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HORSE SOLDIER BOURBON ANNOUNCES “RETURN HOME” TO KENTUCKY, TO START THE NEXT CHAPTER IN THE SAME PLACE THEIR HISTORIC JOURNEY FIRST BEGAN IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING 9/11

Somerset, KY – In 2020, Horse Soldier Bourbon will continue its strategic national expansion by ‘returning home’ to Kentucky, with a \$50 million, long-term investment and development plan, in Somerset and Pulaski County. The award-winning bourbon brand—which was founded by retired members of the U.S. Special Forces, who were the first to enter Afghanistan, following 9/11—will begin an integrated, three-tier expansion, that will create jobs, increase exposure, and provide a positive economic impact across Southern Kentucky.

“Horse Soldiers Coming Home”

In the most literal sense, the 2020 expansion to Kentucky will ‘break new ground,’ but for the senior leadership at Horse Soldier Bourbon, it marks a return to familiar surroundings and a place they once proudly called home.

“Many of us spent decades living in Kentucky before we went off to serve,” said John Koko, co-founder of American Freedom Distillery, which produces Horse Soldier Bourbon. “When the attacks of September 11th happened, several of our guys were based out of Ft. Campbell and training along the Cumberland River, when they received word that the towers had fallen.”

In the weeks following 9/11, a small group of U.S. Army Special Forces entered Afghanistan on horseback. Their clandestine mission marked the first time U.S. troops rode to war on horseback, since WWII. The hand-selected detachment of 12 Green Berets from the 5th Special Forces Group, would later become known as the “Horse Soldiers.”

In 2011, a statue commemorating their historic mission—aptly titled “America’s Response”—was unveiled at Ground Zero, in New York City. Today, the bronze, mounted soldier serves as the symbol of Horse Soldier Bourbon.

“For many of our guys, Kentucky feels like we are ‘coming home’ as opposed to expanding to some place new,” said Koko. “Now that we’ve all retired, we are committed to chasing the American Dream we fought so hard to defend.”



From BDUs to Bourbon

The transition from Battle Dress Uniform (BDU) to bourbon distillers, is one that Koko and the 'Horse Soldiers' proudly embrace. "The same group of men who toppled the Taliban on horseback are now winning in business," said Koko. "Whether you're in battle or in business, success often depends on the same set of core values: work ethic, intellect, and quiet professionalism."

Another key to their cross-over success has been effective team-building. In the months ahead, Horse Soldier plans to add roughly 56 direct jobs, across Somerset and Pulaski County. The \$50 million investment will be broken up over two phases and the anticipated economic impact is already being felt across the region.

For Somerset Mayor Alan Keck, recruiting a bourbon distillery to the community has been a top priority. "I have always believed that by becoming part of the bourbon industry, we can become a showcase like no other," said Keck. "I am grateful that the Horse Soldier Bourbon team saw this vision and the possibilities that exist in Somerset and chose our community to expand their business."

In many ways, the HSB expansion sits at the intersection of tradition and innovation. "We want to combine the modern art and science of what we do as distillers with the rich American history of bourbon in a place that offers outstanding agricultural characteristics," said Koko.

"As an ultra-premium bourbon brand, we are committed to doing everything at the highest level—we adhere to tradition, but we understand the importance of innovation," added Koko. "This requires working with the right people, in the right place, at the right time. We don't believe in settling, that's why this is the only place for us. In 2020, we are proud to return home to Kentucky. It seems only right that our next chapter is written in the same place where our journey first began."

Additional details regarding the scope, scale, and time-line—of Horse Soldier Bourbon's multi-year, \$50 million investment—will be released in the weeks ahead.

About American Freedom Distillery: American Freedom Distillery was a dream turned reality for a special group of friends who served our nation in its darkest days; answering America's call as generations before us have. Ours is a TRUE STORY which we leave for others to tell. Today, we handcraft this American product with the same sense of mission, training and honor.

About Horse Soldier Bourbon: Horse Soldier Bourbon is an All-American, award-winning, ultra-premium bourbon brand, produced by American Freedom Distillery. Horse Soldier is available in three varieties: Straight Bourbon Whiskey, Small Batch Bourbon Whiskey, and Barrel Strength Bourbon Whiskey. With an increasing portfolio of national media coverage—driven by a large, dedicated group of enthusiastic fans and supporters—HSB is currently available in 11 states (brick & mortar) and nationally in 30 states (on-line). To learn more, please visit: HorseSoldierBourbon.com

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