

[WCAX staff report](#)

By Saturday night, 1,500 Vermont National Guard members will be in Louisiana training for their mission to Afghanistan.

The first 300 soldiers left for Fort Polk on Sunday. About 600 more will board planes Friday afternoon. And another 600 will leave on Saturday.

Included in those last two groups will be about three dozen members of an advance party that will be the first group to go to Afghanistan. The guard will hold a deployment ceremony for them Friday morning.

Vermont Congressman Peter Welch wished them well this morning in Washington.

"As we Vermonters bid a temporary farewell to our finest, their families and our communities will prepare to face the hardship of their absence. Yet our state can and will take pride in knowing that our loved ones and our friends and our neighbors who are devoting themselves to the service of our state and all of the United States of America go with our support," said Welch on the House floor.

We will have live coverage of the guard deployment ceremony Friday morning at 8:00.