



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 3, 2018

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www.cityofsanmateo.org/101st

Vietnam Vet Prepares “Airborne Joe” for Homecoming Parade Community Joins in Operation Eagle Visit as Nine Cities Welcome 101st Airborne

SAN MATEO, Calif. – Bob Ortiz, a Vietnam War veteran from the 101st Airborne Division and Special Forces, is prepping his sky soldier-themed float ‘Airborne Joe’ for a homecoming parade that celebrates the Screaming Eagles return to the Peninsula. Airborne Joe will participate in the City of San Mateo’s *Operation Eagle Visit - Homecoming 50 Years* parade scheduled for March 24.

The parade is part of a three-day celebration honoring and celebrating the City of San Mateo’s historic relationship with the 101st Airborne Division. San Mateo became the first municipality in the United States to adopt and recognize a military unit during the Vietnam War, a time when soldiers did not receive the same kind of appreciation and adulation when they returned home as they do today.

“It is great that the community is coming together to celebrate and honor our Vietnam veterans,” said Ortiz. “I believe strongly that our military from past conflicts deserve the same kind of thanks and praise that we have benefited from in recent times.”

Exactly 50 years after the San Mateo City Council adopted the 101st Airborne, current council members will commemorate the historic achievement during a ceremonial reflection and reconfirmation of the City’s commitment at their Monday, March 5 meeting.

“It is wonderful to see excitement building as we get ready to commemorate the remarkable 50-year relationship San Mateo has had with the 101st Airborne,” said San Mateo City Clerk Patrice Olds, organizer of Operation Eagle Visit. It’s gratifying to know how much this means to not only our visiting veterans and soldiers, but also to Bay Area residents like Bob Ortiz who served in the 101st Airborne in 1967.”

Operation Eagle Visit is a collaboration with nine Peninsula cities to honor their adopted 101st Airborne Screaming Eagles, a U.S. Army division based in Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Dozens of active-duty troops and veterans will soar to the Peninsula March 23-25 for *Operation Eagle Visit – Homecoming 50 Years*. The celebration includes a homecoming parade in downtown San Mateo, a gala to honor the soldiers, a festival in Central Park, a boot camp-style workout with the troops and more.

Community members and organizations interested in participating in the parade should contact the San Mateo City Clerk’s Office or visit www.CityofSanMateo.org/101st.



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The three-day festivities include:

- Friday, March 23, 2018
 - 'Sore' with the Eagles – Visiting soldiers will lead a boot camp-style workout beginning 7 a.m. in San Mateo's Central Park.
 - Community Day – Each participating city will host members of the 101st Airborne with a variety of hometown activities.

- Saturday, March 24, 2018
 - Homecoming Parade – Begins 11 a.m. on B Street and runs between and Baldwin and Seventh avenues in San Mateo.
 - Festival in Central Park – Family-friendly booths, activities, and food will be at Central Park on Fifth Avenue, San Mateo.
 - Recognition Banquet and Gala – Dine with the visiting 101st Airborne and original veterans at the San Francisco Airport Marriott Waterfront.

- Sunday, March 25, 2018
 - Memorial Observance at Golden Gate National Cemetery – In recognition of National Medal of Honor Day, a ceremony will be held at the main plaza and at the gravesite of Sgt. Joseph Gregory Artavia, of the 101st Airborne, who died in service 50 years ago on March 24, 1968.

History of Operation Eagle Visit

On March 4, 1968, the City of San Mateo became the first municipality in the United States to adopt and recognize a military unit during the Vietnam War. The initiative was sparked by then-San Mateo resident Linda Giese Patterson, whose brother Sgt. Joseph Gregory Artavia was killed in action.

Patterson encouraged the City to adopt Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 327th Infantry Regiment, 1st Brigade, 101st Airborne Division of the U.S. Army, in a show of moral support for the young troops and in memory of her late brother. In 1972, soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division were invited to San Mateo where they were welcomed home from war with a parade in their honor.

For five decades the City has had a continuous relationship with the Screaming Eagles that includes sending letters and care packages to troops overseas, as well as visiting them at their Fort Campbell headquarters. Since that time, eight other San Mateo County cities have joined the armed forces adopt-a-unit program and forged a bond with the 101st Division.

Media Contact: To set up interviews contact Elizabeth Valente (831) 915-4952