

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

Phone: 605-737-6721 Email: ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil

Web: sd.ng.mil

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rapid City Soldiers welcomed home from Afghanistan

RAPID CITY, S.D. – Six Soldiers from Detachment 48, Operational Support Airlift Command, were welcomed home by family and friends at the Army Aviation Support Facility in Rapid City, Jan. 23, after returning from duty in Afghanistan.

The South Dakota Army National Guard unit served an eight-month deployment in support of Operation Freedom’s Sentinel, where the unit’s mission was to provide aerial reconnaissance and surveillance in support of U.S. and coalition ground commanders in the field.

“It’s great to be home,” said Sgt. Derek Lebeau, aerial sensor operator. “Instead of seeing (my family) on my phone, or my computer, I get to hug them and keep them close.”

Gov. Dennis Daugaard, U.S. Sen. Mike Rounds, Rapid City Mayor Steve Allender and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG, were a few of the distinguished guest to welcome the unit home.

“I know that I am lucky, because you and people like you won the freedoms I enjoy and take for granted... and you’re still today protecting them, and offering them to so many people around the world who want desperately to have what we have. Welcome home,” said Daugaard.

“It’s kind of humbling to have such a strong showing of the state leadership showing up to welcome us home,” said Chief Warrant Officer 4 Wayne Walker, Det. 48 commander.

Detachment 48 is a fixed-wing aviation unit comprised of pilots and operations specialists which operated the Medium Altitude, Reconnaissance and Surveillance System (MARSS) King Air 300 aircraft. While on deployment, the unit flew 700 mission totaling 3,000 hours.

This is the third mobilization for the unit, which deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2008 and 2011.

“It’s a bit of job satisfaction knowing that we’re needed and utilized on a regular basis,” said Walker.

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High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard



160123-Z-RN486-001: Unit members of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 48, Operational Support Airlift Command, stand for roll call during the unit's welcome home ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility, Rapid City, S.D., Jan. 23, 2016. The aviation unit served eight months in Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews/Released)



160123-Z-RN486-002: Gov. Dennis Daugaard expresses his appreciation to Chief Warrant Officer 3 Julie Loofbourow, a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 48, Operational Support Airlift Command, for her dedication to serve the country during the unit's welcome home ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility, Rapid City, S.D., Jan. 23, 2016. The aviation unit served eight months in Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews/Released)



160123-Z-RN486-003: Sgt. Derek Lebeau, a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 48, Operational Support Airlift Command, is welcomed home by retired Command Sgt. Maj. Mike Birnbaum during the unit's welcome home ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility, Rapid City, S.D., Jan. 23, 2016. The aviation unit served eight months in Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews/Released)



160123-Z-RN486-004: Unit members of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Detachment 48, Operational Support Airlift Command, are honored by the public during the unit's welcome home ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility, Rapid City, S.D., Jan. 23, 2016. The aviation unit served eight months in Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews/Released)



160123-Z-RN486-005: Chief Warrant Officer 4 Wayne Walker, commander of Detachment 48 Operational Support Airlift Command, South Dakota Army National Guard, addresses the audience during the unit's welcome home ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility, Rapid City, S.D., Jan. 23, 2016. The aviation unit served eight months in Afghanistan in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Don Matthews/Released)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Maj. Anthony Deiss at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil