

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

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SD National Guard selects Warrant Officer of the Year

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota Army National Guard selected a Rapid City man as its Warrant Officer of the Year during its annual officer’s conference in Sioux Falls, April 27.

Chief Warrant Officer 4 Steve Nelson, U.S. Property and Fiscal Office warehouse supervisor for Joint Force Headquarters, received the Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael F. O’Connor Award as the most exceptional warrant officer after competing against warrant officers from several of the SDARNG’s major commands.

The CW4 Michael F. O’Connor Award was established in 2000 to recognize the most outstanding SDARNG Warrant Officer of the past year. Criterion for the award is based on exceptional qualities of technical knowledge, leadership, dedication and initiative.

“To know that being selected by your command and going forward to the state level gives me a sense that my accomplishments have been noticed,” said Nelson, a native of Redfield. “It’s a pretty special feeling to be selected and added to the list of names of those who have won the CW4 Michael F. O’Connor award in the past.”

“Chief Nelson has exhibited the exceptional qualities, technical knowledge, leadership, dedication and initiative that is required of this award,” said Col. Todd Bartunek, deputy chief of staff U.S. Property and Fiscal Office. “Many of these exceptional qualities have been instilled in him through his passion and commitment to the Soldiers of the SDARNG.”

Nelson, who has over 41 years of military service, enlisted in the SDARNG in 1977 and was assigned as a mechanic in Battery C, 2-147th Field Artillery Battalion in Redfield. Over the next 10 years, he worked his way up to the rank of sergeant first class. By 1998, he was selected for a maintenance warrant officer position and soon graduated from Warrant Officer Candidate School.

Over the next 30 years, Nelson would go on to serve as a maintenance warrant in several units to include: Battery C, 2-147th Field Artillery, 1742nd Transportation Company, 147th Field Artillery Brigade, 842nd Engineer Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion, 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and Joint Force Headquarters.

Nelson is also a war veteran and completed a deployment to Iraq in 2003-2004 with the 842nd Eng. Co., and two tours in Afghanistan with the 147th FAB Embedded Training Team in 2007 and the 196th MEB in 2010-2011.

“I’ve had a great career. If I had to make any changes over the last 41 plus years, I would have become a warrant officer sooner,” Nelson said. “What a great way to take what you know and use it to help others – to be that technical expert and to teach both the enlisted and officers.”

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Nelson has received a number of accolades over the course of his career to include: Soldier of the Year, Artilleryman of the Year, SDNG Technician of the Year, and the General Douglas A. MacArthur Leadership Award.

In addition to his full-time duties, Nelson is a member and avid volunteer in a number of veteran organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Rolling Thunder and Patriot Guard Riders, and both the National Guard Associations of the U.S. and South Dakota, to name a few.

Other warrant officers representing their major command for this year's award were CW3 Monty Claussen, 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade; CW2 Mark Mahoney, 109th Regional Support Group; and CW3 Joel Rassel, 196th Regiment.

"This year's warrant officers in the running for the O'Connor Award were the best of the best," Nelson said. "I felt really grateful to be among the list of four and give thanks to all the hard work that Claussen, Rassel and Mahoney put forward to be selected by their commands."

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High resolution photos are available upon request.



U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer 4 Steve Nelson, CW4 Michael F. O'Connor Award recipient and South Dakota National Guard Warrant Officer of the Year. (U.S. Army National Guard file photo)

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