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## Bus Of Fourty-Three Soldiers Overturms In NC

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**North Carolina** - MOORESVILLE -- A bus carrying Army reservists slid off a rain-slickened highway, slid down an embankment and overturned Friday in Iredell County, injuring 43 soldiers, according to local and state officials.

Medics had to crawl under the bus to reach one of those hurt, authorities say. That victim was airlifted to Carolinas Medical Center but she was released Friday evening, a hospital spokesman said. Other victims' injuries were described by authorities as not life threatening .

The bus was one of two carrying members of the 991st Transportation Company from Charlotte-Douglas International Airport to the National Guard armory in Salisbury, according to Patty McQuillan of the N.C. Highway Patrol.

Authorities at the scene said 45 soldiers were aboard the bus that crashed just before 3 p.m. on N.C. 150/N.C. 152 at Old Meadow Road.

Thirty-five more soldiers were riding on another bus that was not involved in the incident. The soldiers were returning home from a training session at Fort McCoy, an Army base in Wisconsin, about 150 miles northwest of Milwaukee.

Trooper Brett Marr of the N.C. Highway Patrol said the bus was eastbound when it tried to stop for a car making a left turn from the two-lane highway onto Old Meadow Road.

It had rained a short time earlier, and the road was wet. Witnesses told troopers that the rear wheels of the bus appeared to skid, and the bus slid onto the grassy shoulder on the right side of the road. The shoulder gave way and the bus slid down an 8-foot embankment before turning on its side, Marr said.

The Highway Patrol said Friday evening that charges are pending in the case.

The bus landed in a grassy area about 100 yards from KC Mini-Storage. Marr said he hasn't determined how fast the bus was traveling before it slid off the embankment..

Personnel from the South Iredell Fire Department, Mooresville Fire and Rescue, and other agencies responded.

Jason Little, a shift supervisor for Iredell County EMS, said at least a dozen paramedics were on scene, helping treat the injured soldiers. He said special equipment was needed to reach the most seriously injured soldier, who was trapped inside the bus.

Little said crews used "rescue struts" to lift the bus out of the mud, so personnel could reach the victim.

"We tunneled into the bus to free her," Little said. That victim is the only soldier with life threatening injuries, Little said.

Little said the incident was "probably the highest casualty count we've had in Iredell County."

Mecklenburg County's Medic joined several Iredell County agencies in helping crash victims. Medic's Kristin Young said the agency's Mass Casualty Bus took 15 soldiers to CMC-Huntersville. CMC spokesman Phil Whitesell said Friday night that all but three of the soldiers taken to CMC-Huntersville had been released before 8 p.m.

Kim Sellers of the Mooresville police said seven victims were taken to Lake Norman Regional Medical Center in Mooresville, four were transported to Iredell Memorial Hospital in Statesville, and 16 were treated at the scene for minor injuries.

The bus driver was not hurt, McQuillan said.

The bus was operated by Randolph County-based Holiday Tours.

Federal safety records show Holiday Tours Inc., based in Randleman, has a very good safety record. The company is in the top 6 percent of companies nationwide in terms of unsafe driving, and has a "satisfactory" rating, the highest of three available grades.

Holiday operates 61 buses, according to federal records. The company was cited three times for moving violations in the past two years, including once for a lane restriction violation, once for failing to obey a traffic control device and once for speeding 6 to 10 mph over the limit.

The company has been involved in three prior collisions in the past two years, resulting in one injury, records show. Staff writer Ely Portillo contributed.

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