

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

Phone: [605-737-6721](tel:605-737-6721) Email: ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil Web: sd.ng.mil

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Collective training exercise increases readiness for 881st units

By Pfc. Alexis Stevens – 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

RAPID CITY, S.D. – South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers with the 881st Troop Command and Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment participated in a collective training exercise throughout the Black Hills, April 5-6, to increase their combat readiness.

Also known as Operation Thunder, the training event allowed the units to work together to practice medical evacuation procedures and response times involving realistic combat scenarios.

“When you leave your home station and deploy to a combat zone, you never know what you’re going to see,” said Maj. Jon Murphy, executive officer for the 881st.

The Rapid City-based 1-189th Soldiers, an aerial medevac unit which operates HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters, were prepped and prepared to execute missions non-stop for 36-hours, operating out of two forward operating bases at Fort Meade and Custer.

For the Sturgis-based 881st, the battalion headquarters for the 1-189th, the exercise was about finding ways to create and integrate all their Soldiers into the training and stress them at every level throughout the units in realistic combat operations.

“We wanted to challenge them,” said Murphy. “We wanted to give them different situations that will provide a way to develop, to adapt and overcome challenges.”

The unit responded to a variety of medevac requests throughout the Black Hills region and arrived upon scenes involving wounded Soldiers from vehicle-borne explosive devices, wounded civilians or picking up high-value targets.

The range of missions or scenarios created by the 881st staff for the 1-189th Soldiers was a key objective for the exercise.

“My overall goal is to create a battalion training event where we get all subordinate units involved,” said Lt. Col. Scott Linquist, 881st commander. “It helps our staff realize what the mission and capabilities of our subordinate units are.”

“This is an opportunity for us to be able to help the units that we support and maximize that skill set by providing the training they need to be successful,” said Murphy.

Some of the 881st Soldiers were once members of the 1-189th, which gives them the insight to create a realistic combat training.

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“One aspect of the tactical side of the mission is how they integrate with ground forces, and also be able to fly within the airspace of a combat theatre and some challenges they may see in those scenarios,” said Murphy.

Murphy said this event is just the first phase for the battalion and its subordinate units, and it will continue to grow throughout the year and into the following year.

The training event may have come at a perfect time for the 1-189th, as the unit is preparing for a yearlong deployment to Kuwait this fall.

“Our Soldiers need to get into a tactical mindset,” said Capt. Brittany Pearson, 2nd Platoon team leader, Company C, 1-189th. “If we go anywhere outside of the United States, where we are in a tactical environment, we will need to be able to think quick on our feet and react to any situation, as well as be able to save lives.”

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



170405-Z-WF991-0161: A medic with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, rushes to aid simulated injured Soldiers during a collective training exercise at Orman Dam, near Belle Fourche, S.D., April 5, 2017. The training event was held in connection with members of the 881st Troop Command and allowed the units to work together to practice medical evacuation procedures and response times for future operations involving realistic combat scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Alexis Stevens)



170405-Z-WF991-0165: Flight medics with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, aid a simulated injured Soldier during a collective training exercise at Orman Dam, near Belle Fourche, S.D., April 5, 2017. The training event was held in connection with members of the 881st Troop Command and allowed the units to work together to practice medical evacuation procedures and response times for future operations involving realistic combat scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Alexis Stevens)



170405-Z-WF991-0221: Flight medics with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, aid a simulated injured Soldier during a collective training exercise at Orman Dam, near Belle Fourche, S.D., April 5, 2017. The training event was held in connection with members of the 881st Troop Command and allowed the units to work together to practice medical evacuation procedures and response times for future operations involving realistic combat scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Alexis Stevens)



170405-Z-WF991-234: Flight medics with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, transport a simulated injured Soldier during a collective training exercise at Orman Dam, near Belle Fourche, S.D., April 5, 2017. The training event was held in connection with members of the 881st Troop Command and allowed the units to work together to practice medical evacuation procedures and response times for future operations involving realistic combat scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Alexis Stevens)



170406-Z-WF991-0063: A HH-60M Black Hawk helicopter with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, lands at a training site along Six Mile Road, near Hill City, S.D., April 6, 2017. Soldiers from the 1-189th trained with members of the 881st Troop Command and practiced medical evacuation procedures and response times for future operations involving realistic combat scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Alexis Stevens)



170406-Z-WF991-0079: Flight medics with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, load a simulated injured Soldier onto a stretcher during a collective training exercise along Six Mile Road, near Hill City, S.D., April 6, 2017. The training event was held in connection with members of the 881st Troop Command and allowed the units to work together to practice medical evacuation procedures and response times for future operations involving realistic combat scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Alexis Stevens)



170406-Z-WF991-0092: Flight medics with Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, treat simulated injured Soldiers during a collective training exercise along Six Mile Road, near Hill City, S.D., April 6, 2017.. The training event was held in connection with members of the 881st Troop Command and allowed the units to work together to practice medical evacuation procedures and response times for future operations involving realistic combat scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Alexis Stevens)

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