

Ready to support

FORT MEADE'S ROLE IN STATE FUNERAL OF 41ST PRESIDENT

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U.S. Honor Guard stands guard at the casket of George H. W. Bush, 41st President of the United States, inside the United States Capitol, Washington, D.C., Dec. 5th, 2018. Nearly 4,000 military and civilian personnel from across all branches of the U.S. armed forces, including Reserve and National Guard Components, provided ceremonial and civil affairs support during George H. W. Bush state funeral. (DoD photo by U.S. Army Pfc. Julie Driver)

As the nation mourned the loss of President George H.W. Bush, service members from Fort Meade were called on to carry out missions that made them part of American history.

As people lined up during the state funeral on Dec. 5 at the U.S. Capitol to pay their respects, Pfc. Julie Driver was also there capturing the day with her camera.

"At first I was nervous, but once we started doing it, I just felt honored to be a part of it," said the native of Floral City, Fla.

Driver is with the 55th Signal Company (Combat Camera), 3rd Platoon, which documents ceremonies such as the funeral of a president.

"It was a pretty large operation," said Driver of the nearly 20 people from the company that covered the funeral.

Pfc. Joshua Hugley, who is also with Combat Camera, 3rd Platoon couldn't help but notice the unique environment that working such a historic event created.

“It was really cool to see how all of the services work together,” said Hugley, a native of Michigan City, Ind. “It’s something you just don’t see every day and how they all came together for one purpose.”

Readiness Is Key

There isn’t much advance notice when it comes to covering an event with the magnitude of a presidential funeral. But Driver and Hugley are always prepared because they document ceremony rehearsals as part of their training.

“[Honor guards] do this exercise [for funerals and ceremonies] several times a year, so that everyone involved is up to speed on what’s going to happen in case of someone’s passing,” Driver said.

The profound significance of this historic event is not lost on Driver and Hugley.

“This mission has meant the most to history so far out of anything I have documented,” Driver said.

“This was a once-in-career kind of thing.”

Hugley said he knew it was a big event but didn’t quite realize it until he was there and saw the impact of what happened.

“It’s a whole other thing when you are standing there and taking it all in, that this is actually happening,” he said.

Many Missions, One Goal

The 241st Military Police Detachment at Fort Meade had a different mission during the state funeral.

Four military police officers provided escort for naval assets from Indian Head Naval Base to Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. Staff Sgt. John Gerhart, from Prescott, Ariz., led the support mission for the 241st MP.

Gerhart said that even though his team wasn’t at the funeral itself, their mission was to provide security for the naval CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) defense team’s 19-vehicle convoy.

“We were expediting their travel so they got through to where they were supposed to be safely and without any incidents — which is what happened,” Gerhart said.

The CBRN team is involved in events such as this to serve as the first line of defense in case of a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear attack.

The security support that the 241st MP provided during the Bush funeral is critically important, Gerhart said.

“They [CBRN defense] wouldn’t be there without us providing them the support to get them where they need to get to,” he said.

Ready When Called

Providing security for high-profile events is nothing new for the 241st MP.

Gerhart said the detachment routinely participates in inaugurations and State of the Union addresses, to name a few.

No matter the event, Gerhart said the 241st MP is always ready to provide security at high-profile events.

"It's ingrained in what we do every single day," he said. "It's our job as police officers to be that first line of defense."

The Joint Task Force-National Capital Region said nearly 4,000 military and civilian personnel from across all branches of the U.S. Armed Forces, including Reserve and National Guard Components, provided ceremonial and civil affairs support during the state funeral.

To see more of Pfc. Julie Driver's photos from President George H.W. Bush's funeral, go to <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/4951313/dod-conducts-state-funeral>.

Pfc. Joshua Hugley's photos can be viewed at <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/4951178/statefuneral41feature>.