

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

Phone: 605-737-6721 Email: ng.sd.sdarng.list.pao@mail.mil Web: sd.ng.mil



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SD National Guard looks back on a successful 2017

RAPID CITY, S.D. - The South Dakota National Guard once again distinguished itself as one of the premier National Guard organizations in the nation in 2017, just as it has for the past 155 years.

From serving in combat operations overseas to supporting domestic emergencies here at home, SDNG Soldiers and Airmen have once again answered the call to help people in need.

Support to federal commitments worldwide continued in 2017 as more than 275 Soldiers and 125 Airmen from five units supported overseas contingency operations.

The 153rd Engineer Battalion and its Forward Support Company returned 165 Soldiers from duty in the Middle East. The Huron and Parkston-based units served 10 months providing command and control of attached engineer units. Members of the unit served in multiple locations throughout the region, including Iraq and Syria.

The Rapid City-based 216th Engineer Detachment's Firefighting Team deployed three Soldiers for a nine-month tour to Romania where they are providing command and control of firefighting teams to provide fire protection of aviation assets, facilities and installations in the European Command area of operation.

Fifteen Soldiers from the 200th Engineer Company, based out of Pierre, Chamberlain and Mobridge, deployed to the Middle East as a Bridge Training Team where they are providing training and assistance to coalition forces on military bridge systems throughout the region.

More than 90 Soldiers with the Rapid City-based Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, deployed to the Middle East where they are providing aerial medical evacuation support with its HH-60M Black Hawk helicopters.

The Sioux Falls-based 114th Fighter Wing saw the deployment of 125 Airmen to six countries throughout the Middle East and Europe as part of their Reserve Component Period in support of Operations Inherent Resolve and Spartan Shield. The Sioux Falls-based Airmen serve in a variety of capacities from administration, services, engineering, communications, force protection, maintenance and logistics support.

Since 9/11, the SDNG has deployed more than 8,000 Soldiers and Airmen in support of various operations.

The SDNG continued to provide domestic operations support to the citizens of South Dakota and the nation throughout 2017.

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More than 150 Soldiers and Airmen provided support to the 58th Presidential Inauguration in Washington, D.C., Jan. 20. The SDNG service members were joined by more than 7,500 Guardsmen from 44 other states and territories to assist the District of Columbia National Guard and federal and local law enforcement agencies in providing security, crowd control and traffic management of attendees and support personnel throughout the U.S. Capital region.

Guard members were also 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 SDARNG responded to eight fires throughout the Black Hills and western South Dakota from March through September.

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

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. Daugaard activated four Soldiers of the Watertown-based 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 for six weeks with vehicles and equipment with the capability to receive, store and distribute potable water. The Soldiers personally distributed more than 420,000 gallons of water to Puerto Rico residents and helped to setup two water purification sites and two water distribution sites, which allowed for a total of 920,000 gallons of water to be distributed in support of relief efforts.

The 114th Fighter Wing continued support to NORAD's Airspace Control Alert mission at March Air Force Base in California, providing four F-16 Fighting Falcons and pilots who are ready on a 24-hour alert status to protect the country for any type of emergency.

This year also marked the 11th anniversary of the South Dakota and Suriname State Partnership Program. There were 61 subject matter expert participants that took part in 13 significant exchanges, which included land search and rescue operations, force management, HAZMAT planning and prevention, officer professional development and an engineer mission to help renovate parts of a school in Paramaribo.

Both the South Dakota Army (SDARNG) and Air (SDANG) National Guard had another outstanding training year and received a number of awards demonstrating their operational readiness.

Twenty-three out of 42 SDARNG units received the National Guard Bureau's Superior Unit Award in recognition of outstanding achievement during training year 2016. The Superior Unit Award is presented to units who meet highly-enforced military standards in the areas of personnel, training and readiness. The SDARNG, who makes up only 9/10ths of one percent of this nation's National Guard, earned 66 percent of the Superior Unit Awards for training year 2016.

Detachment 1, Company B, 1-112th Aviation Battalion, was awarded the National Guard Association of the United States' Certificate of Victory for having the highest overall figure of merit in weapons qualification in the nation. This is the third year in a row a SDARNG unit has received the award.

The SDARNG was presented with the gold recipient award in the 2017 Army Communities of Excellence Awards. The ACOE Awards recognize top performance within U.S. Army, National Guard and Reserve installations/communities and their approach to systems management.

Because of the gold finish, the ACOE Awards presented the SDARNG with \$100,000 to enhance the organization even further. The money will support process improvement, specifically supporting workforce professional development.

For the fourth time in five years, the Department of Defense awarded a SDARNG unit with the Reserve Family Readiness Award for the Army National Guard. The award was presented to the Rapid City and Wagner-based 155th Engineer Company at the Pentagon. The annual award is presented to one unit from each of the seven Reserve components that demonstrate excellence in engaging with and supporting their members' families.

The 155th was recognized again, this time claiming a top award from the Society of American Military Engineers for outstanding military and engineering service. The 155th received the Itschner Award, which recognizes the best engineer company in three categories: U.S. Army, Army Reserve and National Guard.

The SDANG continued to demonstrate its success as one of the top five flying units in the nation as NGAUS awarded the 114th Fighter Wing with its Distinguished Flying Unit Plaque for the third consecutive year. This is the seventh time the unit has received this award for exceptional meritorious service. The award is based on overall combat readiness and the unit's performance with respect to all other Air National Guard units.

The 114th was also announced as a recipient of the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award for the third straight year. This is the ninth time the unit has received this award for exceptional meritorious service by the U.S. Air Force and Air National Guard.

The SDARNG won a National Guard Bureau Excellence in Diversity Award for fiscal year 2016. The NGB Excellence in Diversity Awards are presented to outstanding National Guard individuals, organizations, states and territories for significant contributions to diversity and inclusion initiatives.

The SDNG hosted its 33rd annual Golden Coyote training exercise in the Black Hills in June. The two-week training exercise has developed into one of the nation's top training opportunities for the National Guard, Reserve and active-duty forces, as well as military personnel from allied countries. Golden Coyote 2017 involved more than 2,400 participants from 30 units representing 13 states, one U.S. territory and two allied nations.

Never in our history have we been better trained, better equipped or more heavily relied upon than we are today. The Soldiers and Airmen of the SDNG are proud to add to its legacy and tradition as a force ready to support and defend our communities, state and nation.

-30-

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



170809-Z-LQ671-306: A U.S. Air Force F-16 Fighting Falcon assigned to the 175th Fighter Squadron takes off during a training sortie at Volk Field, WI, Aug. 11, 2017. Nearly 200 Airmen from the 114th Fighter Wing participated in a live drop bombing exercise at Volk Field Air National Guard Base, WI, Aug 9-16. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)



170909-Z-LQ671-011: Staff Sgt. Scott Krogstad, 114th Civil Engineer power production specialist, demonstrates the functions of the BAK-14M retractable hook cable support system in the power production shop at Joe Foss Field, Sept. 9, 2017. The support arm and cover assembly of the support box can be raised to a fully open position to give access to the components for servicing. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)



171013-Z-SJ722-062: 114th Maintenance Squadron ammunition Airmen prepared munitions during the Phase 1 of the Attack Response Exercise (ARE) Oct. 13, 2017, Joe Foss Field, S.D. The goal of the exercise was to evaluate the 114th Fighter Wing's ability to rapidly deploy personnel and materiel to a deployed location in support of a Combatant Commander. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra)



170927-Z-TW084-0010: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Tom Martin, Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment, South Dakota Army National Guard, holds one of his daughters at his deployment ceremony in Rapid City, S.D., Sept. 27, 2017. Martin and the 1-189th departed on a yearlong deployment to the Middle East to provide aerial medical evacuation support. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Austin Pearce)



170505-Z-TW084-0023: 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)



171026-Z-QI027-0163: U.S. Army Spc. Jorge Morales, Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion, South Dakota National Guard, fills a water tank for a resident in Comerio, Puerto Rico, Oct. 26, 2017. Morales, a native of Puerto Rico, 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. Avery Cunningham)



170715-Z-NM086-0230: Soldiers of South Dakota Army National Guard's 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion fire M26 practice rockets from a M270A1 Multiple Launch Rocket System while participating in distinguished visitors' day – a finale to Saber Guardian 17, July 15, 2017, Cincu, Romania. SG17, a U.S. Army Europe-led, multinational exercise, took place in Bulgaria, Hungary and Romania, July 11-20. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Rachel Korzeniewski)



170930-Z-GT719-0002: U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Keith Fitzgerald hugs his family after returning from a 10-month deployment to the Middle East with the 153rd Engineer Battalion, South Dakota Army National Guard, in Huron, S.D., Sept. 30, 2017. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Heather Trobee)

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