

VFW celebrates veterans and soldiers

BY COLETTE LINTON
Multimedia Editor

Three Truman students will graduate in December and be commissioned into active duty in the Army to begin their careers as officers.

After basic training, seniors David Atkinson, Justin Lacy, and Shane Wright will join the ranks of other young officers and soldiers as second lieutenants.

Truman Reserve Officers Training Corps cadets are the next generation of veterans.

ROTC cadets were recognized ahead of their time as veterans Nov. 11. Because of America's continued engagement in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, retired Air Force Lt. Col. Roger Rosenberg recognized the students and others whose service in the wars is imminent, at the Veterans' memorial service.

Senior cadet Becky Mohan, a public affairs officer for ROTC, said she joined the ROTC program as a sophomore because she wanted to take that extra step and give back to her country.

"They planned us for — it's not if, but when, we go," Mohan said.

Unlike many graduating seniors, Mohan knows she will have a job as a second lieutenant commissioned officer immediately after graduation in May. She will attend a branch school as part of her training for logistics. The specifications of her job and the tours she will spend abroad are dependent on the needs of the Army.

As an officer in logistics, Mohan will manage the transportation of supplies, information, inventory and warehousing and will maintain supply lines.

"I want to go," Mohan said. "You don't join the service and not want to serve your country, but to do what you were trained to do. We haven't served, I think we're doing something now, but it's not to scale of what [the veterans] have already done ... all [ROTC students who will be commissioned], more or less, are likely to go and be deployed to different countries. It's an eye-opener."

The realities of war that soldiers face are challenges that require them to be adaptable to evolving responsibilities, which might require them to carry out tasks they were not originally trained to do, some of which are not covered in any text or training manual. This requirement for Army personnel has not



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Taps, a traditional military melody, was played on the bugle Nov. 11 at the Kirksville army at the Veterans Day ceremony.

changed, but the aspects and goals of this war differ from those before it. The success of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will require a stable government and a supportive infrastructure, said Major James Tenpenny, a professor of military science who served a tour in Iraq from April 2009 to April 2010.

Tenpenny spoke at the service and described some of the challenges that soldiers on tour will face.

"There are soldiers over there right now doing things they weren't taught to do," Tenpenny said. "For example, the people who graduate from Truman within a year ... could possibly be in Afghanistan. They will be in charge of at least 40 soldiers, and they'll make about \$50,000 a year. Well, when they go over to Afghanistan, they're going to be expected to go to a village

and talk to a sheik. So they're going to be expected to correspond and have a relationship with that sheik to protect that village and build that village up."

The factors that influence the length of time American troops will occupy Iraq and Afghanistan includes the time it will take to establish a stable government, Tenpenny said. The factions within the Afghan National Army are

a product of a long-standing history of tribal wars in Afghanistan, and the existence of these divisions within the army leads to the lack of authority and experience among Afghan Army troops.

Afghan soldiers often are pulled from the ranks to become battalion commanders, Tenpenny said. Many times the Afghan soldiers are uneducated, some having attained only an eighth-grade education. They are then trained to command 500 to 800 soldiers.

"Although, for the American soldier ... for America to give me that responsibility, I have to have at least 18 years of training for that to even happen," Tenpenny said. "It's going to take them a while. We've got to train them. I think it's going to be longer than 2012 to be done — to be out of there — because the key to all of this is the Afghan National Security force. They need to be protective of themselves."

Sixty five percent of the American population favored the plan to withdraw troops from Iraq, but only three citizens out of every 10 supported the withdrawal because they thought America had achieved its goals in Iraq, according to a CNN/Opinion Research Corporation survey conducted in August. The majority of those polled said that the goals were unattainable regardless of the time American troops remained there.

"A lot of people don't agree with what's going on, but when you've signed up to be soldiers and when our government tells us to go do something, we're going to go do it, whether we personally do it or not, and we're going to do it to the best of our ability," Tenpenny said. "But when another soldier and I go out on a mission, it's not about me. It's about us, it's not about the government, it's not about what I believe or not. It's about me protecting him and him protecting me, and that's how we're successful. We're doing it for each other."

Larry Daniels, adjutant and treasurer of the Disabled American Veterans' organization, said, "As history will show you, the war that is going on has been going on for 30 years in one way or another. The younger generations are having to fill in where [older generations] left off. And whenever we have those periods of service, we always have those that come forward and do the call to help our country."

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