Williams.

Not only do these highly trained deputies serve and protect their community daily, they are also military police officers with the Millington based National Guard unit. Currently, they are serving in Africa providing base defense, critical site security, and a myriad of other tasks.

"One of the best aspects of the Guard is that we all bring different skills and knowledge from our civilian careers to our job here," said 1st Lt. Timothy Sanders, commander of the 268th Military Police Company. "Having various local and state law enforcement officers with the unit increases our abilities and lets us draw on their experience to better complete our mission."

One of the deputies, Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Jones, is a veteran in both fields and brings 24 years of law enforcement experience to the unit. A Memphis native, Jones is a sergeant in the Shelby County Sheriff's Office and has spent the last 17 years working there.

"I love helping people and making a difference," said Jones. "That's why we all do what we do. Whether you are in the medical field, law enforcement, or anything else, there is a lot of people in the Guard wearing two hats. And that makes us a stronger unit."

This is Jones' third deployment with the Tennessee National Guard. He previously deployed to Iraq in 2009 and to Afghanistan in 2013.

"We have a great bunch of Soldiers," said Jones. "We're excited about the unique opportunity to serve in Africa, and personally, I'm excited about seeing some of our young leaders grow while we're there. I enjoy being a military policeman because we get to do a wide variety of different things."

Deputies Brunson and Williams agree.

"Public service has always been a calling for me," said Brunson. "I always knew I wanted to work in law enforcement and thanks to the Guard and Sheriff's Office, I can serve in two careers."



Brunson is a Millington native who has been a guardsman for six years. After completing basic and military police training, she became a deputy with the Shelby County Sherriff's Office.

Williams is also a specialist and has been a guardsman for four years. He has been a deputy for just over one year but served with the Memphis Police Department before transferring to Shelby County. A Memphis native, he is excited about his first overseas deployment.

“I joined the Guard to be in the Military Police Corps. This was my plan all along,” said Williams. “I’m really excited about this mission and our unit has prepared us well. I know we will be successful and look forward to bringing this experience home. It will make me a better Soldier and deputy.”

The 268th Military Police Company departed Tennessee for Fort Bliss, Texas, on Jan. 10, where they completed additional mobilization training before flying to Africa.

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Spc. Daija Brunson, Sgt. 1st Class Jonathan Jones, and Spc. Christopher Williams hold a Shelby County Sheriff's Office patch at the Millington National Guard Armory, Jan. 8. All three Soldiers are full-time deputies with the Shelby County Sheriff's Office and members of the Tennessee National Guard's 268th Military Police Company, based in Millington. They are three of more than 80 Soldiers who left Jan. 10, for a yearlong deployment to the Horn of Africa in support of U.S. Africa Command. (photo by Staff Sgt. Mathieu Perry)

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