



**\*\*\*For Immediate Release\*\*\***

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Government and Media Relations

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### **WSP Sergeant deployed to combat COVID-19 with U.S. Army Reserves**

**BREMERTON** – With just one phone call, Washington State Patrol (WSP) Sergeant Kristopher Orlowski found himself trading his French blues for fatigues and joining the fight against COVID-19.

As a medic and Command Sergeant Major in the U.S. Army Reserves, Orlowski received the call that he was being activated at 10 a.m. Thursday, March 26, 2020. He was given less than 24-hours to prepare for his deployment, as well as say goodbye to his wife, Krissa, and 4-year-old daughter, Autumn.

“The call was surreal, but it’s something we have trained for,” Orlowski said. “We always know we could get the phone call to pack your stuff and head out in response to our nation’s call.”

Instead of signing in for service on his regularly scheduled shift in Bremerton that Friday night, Orlowski left on a 9:30 a.m. flight destined for Wisconsin where he and the other Army Reserves soldiers are being briefed and assigned throughout the nation. His exact location has yet to be determined, and his date of return remains unknown.

#### **REPORTING FOR DUTY**

After the whirlwind that followed the Thursday phone call, father and daughter walked hand in hand through the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport Friday morning. Autumn held onto her father with her right hand while clutching her favorite stuffed animal, a cat named “Gracie,” in her left.

Unlike his first deployment to the Middle East in 2018 when Autumn was only two-and-a-half years old, she had more to say this time.

“She was crying and begged me not to leave her,” Orlowski said. “Talk about ripping your heart out.”

Orlowski, a 13-year-veteran with the WSP, began his military career on active duty with the U.S. Army from 1997 to 2000 before joining the Army Reserves. He was set to retire from the reserves in February 2021.

Whether or not that will happen now is unknown.

He recently returned to his family from his first deployment in June 2019, and had to say goodbye again just eight months later.

It is a reality his family had prepared for, considering the circumstances.

“Given that we are a medical unit, we all thought it was a possibility once COVID began spreading and seeing the toll it took on our civilian healthcare system,” Orłowski said. “My family is dealing with it the best they can.”

Krissa is in the healthcare field as a Physician Assistant at a privately owned practice in Pierce County, and will remain working full-time while Orłowski is deployed. She is also an Army veteran who served active duty as a medic from 2003 to 2006 and joined the Army Reserves from 2006 to 2008.

The Orłowski’s had an eight month lead time to his first deployment, complete with deployment ceremony and family readiness meetings. The circumstances were also much different.

“With his last deployment, I could lean on family and friends a lot more for help with Autumn,” Krissa said. “But now, with social distancing in place, it’s hard to get the extra support I had last time.

“Every day I go to work I think what am I getting exposed to? If I get sick, who is going to take care of Autumn? If I got sick before, I could be quarantined separate at the house, but I can’t do that now without her getting sick, too, because I don’t have the second parent.”

Even with everything still very much unknown, Krissa said she does have the support of her family, as well as the WSP.

“I felt a lot of support from the WSP when he was mobilized last time, and I feel the support this time,” Krissa said.

Orłowski was hired by the WSP in December 2006, assigned to District 2 – South Seattle. He was promoted to the rank of Sergeant in 2019, transferring to his current assignment in District 8 – Bremerton.

“This is bittersweet, as it makes me proud as an American, but sad to witness the toll on not only his family at home, but the men and women he leads in Bremerton as a sergeant,” said WSP District 8 Captain James Mjor. “His smile and charisma will be missed at the office and around Kitsap County for what I hope and pray is a very short and safe period of time.”

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