

# South Dakota National Guard

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Passion, duty, experience fuel Soldiers' drive to serve overseas

By Sgt. Mark VanGerpen  
196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade

HARRISBURG, S.D. – Thirty-nine Soldiers with the South Dakota Army National Guard's 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade are set to deploy to Kuwait after an activation ceremony Feb. 27 in Harrisburg.

The Soldiers of the Sioux Falls unit will fill a variety of roles on the nine-month deployment as they help augment the Army's force protection operations in Kuwait. They will cover everything from publishing orders and tracking missions to providing security for troops.

The call for volunteers came to the Sioux Falls-based unit more than a year ago. All 39 Soldiers specifically chose to leave their homes and families for the better part of a year to serve their country abroad.

Spc. Courtney Larson, an intelligence analyst from Sioux Falls, had never been out of the United States before she volunteered. She comes from a military family with a history of overseas service. Her great-grandfather was a brigadier general and her grandfather served in the Vietnam War.

She joined the deployment as a chance to expand her horizons and deepen her experience.

"I wanted the military background," she said. "A lot of people I work with have that background and in S2 (Army intelligence) that helps you a lot. And, I'm young and wanted a break from school."

Larson will be traveling with Soldiers like Maj. Scott Green, a logistician with two deployments under his belt. Green served in Yankton's Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, deploying to Iraq in 2005-2006 and Kuwait in 2009-2010.

For Green, deploying was a chance to continue the mission he began on his last deployment.

"It felt like an opportunity to be able to support a cause that I'm passionate about," he said. "When I deployed with C Battery we lost some Soldiers, so in a way it feels like finishing the job that we started many, many years ago. I'm looking forward to the group that we have going, and being able to work together and support each other as we integrate into supporting units all over the Middle East theater."

Sgt. Ted Jackson is an information technology specialist from Sioux Falls. He holds bachelor's degrees in computer network security and network system administration from Dakota State University.

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Jackson deployed to Kandahar, Afghanistan, with Pierre's 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion in 2013. He knows firsthand the importance of communications in the military and volunteered to deploy with that in mind.

"I saw the value in communications throughout my first deployment and the importance of having good S6 (communications) personnel," he said. "I knew the team I was going with was knowledgeable and I knew I could bring some value to the team as well."

As the Soldiers head to Kuwait, many leave their families behind to carry on life without them. Green, Larson and Jackson said that while their families worried for their safety, they all supported them in their decisions to deploy.

Jackson said there was natural concern from his girlfriend and parents when he told them he wanted to go, but in the end they supported his decision.

"My family is proud of me," Larson added. "My mom's probably not so excited about it, but they're very supportive, that's for sure."

That kind of support deserves the same recognition as the Soldiers receive, Green said.

"The credit needs to go to the families of the Soldiers," he said. "They are they unsung heroes of fights like this. They endure the long hours at home. They keep everything together and the family moving forward as we're overseas. So much credit gets placed on the Soldier, but in reality the family deserves just as much credit as the Soldier themselves."

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**160227-Z-LN227-001:** Capt. Michael Warkenthien holds his niece at an activation ceremony, Feb. 27, 2016, at Harrisburg High School for 39 South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers deploying to Kuwait. The Soldiers are with Sioux Falls' 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and will spend nine months overseas. They will fill multiple roles while deployed, augmenting the Army's force protection operations in Kuwait. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Charles Butler/Released)



**160227-Z-LN227-002:** Sioux Falls Mayor Mike Huether, right, shakes hands with Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Williams at an activation ceremony, Feb. 27, 2016, at Harrisburg High School for 39 South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers deploying to Kuwait. The Soldiers are with Sioux Falls' 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and will spend nine months overseas. They will fill multiple roles while deployed, augmenting the Army's force protection operations in Kuwait. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Charles Butler/Released)



**160227-Z-LN227-003:** Thirty-nine Soldiers with the South Dakota Army National Guard's 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade began a nine-month deployment to Kuwait with an activation ceremony, Feb. 27, 2016, at Harrisburg High School. The Soldiers will fill multiple roles overseas as they augment the Army's force protection operations in Kuwait. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Charles Butler/Released)

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