

Guardsman Adjusts After Tour in Iraq

A lawyer and 9/11 survivor who was deployed to Iraq on July 30 to take part in Operation Iraqi Freedom returned to civilian life Friday.

Maj. Mathew B. Tully of Hunter said he was home for Christmas but wasn't released from active duty until Thursday. Tully is in the New York Army National Guard 42nd Infantry Division, based in Troy.

Tully was welcomed home Dec. 6 by Vice President Dick Cheney and his wife, Lynne.

The 42nd Infantry Division, composed of about 25,000 soldiers, was headquartered in Tikrit, Iraq, where it was responsible for providing security and conducting stability operations in a large part of the Sunni Triangle.

Tully, who served as the acting division chief of operations, said he was one of 15 returning soldiers who were asked to speak privately with the vice president about the situation in Iraq.

"It was an intimate setting, and we were talking about what life is like in Iraq," Tully said. "It was an esteemed honor to speak with the vice president of the United States of America.

"It was heartening to know that he was concerned about us while we were serving in Iraq and that he understands the sacrifices we all have made," he said.

At the time of his return, Tully said the talk with Cheney was classified, but he added that it soon became obvious that Cheney had been preparing for his visit to Iraq.

Tully said he volunteered to leave his law practice in Albany to return to active duty.

"I'm very glad I did it," Tully said Friday. "But I'm not sure if I would want to do it again.

"It was one of the most exhilarating experiences of my life," he said. "And it certainly gives a person a reason to re-examine all their feelings about family, faith and friends."

Tully said he is adjusting to being home.

"It's difficult to stop worrying about being attacked," Tully said. "I am having trouble getting used to driving on the right side of the road, because in Iraq we were trained to drive down the center of the road to avoid explosive devices on the sides of the road."

Tully said that his thoughts are often with his friends and colleagues still in Iraq.

"The next great generation of Americans is over there," Tully said. "They are 18 and 19 years old, and they are doing amazingly brave and dangerous things every day."

Tully, who was in the lobby of Two World Trade Center when the first plane hit the building's twin tower, is the founding partner of Tully, Rinckey & Associates. Tully and members of his law firm work in village, town and county courts in Delaware County.

"I wasn't an initial supporter of the war," Tully said. "And I am completely opposed to pre-emptive attacks - they are un-American. Now, however, I do think that this war has

turned out to be a war on terrorism, which makes it justifiable."

Tully said he relocated upstate after surviving the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. He said he has been spending time at home, catching up on things that need to be done before he returns to his law practice Wednesday.