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Student reservists serve U.S. during holidays

By **Jeff Samoray**, OU Web Writer

Oakland University students are looking forward to relaxing from their studies, catching up with friends and visiting family during the holiday break. But for several other students, that time will be spent serving their country.

OU has six students in the military reserves that were called to active duty by President Bush following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. Those students are Kimberly Boehms, a junior communications major; Donald Hendrickson, a graduate student in engineering; John Morgan, a senior general studies major; Vernessa Morris, a freshman engineering major; Robert Swenson, a sophomore business major; and Yomin Yun, a senior psychology major.

Swenson had worked one weekend per month for about a year with the Air National Guard when he was called up in September to work with munitions at Selfridge Air National Guard Base near Mt. Clemens.

"I entered the Reserves so I could go to school on the G.I. Bill. I did it to serve my country and it provides good benefits," Swenson said. "You don't think when you sign up that it will become a full-time job, but at any time you know you can be called up."

Like the rest of America, Swenson was riveted by the Sept. 11 attacks. But instead of thinking he might be called to active duty, he said he was upset by the enormity of the tragedy.

"It was escalating pretty badly," he said. "I was a little surprised about being called up, but I felt good about it. I knew I was doing the right thing. I'll be back in school eventually."

After having fulfilled his 60-day assignment, Swenson said he's currently waiting orders and is not sure when he'll be able to return to classes at OU.

Yun, who has been in the Air Force Reserves for about three years, was called up on Sept. 29 and assigned to work base security at Youngstown Air Reserve Base in Vienna, Ohio. His responsibilities include base security, law enforcement and combat support. Like Swenson, Yun said he was in disbelief at the Sept. 11 attacks.

"Just like the general public, I was saddened by the lives that were taken," he said. "But the price of freedom isn't free, and the military had to respond."

Yun said he had a lot of responsibilities to take care of in the short time he had before leaving for his assignment.

"There's never a convenient time to be called up," he said. "Everyone in the Reserves knows you're subject to leave at any time for any place. But I can't really say it's a disruption in my life. If it were a disruption, then it's not a good career path for me."

"First of all, I had to withdraw from school. Then I had to make sure all my finances were in order and that my family knows what to do. I have a wife, a 12-year-old son and 11-year-old daughter. It's tough leaving them behind, but they're very supportive. While I'm stateside, I'll be allowed some time off, but that all depends. There's a good chance I'll be sent elsewhere. I'm on standby."

Yun's schedule currently is in flux, and he may not be able to be come for the holidays.

"I look forward to coming back to my family and returning to OU, but nobody knows when that will be," he said. "The staff at OU has been very supportive, however. And I thank them for that."

Reserve components make up nearly 50 percent of the total armed forces. To date, more than 40,000 guardsmen and reservists have been called up to reinforce active duty units participating in Operation Enduring Freedom, according to the **United States Army Reserve** Web site.

Oakland University has policies in place to provide **tuition and housing fee refunds** for any of its students who must report to active duty, consistent with federal law. To receive the tuition and room and board refunds, students should contact Associate

Registrar Ron Somerville at (248) 370-3455 and present a copy of their call-up orders.

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