

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

April 15, 2016



139th Soldiers sharpen warfighter skills

By Staff Sgt. Nicholas Abbas – 139th Brigade Support Battalion

CAMP RIPLEY, Minn. – Members of the South Dakota Army National Guard’s 139th Brigade Support Battalion completed a spring field training exercise at Camp Ripley, March 31-April 3, where they trained on basic Soldier skills and conducted weapons qualification.

About 320 Soldiers from the battalion participated in the training, which included the Headquarters Company and Companies A and B of the 139th, the 115th Signal Company and 235th Military Police Company.

The event gave junior and senior Soldiers a chance to gain experience and sharpen their warfighting skills with assigned weapons systems and confidence-building courses.

“The biggest goal of this exercise is to get experience on the equipment from the newest to the most senior operators,” said Master Sgt. Scott Bull, operations NCO for the 139th BSB. “The event gave Soldiers the opportunity to grow trust in themselves, as well as one another in order to accomplish their mission more efficiently.”

The weapons training included the M2 .50 caliber machine gun, MK19 grenade launcher, M240B machine gun and M16 rifle. The Soldiers sent rounds down range from foxholes to Humvee mounted positions and engaged targets to hone their marksmanship skills.

In addition to the weapons training, the Soldiers negotiated several confidence-building courses to test their operating, communication and team work skills. This included rappelling down a 40 ft. tower, applying their problem solving skills during the Leader Reaction Course, clearing buildings at the Military Operations in Urban Terrain site, and pushing their physical limits on the obstacle course.

“The Soldiers had the opportunity to prove to themselves and the rest of the unit that they are able to accomplish tasks outside of their normal day-to-day MOS (military occupation) skill sets,” said Capt. Carlton Willems, commander, 115th Signal Co.

“This is a great experience,” said Maj. Jason Kleinschmit, support operations officer for the 139th BSB and rappel tower officer in charge. “It was great to see some Soldiers overcome their fear of heights and trust their training to accomplish what they set out to do.”

The training exercise was not only beneficial for the unit members – unit recruiters brought in prospective recruits to watch and participate in the training. The exercise gave them a chance to see the quality, real-world training Soldiers conduct.

“The opportunity to bring recruits to this event so they can see and participate in real-life training is not only motivational to the recruits, it also helps them see what they can train on if they become a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard,” said Sgt. 1st Class Phil Keller, Brookings area recruiter.

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“We are already a close group, but each event we do together like this or annual training allows us to grow closer as a unit,” said Staff Sgt. Grant Evans, training NCO for Company A.

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



160401-Z-ZZ999-001: Soldiers from the 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, conduct weapons qualification with Humvee mounted M2 .50 caliber machine guns during a field training exercise at Camp Ripley, Minn., April 1, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Abbas/Released)



160401-Z-ZZ999-004: A Soldier from the 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, conducts weapons qualification with a Humvee mounted M2 .50 caliber machine gun during a field training exercise at Camp Ripley, Minn., April 1, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Abbas/Released)



160401-Z-ZZ999-005: U.S. Army Pfc. Gabriel Garrigan of Detachment 1, 235th Military Police Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, switches the barrel of a M2 .50 caliber machine gun during a field training exercise at Camp Ripley, Minn., April 1, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Abbas/Released)



160401-Z-ZZ999-007: U.S. Army Spc. Nicholas Howard of the 115th Signal Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, fires a M249 machine gun during a field training exercise at Camp Ripley, Minn., April 1, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Abbas/Released)



160402-Z-ZZ999-001: Soldiers from the 115th Signal Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, prepare rappelling harnesses during a field training exercise at Camp Ripley, Minn., April 2, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Abbas/Released)



160402-Z-ZZ999-002: U.S. Army Sgt. Alexander Pageler of Headquarters Company, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, rappels down a tower during a field training exercise at Camp Ripley, Minn., April 2, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Nicholas Abbas/Released)

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