

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SD battalion named most outstanding Army Guard unit

WASHINGTON – The South Dakota Army National Guard’s 153rd Engineer Battalion was recognized as the most outstanding Army National Guard battalion in the nation and was presented the Gen. Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. Award at the Association of the U.S. Army annual conference in Washington, D.C., Oct. 3.

The Kerwin Award recognizes the top performing Army National Guard and Army Reserve units in the country for achieving the highest standards in training and readiness.

The Huron-based 153rd demonstrated excellence in operational planning, execution of training and maintaining high readiness standards above all other Army National Guard units for training year 2015.

Gen. Robert B. Abrams, commanding general of U.S. Army Forces Command, presented the award to Lt. Col. Trent Bruce, 153rd battalion commander, and Command Sgt. Maj. Gary DeVries.

“It is truly an honor to command the Soldiers of the 153rd,” Bruce said. “The awards and accolades the unit has received, recognizing them as the very best in the nation, are a true testament to the leadership of the non-commissioned officers within the battalion and the outstanding work ethic of the Soldiers to be prepared when the nation or state may call.”

The award marks the second time this year the 153rd has been recognized for excellence in training and readiness. Last month, during the National Guard Association of the United States annual conference in Baltimore, the unit was awarded the Maj. Gen. Milton A. Reckord Trophy for the third straight year as the most outstanding Army National Guard battalion in the nation.

“To achieve this success, year after year, is extremely difficult, and is testimony to the environment of excellence and culture to exceed all metrics for success that have been established by the leaders of the unit, both past and present,” Bruce said.

The 153rd is currently preparing for an upcoming deployment to the Middle East, where they will provide command and control of engineer missions in support of U.S. forces in the region.

To be eligible for the award, units must achieve readiness objectives as outlined by U.S. Army Forces Command.

Evaluation criteria for the award include the areas of assigned personnel strength, percentage of personnel qualified in their duty position, attendance at monthly drill weekends and annual training, individual weapons qualification and physical fitness test scores, as well as an effective maintenance program.

The 153rd provides mission command and supervision for seven units with about 860 Soldiers in 12 communities throughout South Dakota. The 153rd assists assigned units in meeting training, administrative and logistical requirements to maintain the unit’s readiness in support of their state and federal missions.

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The Kerwin Award was first established in 1976 after the former U.S. Army vice chief of staff who served as the first commander of U.S. Army Forces Command. The command was responsible for ensuring the readiness and training of all Army units in the United States.

Gen. Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. was a strong advocate of the “One Army,” or “Total Army” concept that recognized the important role of the National Guard and Army Reserve. The programs he initiated resulted in a significant improvement in the readiness of reserve components.

Units under the 153rd’s command include: Headquarters and Headquarters Company of Huron; Forward Support Company of Parkston and Huron; 842nd Engineer Company of Spearfish, Belle Fourche and Sturgis, 211th Engineer Company of Madison and De Smet; 155th Engineer Company of Rapid City and Wagner; 200th Engineer Company of Pierre, Chamberlain and Mobridge; and the 927th Engineer Detachment of Huron.

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



161003-Z-DZ751-044: The South Dakota Army National Guard’s 153rd Engineer Battalion receives the Gen. Walter T. Kerwin, Jr. Award in recognition of being the unit with the highest level of readiness in the Army National Guard at the Maj. Gen. Robert G. Moorhead Guard/Reserve Breakfast at the opening of the 2016 Association of the U.S. Army annual meeting, Washington, D.C., Oct. 3, 2016. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Jim Greenhill)

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