



CITY OF MUSCATINE
215 Sycamore Street
Muscatine, IA 52761
Ph. (563) 264-1550 • Fax (563) 264-0750

CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

For more information contact:

Kevin Jenison
Communication Manager
E-Mail: kjenison@muscataineiowa.gov
Phone: (563) 264-1550 • Fax: (563) 264-0750

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAY 12, 2021

MUSCATINE FIREFIGHTER RETURNS FROM DEPLOYMENT

Rymars happy to be home and back to normal routine as a firefighter

MUSCATINE, Iowa – After 10 months in the tan and beige of the Middle East, Muscatine Firefighter Joe Rymars is glad to be home and back in a normal routine.

“I love the outdoors and missed seeing trees, and going hunting and fishing,” Rymars said. “My wife and my home were two of the biggest things I missed.”

Rymars returned in early April from a 10-month deployment with the Iowa National Guard to Qatar as part of Operation Spartan Shield and Inherent Resolve in U.S. Central Command. The primary mission of the task force, a unique, multi-component organization made up of active Army and National Guard units, rounded out by U.S. Army Reserve support units, is to provide security and protection in 27 countries including Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Rymars is the third member of the Muscatine Fire Department who has been called to active duty over the past five years.



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“Being an Army Combat Medic veteran myself, I want to commend all of our military staff members on the fire department who have served previously and who are currently serving in the military reserves and Iowa National Guard,” Fire Chief Jerry Ewers said. “We fully support them in their roles as an employer.”

Lieutenant Roy Patterson served a six-month deployment to Southeast Asia in 2017 focusing on crash rescue firefighting and structural firefighting with the U.S. Air Force Reserve. Battalion Chief Gary Ronzheimer completed his sixth deployment in 2016 as a Chief Hospital Corpsman with the U.S. Navy Reserve with a multi-national unit stationed at a hospital in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

“Over the last several years we have had several firefighters be deployed overseas for approximately a one year activation,” Chief Ewers said. “Joe Rymars and the others have served this country and our department with pride and courage. I know it's hard on them, their co-workers, friends, and immediate family during their absence. They should be proud of what they have done and I know we are proud of them and their sacrifices they have made.”

Originally from the Walcott area and now living in Blue Grass with his wife Sarah, Rymars has been a member of the Iowa National Guard since 2014 and joined the Muscatine Fire Department October 2018.

And it was in basic training that Rymars discovered an interest in the trauma aspects of medical care.

“Going through basic training there was some trauma aspects as far as medical care that got me interested,” Rymars said. “I took an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) class and became an EMT. I have just kind of continued down that pathway.”

Rymars Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) is Combat Engineer, and remained interested in trauma.



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"In basic training and in AIT (advanced individual training) I took a lot of interest in the trauma courses," Rymars said. "I just like the whole subject. There was not anything in particular that really interested me, I just liked the medical aspect of trauma care and emergency care."

Deployment orders came down in February 2020 and Rymars left Iowa on May 30 with the Iowa National Guard. The unit returned April 6, 2021.

"The normal things are what you miss most when deployed," Rymars said. "My wife, my house, the normalcy that comes with having a set schedule with work, and then a lot of other little things. I love seeing anything green. That is one color you do not get over there as literally everything is either beige or tan."

Rymars said it has not been that hard getting back into the swing of things.

It hasn't been that hard," Rymars said. "It wasn't like 2006 and an 18-month deployment to Iraq. It was just a 10-month excursion to the desert. The adjustment back did not take long."

Rymars said one of the scariest times he had once getting back to Iowa was driving again.

"I will be honest, the first time driving again, especially on the interstate, was terrifying for about five minutes," Rymars said. "But then I got over it. The fastest I had traveled the year before was like 15 mph."

Rymars added that the adjustment can be just mentally terrifying but you get over it almost right away and everything comes back pretty quickly.

"We are glad to have Joe return to work and get back into the swing of being an active duty firefighter here in Muscatine," Chief Ewers said.