

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Steffanie Bell
609-777-2600

RELEASE: June 25, 1999

Governor Welcomes Home National Guard Members Returning From Duty in Kosovo

Gov. Christie Whitman today issued a warm welcome home to members of New Jersey's Air National Guard who began returning from active duty in Kosovo Thursday night. Fifty members of the 108th Air Refueling Wing will have returned to New Jersey by this afternoon. The remaining 380 Guard members are expected to return in the near future.

"The members of New Jersey's National Guard have made us all proud -- placing country above self -- contributing to the successful mission to bring peace to Kosovo," said the Governor. "I know I speak for all New Jerseyans when I say we are proud of these men and women and are happy to have them back on New Jersey soil. I look forward to having all 430 deployed members back home. "

"Our National Guard represents the finest of what this country has to offer," said Gov. Whitman. "The uncertainty of when they will be called upon and the conditions under which they will be needed makes their commitment even more admirable. To all of them I say thank you and welcome home."

Members of the 108th were called to active duty in late May for the duration of 270 days. Once back in New Jersey, members will continue to serve their active duty at McGuire Air Force Base. Gov. Whitman at that time announced the formation of a loan program to assist small businesses in which the entrepreneur and/or a key employee were asked to serve as part of the NATO operations in Kosovo.

The Governor also signed an executive order to protect the salary and benefits of state employees who serve in the military reserves and National Guard and were called upon to serve during the crisis.

