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Gerald R. Ford International Airport

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Gerald R. Ford International Airport to Participate in “Operation Handshake” for Returning Troops



Grand Rapids, MI – There’s no place like home for the holidays, and that’s why the Gerald R. Ford International Airport (GFIA) along with the Patriot Guard Riders of West Michigan, will be welcoming troops home during one of the busiest travel days of the year.

On Wednesday, November 26th, airport volunteers and the Patriot Guard Riders will participate in “Operation Handshake,” an event to welcome home returning military members and veterans, and to thank them for their service. Volunteers will staff both airport concourses from 8:30 a.m. – 7 p.m., and cookies and refreshments will be served.



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“We know that not every member of our military can make it home during the holidays, but for those returning to West Michigan we want to make it special and let them know we are thankful for their service,” said GFIA Executive Director Brian Ryks.

“We appreciate the partnership with the Patriot Guard Riders of West Michigan, and their loyalty to serving our community through events like Operation Handshake.”

The event is free and open to the public. Boy Scout, Girls Scout and community service groups are encouraged to attend. **The media is also encouraged to put a call out to the community, asking family members to notify the Patriot Guard Riders of returning military members’ arrival times and flight information.** Information can be sent to michigan@patriotguard.org or Tony VanGessel at 616-862-1984.

“This is what Thanksgiving is really all about,” said Tony VanGessel, Captain of the Patriot Guard Riders of West Michigan. “What we see each year is an inspiration. We get a thank you from the military members, but it’s also heartwarming for the general traveling public around us to see what transpires.”

For more information on the Patriot Guard Riders, visit <http://www.patriotguardmi.org>

For interview requests or more information on the day of the event, please contact Tara Hernandez.

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