

# Living

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Section C



Pfc. Amy Renee Bullock Sinkler



Soldiers from Ft. Bragg join Pfc. Amy Renee Bullock Sinkler's family in prayer on the tarmac of Columbus County Airport Jan. 27, seven days after she died from an insurgent attack in Baghlan province, Afghanistan.

## A soldier's journey home

By MARK GILCHRIST \*  
Chief Photographer

Early in the morning of Jan. 27, a government-contracted jet traveling from Dover Air Force Base appeared in the skies over Columbus County Airport. As it passed over a formation of Army soldiers gathered on the tarmac, the aircraft banked hard left to Runway 24.

Mournful eyes gazed upward as the jet swept across the Carolina-blue sky and dropped to earth before a waiting mother, father, husband and family.

The pilot radioed the airport requesting permission to land, stating, "We have one hero on board."

The howl of tires on the runway and the blast of the jet's engine evoked the horrific violence that had taken away 23-year-old Private First Class Amy Renee Bullock Sinkler and which brought her back home unexpectedly on this icy cold January morning.

The pilots unloaded and installed equipment that would convey the remains of the first Columbus County female soldier killed in the service of her nation.

With intense dedication to show respect and reverence to the memory of Sinkler, and to express sorrow and condolences to her loved ones, six perfectly dressed honor guardsmen and members of their detail froze in sharp formation as their comrade's family emerged from the airport building onto the tarmac.

With seamless precision, a silver casket was drawn from the aircraft. One week after she was killed, Jackie Bullock-Thompson and Randolph Thompson's baby girl was brought halfway around the globe and delivered to them. They approached the casket and they cried. They held the hands of Army chaplains and they prayed the prayer of a nation praying for peace.

Then, with each move designed to deliver the force of an entire army in grief, the soldiers approached and surrounded the casket. They saluted their comrade, took hold of the casket, raised it close to their hearts and carried her to a waiting hearse.

The soldiers saluted Private First Class Sinkler several times that morning, then escorted her to and into the funeral home. They accompanied her again during memorial services at West Columbus High School and during her burial in Fair Bluff Saturday.

Visitors filled the WCHS auditorium for the service, which included presentations of medals by a brigadier general, prayers, musical performances and heartfelt messages from family members, friends and fellow soldiers.

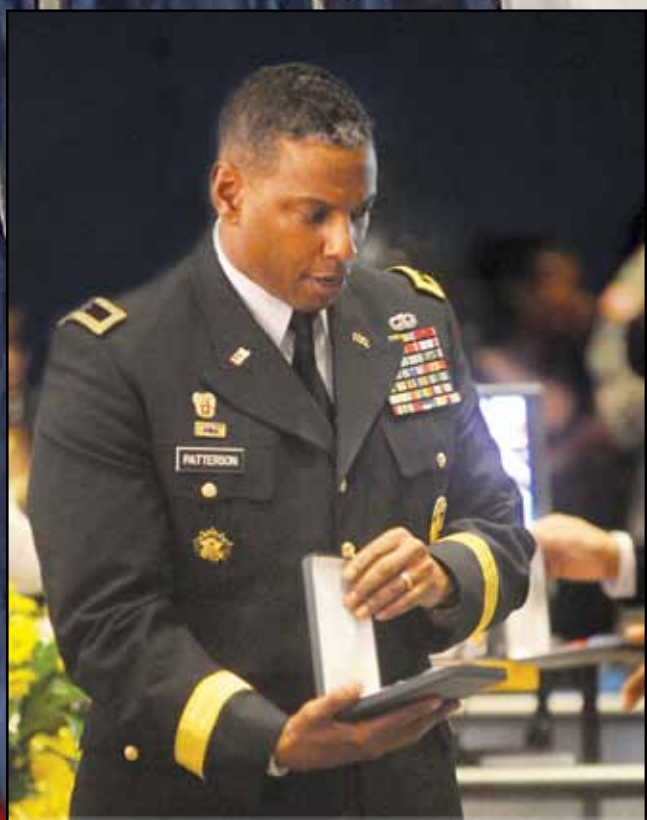
More than 100 motorcyclists, firefighters and veterans attended the service to show their support and to buffer anticipated activity by protestors who had threatened to interfere.

\* Text adapted from a video slideshow on Whiteville.com



C.H. photo

Sinkler was remembered at her alma mater, West Columbus High School, Saturday.



Brig. Gen. LaWarren V. Patterson presents Purple Heart and Bronze Star medals to parents Jackie Bullock-Thompson and Randolph Thompson. Below, a soldier plays taps during the burial service at Butler Branch Cemetery. Bottom, people show their support on the roadside near WCHS. At left, husband Douglas Sinkler holds a flag given to him by Gen. Patterson.



C.H. photo

Above, Gen. Patterson greets family members during the burial service. Below, the family attended candlelight vigils in Chadbourne and Whiteville. Bottom, volunteers held extra flags at the cemetery to show their support.



C.H. photo