

South Dakota National Guard

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SD National Guard provides domestic operations support

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota National Guard continued to provide domestic operations support to the citizens of South Dakota and the nation throughout 2017.

Soldiers and Airmen responded to a variety of missions at the state and federal level that supported civil authorities, emergency management personnel and law enforcement agencies.

“In times of need, South Dakota National Guard forces provide response and recovery assistance to federal, state and local governments,” said Lt. Col. Jim Selchert, director of military support to civil authorities. “Civil authorities understand the unique capabilities of the National Guard when additional assets are needed in an emergency or natural disaster.”

Located in 22 communities across the state, the SDNG has more than 4,100 service members that can provide overwhelming capability and capacity to the governor before and after disasters strike. In 2017, Guard members were called up by Gov. Dennis Daugaard to support 11 state active duty missions that involved 90 personnel and totaled over 300 man-days.

The majority of the response involved wildland fire support providing aerial water suppression assistance using HH-60 Black Hawk helicopter crews and ground support personnel. The Army Guard responded to eight fires throughout the Black Hills and western South Dakota from March through September.

“Helicopter flight crews certify annually with the South Dakota Wildland Fire Division in order to provide assistance when wildland fires develop,” said Selchert. “The crews conduct water-bucket drops to aid firefighters on the ground by cooling off hot spots, save structures and help get some containment on the fire.”

When not dropping water, flight crews are also picking up people in need. One crew assisted in the rescue of a male hiker who was injured on Black Elk Peak and airlifted from Custer State Park on April 13.

The man was found near high rock formations by Custer County Search and Rescue personnel about two-thirds of the way up the 7,200-foot peak in rough terrain. The man was airlifted to Rapid City Regional Hospital for treatment.

“Our aviation assets also provide a unique hoist capability to be able to safely remove personnel from difficult or hard to reach areas,” said Selchert. “Our crews train every year with interagency partners for these scenarios.”

Another team training and ready to support a variety of local and state agencies in 2017 was the 82nd Civil Support Team. Deployable within 90 minutes, the 22-member unit conducted numerous exercises this past year to maintain their preparedness level for responding to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear threats.

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“We train constantly. Every month we do exercises. Sometimes we do a couple exercises in one week,” said Lt. Col. Dale Gadbois, CST commander. “We have to constantly hone our skills because we have so much specialized equipment and we need to be on top of our training, and these exercises definitely afford us the ability to sustain our operations.”

The unit uses high-tech equipment for substance detection and has an array of testing, laboratory and communications gear to help identify natural or man-made hazardous materials.

As the state’s all-hazards response team, the 82nd serves as subject matter experts on any CBRN event and supports civil authorities in major disasters and help emergency management personnel get a clear picture of what’s happening and how to address it.

“It’s very critical that we work with agencies in the local area, because as the Civil Support Team we typically work for an incident commander from a civilian-led agency, whether it be a fire department or law enforcement – and working with them and establishing relationships is going to pay dividends in the end when it comes to a real-world emergency or response.

“By building relationships with first responders, law enforcement, fire departments and hazmat teams, we are able to interoperate, communicate and understand each other’s capabilities and how we can complement each other during a response,” said Gadbois.

While the CST was training to protect against CBRN dangers, a new team was activated this year to respond to cyber threats.

In June, an activation ceremony was held for the newest SDNG unit; Detachment 2, Cyber Protection Team 174. CPTs are part of the National Guard Bureau’s ongoing growth of cyber forces throughout the Department of Defense.

The team can be called up by the president or governor to assist local, state and federal agencies’ in protecting domestic critical infrastructure and to provide support to law enforcement, homeland defense and defense support of civil authority activities in support of national objectives.

“Our mission is to coordinate, train and assist mission partners in an advisory-type role to steer them in the right direction in the event of a cyberattack,” said Staff Sgt. Mike Reiprich, senior security analyst for Det. 2, CPT 174. “We would strictly be an extra set of eyes for our mission partners in that advisory role.”

Reiprich also emphasized the team does not perform offensive cyberattacks to any intruder or potential attacker.

“We’re there to defend a network and protect it if an intrusion happens,” he said. “We are preventative and then reactive until a network is secured.”

However it’s not just within the state that South Dakota Guardsmen responded this year. When disaster struck the island of Puerto Rico in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, the state responded.

Gov. Dugaard activated four members of Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, at the request of Puerto Rico government authorities to help with recovery operations and provide water distribution capabilities to those in need.

On Oct. 8, the Soldiers deployed with two Load Handling System vehicles and trailers equipped with four Compatible Water Tank Racks, or “Hippos.” The Hippo has the capability to receive, store and distribute up to 2,000 gallons of potable water per system.

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Whether responding to natural disasters or preparing to defend against cyberattacks, on any given day, SDNG Airmen and Soldiers are ready to provide assistance.

“The National Guard is the military first responder for our communities, state and nation and the primary domestic response option for the Department of Defense,” Selchert said. “We stand trained and prepared to assist civil authorities in protecting lives and property.”

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



170505-Z-TW084-0044: Members of Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, conduct annual wildland fire certification with the South Dakota Wildland Fire Division near Hot Springs, S.D., May 5, 2017. The annual training recertifies 189th flight crews to assist the South Dakota Wildland Fire Division during real-life scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Austin Pearce)



171011-Z-HW727-0003: U.S. Army Spc. Ryan Sanden from the South Dakota National Guard’s Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, fills up water bottles for a girl near the town of Naranjito, Puerto Rico, Oct. 11, 2017. Sanden, along with thousands of other National Guardsmen from other states, deployed to Puerto Rico to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims of Hurricane Maria. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Alexis Vélez)



171011-Z-HW727-0002: A resident of Naranjito, Puerto Rico, thanks U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Gregory Beynon from the South Dakota National Guard’s Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, after providing him with a supply of water, Oct. 11, 2017. Beynon, along with thousands of other National Guardsmen from other states, deployed to Puerto Rico to provide humanitarian assistance to the victims of Hurricane Maria. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Alexis Vélez)



171011-Z-TW084-0009: U.S. Army Warrant Officer Ashton Hanisch, left, network infrastructure service specialist, and Staff Sgt. Michael Reiprich, senior security analyst, with the South Dakota Army National Guard’s Cyber Protection Team 174 conduct cyber protection training at Camp Rapid in Rapid City, S.D., Oct. 11, 2017. The team is part of the National Guard Bureau’s ongoing growth of cyber forces throughout the Department of Defense. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Austin Pearce)



171011-Z-TW084-0020: U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Christopher Wenk, left, cyber network defense manager, and Staff Sgt. Brayden Nelson, intelligence analyst, with the South Dakota Army National Guard’s Cyber Protection Team 174 conduct server maintenance at Camp Rapid in Rapid City, S.D., Oct. 11, 2017. The team is part of the National Guard Bureau’s ongoing growth of cyber forces throughout the Department of Defense. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Austin Pearce)



171012-Z-TW084-0045: U.S. Army 2nd Lt. Michael Wollman, left, and Staff Sgt. Kelley Trebesch, both survey team members with the 82nd Civil Support Team, South Dakota National Guard, prepare to conduct sampling of an unidentified substance during a training exercise at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center in Rapid City, S.D., Oct. 12, 2017. The 82nd CST conducts numerous exercises every year to maintain their preparedness level for responding to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear threats. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Austin Pearce)



171012-Z-TW084-0100: Members of the 82nd Civil Support Team, South Dakota National Guard, train on decontamination procedures during a training exercise at the Rushmore Plaza Civic Center in Rapid City, S.D., Oct. 12, 2017. The 82nd CST conducts numerous exercises every year to maintain their preparedness level for responding to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear threats. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Austin Pearce)

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact the SDNG Public Affairs Office at (605) 737-6721 or e-mail ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil