

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 Guard Family Readiness Group receives national award

ARLINGTON, Va. – For the fifth time in six years, the Department of Defense awarded a South Dakota Army National Guard unit with the Reserve Family Readiness Award for the Army National Guard.

The Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs presented the Huron and Parkston-based 153rd Engineer Battalion and its Forward Support Company with the award for 2017 at the Pentagon, March 23.

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. Units represented come from the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Navy Reserve, Air National Guard, Air Force Reserve and the Coast Guard Reserve.

“The RFRA program was established in 2000 to recognize the top unit in each Reserve Component that demonstrated outstanding family readiness while maintaining superior mission readiness,” said Robert Wilkie, undersecretary of defense for personnel and readiness, in a letter to the units. “Strong family readiness programs contribute to mission readiness and greatly enhance the ability to deploy Guard and Reserve units.”

Volunteer team leaders from the Huron and Parkston family readiness groups joined state and national military representatives for the awards program at the Pentagon.

“Every Soldier that deploys needs to feel assured that their family is taken care of,” said Lt. Col. Dennis Bickett, 153rd commander. “Having an excellent family readiness group goes to great lengths to assuage concerns that deployed Soldiers have for their families back home. This award demonstrates that fantastic job the Headquarters and Forward Support Company Family Readiness Group did while the 153rd was deployed to the Middle East.”

The 153rd deployed to the Middle East from November 2016-September 2017 and provided command and control and logistical support of attached engineer units.

“When units are deployed, the FRG is a connection to others going through the same stresses,” Bickett said. “It is also a resource for families to share information and solve problems. When a unit has a solid FRG, officers, NCOs and Soldiers can focus on preparing the unit rather than worrying about how their family will be supported during a deployment.”

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



180323-Z-ZZ999-001: Members of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 153rd Engineer Battalion and its Family Readiness Group accept the 2017 Reserve Family Readiness Award for the Army National Guard from Department of Defense officials at a ceremony March 23, 2018, at the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes. The Reserve Family Readiness Award is given to the unit in each of the seven services that demonstrates excellence in engaging with and supporting their members' families. (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



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