

South Dakota National Guard

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SD Guard, Suriname partner together to renovate school, provide health services

PARAMARIBO, Suriname – About 30 soldiers from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American country of Suriname to provide engineer support for a school renovation and medical and dental services in several community locations, April 18 through May 3.

The renovation project and healthcare mission were conducted as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program to provide training for military personnel while simultaneously assisting in worthy community needs by improving the school’s infrastructure and improving systemic and oral health for Suriname residents.

The State Partnership Program seeks to strengthen ties through engagement activities and share experiences and best practices through a variety of military training exchanges. Funding for the project was provided by the National Guard Bureau and all materials and supplies were purchased in Suriname through U.S. Southern Command’s Humanitarian Civil Assistance program.

“The partnership between Suriname Defense Force and the SDNG continues to grow strong and is seen in the collaboration for this event,” said Maj. Melody Howell, bilateral affairs officer - Security Cooperation Office in Suriname. “Continued support from NGB, SOUTHCOM, and the U.S. Embassy helps make events like this possible.”

A dozen soldiers from the 842nd Engineer Company worked alongside about a dozen Suriname Defense Force engineers on renovations for the Magenta Polder (Elementary) School. Renovations consisted of rebuilding and repairing bathrooms, wall sections, doors, locks and screens, bathroom toilets, faucets, ceiling tiles, and removing all lights and replacing with LED fixtures.

Material funding for the project was \$15,000, including an additional \$30,000 in humanitarian aide donations of materials to continue renovations by the Suriname Ministry of Education.

Eighteen soldiers from the SDNG’s 730th Area Support Medical Company, Medical Command and 114th Medical Group worked alongside 10 Suriname Defense Force medics to provide health services to residents in the rural communities of Atjoni, Brownsweg and Brokopondo. The team saw over 2000 medical and dental patients where they conducted health screenings and small in/outpatient procedures.

Materials and medicine funding for the medical and dental services was \$15,000 for each location for a total of \$45,000.

“We were very excited to see this project get funded and approved,” said Lt. Col. Stephen E. Sewell III, State Partnership Program coordinator and project officer. “The SDNG has proven once again that, if given resources, we will produce outstanding results.”

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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.

The State Partnership Program provides unique capacity-building capabilities to combatant commanders through partnerships between U.S. states and foreign countries. The program helps to support U.S. national interests and security cooperation goals by engaging partner nations through military-to-military exchanges.

The partnership has made an impact to both organizations over the past 16 years. Every year, nearly a dozen exchanges take place between SDNG and SDF service members that enhances training, skills, techniques and operational processes and procedures.

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220422-001: South Dakota Army National Guard engineers conduct renovations at the Magenta Polder (Elementary) School in Suriname, April 22, 2022, as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program to provide training for military personnel while simultaneously assisting in worthy community needs. About 30 soldiers from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American county of Suriname to provide engineer support for a school renovation and medical and dental services in several community locations (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



220422-002: South Dakota Army National Guard engineers conduct renovations at the Magenta Polder (Elementary) School in Suriname, April 22, 2022, as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program to provide training for military personnel while simultaneously assisting in worthy community needs. About 30 soldiers from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American county of Suriname to provide engineer support for a school renovation and medical and dental services in several community locations (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



220422-003: A South Dakota Army National Guard engineer works alongside Suriname Defense Force soldiers as they conduct renovations at the Magenta Polder (Elementary) School in Suriname, April 22, 2022, as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program to provide training for military personnel while simultaneously assisting in worthy community needs. About 30 soldiers from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American county of Suriname to provide engineer support for a school renovation and medical and dental services in several community locations (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



220422-004: A South Dakota Army National Guard engineer works alongside a Suriname Defense Force soldier as they conduct renovations at the Magenta Polder (Elementary) School in Suriname, April 22, 2022, as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program to provide training for military personnel while simultaneously assisting in worthy community needs. About 30 soldiers from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American county of Suriname to provide engineer support for a school renovation and medical and dental services in several community locations (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



220422-005: A South Dakota Army National Guard medic tests the blood pressure of a Surinamese woman in Suriname, April 22, 2022, as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program to provide training for military personnel while simultaneously assisting in worthy community needs. About 30 soldiers from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American county of Suriname to provide engineer support for a school renovation and medical and dental services in several community locations (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



220422-006: South Dakota Air National Guard airmen perform a dental examination of a Surinamese woman in Suriname, April 22, 2022, as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program to provide training for military personnel while simultaneously assisting in worthy community needs. About 30 soldiers from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American county of Suriname to provide engineer support for a school renovation and medical and dental services in several community locations (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



220422-007: A South Dakota Army National Guard physician assistant examines the knee of a Surinamese man in Suriname, April 22, 2022, as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program to provide training for military personnel while simultaneously assisting in worthy community needs. About 30 soldiers from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American county of Suriname to provide engineer support for a school renovation and medical and dental services in several community locations (U.S. Army National Guard photo)



220422-008: A South Dakota Army National Guard physician assistant looks in the ear of a Surinamese child in Suriname, April 22, 2022, as part of the Suriname and South Dakota State Partnership Program to provide training for military personnel while simultaneously assisting in worthy community needs. About 30 soldiers from the South Dakota National Guard traveled to the South American county of Suriname to provide engineer support for a school renovation and medical and dental services in several community locations (U.S. Army National Guard photo)