

South Dakota National Guard

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Suriname, SD National Guard leaders reinforce partnership

By Sgt. 1st Class Michael Beck - 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

PARAMARIBO, Suriname - Senior leaders from the South Dakota National Guard visited the Republic of Suriname, South Dakota's State Partnership Program nation, Nov. 22 through 26, to reinforce the partnership between the SDNG and Suriname military while supporting their 46th year of independence at their National Day celebration.

South Dakota and Suriname, in coordination with U.S. Southern Command, established a successful security cooperation relationship in 2006 under the National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program. Since then, numerous exchanges have taken place between the SDNG and Suriname's Defense Forces to share experiences and best practices in a variety of military training and topics.

Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Marlette, the adjutant general of the SDNG, along with Brig. Gen. Ed Vanderwolde, director of the joint staff, and Command Sgt. Maj. Patrick Couser, senior enlisted leader began the week at the Ministry of Defense in Paramaribo.

Meeting with Suriname's Minister of Defense Krishnakoemarie Mathoera, Col. Henri van Axel Dongen, commander of the Suriname Defense Forces and the commanders of Suriname's military branches, Marlette discussed the success of the 15-year partnership and future exchanges and projects.

"I am very optimistic about what the future holds for the Suriname-South Dakota partnership," Marlette said. "We continue to find new and meaningful ways to work together to help each of our organizations learn and grow through this partnership. Although geographically very different, we share many common missions, challenges and goals for our organizations."

This trip also included visits to the Ministry of Education, Col. Jerry Slijngard, the head of Suriname's National Coordination Center for Disaster Relief and his senior staff, as well as with senior enlisted leaders of the Surinamese militaries.

Over the past 15 years, the two parties have conducted nearly 170 engagement activities in support of USSOUTHCOM cooperation objectives with Suriname, including countering transnational criminal and violent extremist organizations, reinforcing humanitarian assistance and disasters response capabilities, promoting military professional development, enhancing regional access and security sector reform.

In the senior enlisted leaders meeting, Command Sgt. Maj. Couser discussed the importance of diversifying membership in the military while discussing the increase in women enlisting in the Surinamese Army.

"We encourage (diversity) to gain perspective," said Couser. "We learn how we can best help each other, how we can learn from you, and you from us. We build strength by treating everyone with dignity and trust."

SDNG senior leaders were also honored guests at Suriname's National Day Parade, celebrating the country's 1975 independence from the Netherlands, as well as a meal with Suriname's president, Chan Santokhi.

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211124-Z-BB320-0024: U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Jeffrey Marlette, adjutant general for the South Dakota National Guard shakes hands with Col. Jerry Slijngard, Suriname's National Crisis Coordinator, during a distinguished leaders visit to Paramaribo, Suriname, Nov. 24, 2021. Senior leaders from the SDNG visited the Republic of Suriname, South Dakota's State Partnership Program nation, to reinforce the partnership between the SDNG and Suriname military while supporting their 46th year of independence at National Day. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Beck)



211123-Z-BB321-0043: South Dakota National Guard and Suriname Defense Force leaders stand together during a distinguished leaders visit to Paramaribo, Suriname, Nov. 24, 2021. Senior leaders from the SDNG visited the Republic of Suriname, South Dakota's State Partnership Program nation, to reinforce the partnership between the SDNG and Suriname military while supporting their 46th year of independence at National Day. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Beck)



211125-Z-BB321-1205: Suriname President Chan Santokhi delivers a speech during the country's National Day Celebration in Paramaribo, Suriname, Nov. 25, 2021. Senior leaders from the SDNG visited the Republic of Suriname, South Dakota's State Partnership Program nation, to reinforce the partnership between the SDNG and Suriname military while supporting their 46th year of independence at National Day. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Beck)



211125-Z-BB321-1168: French Foreign Legion service members participate in National Day celebrations in Paramaribo, Suriname, Nov. 25, 2021. Senior leaders from the South Dakota National Guard visited the Republic of Suriname, South Dakota's State Partnership Program nation, to reinforce the partnership between the SDNG and Suriname military while supporting their 46th year of independence at National Day. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Beck)



211125-Z-BB321-1046: Service members with Suriname's Defense Forces raise the flag in front of the Presidential Palace for National Day celebrations in Paramaribo, Suriname, Nov. 25, 2021. Senior leaders from the South Dakota National Guard visited the Republic of Suriname, South Dakota's State Partnership Program nation, to reinforce the partnership between the SDNG and Suriname military while supporting their 46th year of independence at National Day. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Michael Beck)