

DAKOTA PACK

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD • SUMMER 2009



« EMERGENCY RESPONSE

Guardsmen assist in
flood operation

« DEPLOYMENTS

Engineers prepare
for explosive
mission

YEAR OF THE NCO

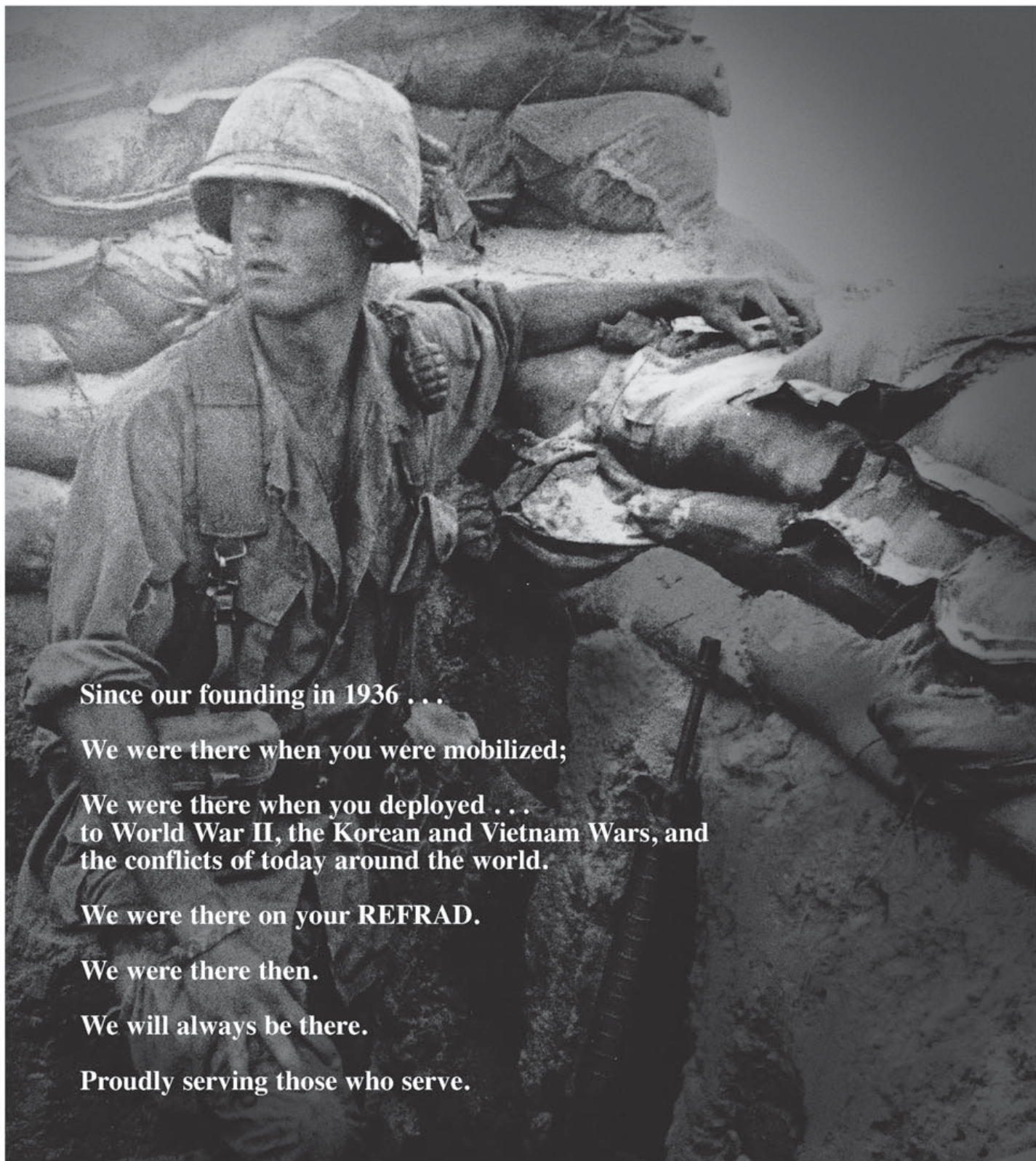
Guard recognizes
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Dakota Pack is a commercial enterprise publication, produced in partnership, quarterly, by the South Dakota National Guard and AQP, Publishing Inc. Views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the Departments of the Army and Air Force or the State of South Dakota. All photos are South Dakota National Guard photos unless otherwise credited.

Distribution: Dakota Pack is published for all military service members, their families, civilian employees, veterans and retirees of the South Dakota National Guard. It is distributed through AQP, Publishing Inc. under exclusive written contract with a circulation of 8,500. It is also available at our web site: sdguard.ngb.army.mil.

How to reach us: Questions or comments for Dakota Pack should be directed to the SDNG Public Affairs Office: 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, SD 57702, 605.737.6721, fax: 605.737.6264, pao@sd.ngb.army.mil.

Submissions: Print and photo submissions of general interest to members of the SDNG, their families, civilian employees, veterans and retirees are invited and encouraged. Please send article and photos with name, phone number, e-mail, complete mailing address and comments to: anthony.deiss@us.army.mil, 605.737.6978. Submissions are subject to editing. Electronic submissions are preferred and digital photos should be at least 300 dpi.

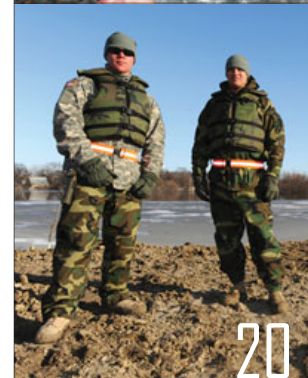
DAKOTA PACK

Magazine of the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard



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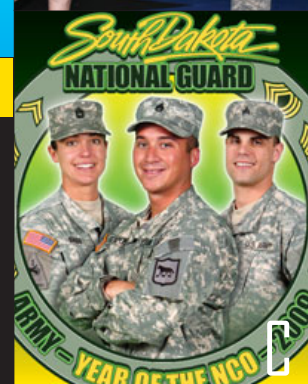
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On the cover

Master Sgt. Susan Shoe, Staff Sgt. Adam Herrmann and Sgt. Leroy Lockwood participated in promotional materials for the South Dakota Army National Guard's Year of the NCO campaign; an Army initiative to recognize, honor and thank NCOs for their service and sacrifice to their community, state and nation.





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Guard supports DOT after winter storm

RAPID CITY – The South Dakota Army National Guard was called up to provide support to the S.D. Department of Transportation in response to a winter storm that blanketed western South Dakota with snow and wind on March 23-24, causing a no travel advisory and the closure of Interstate 90 from Wyoming to Wall.

Six members of the Guard were placed on state active duty orders to provide assistance and to clear snow from under passes and service roads from Sturgis to the Wyoming border; providing two snow blowers, a Humvee, and pick-up truck to help plow snow.

The 109th Task Force located in Rapid City took the lead in coordinating personnel and equipment from the 155th Engineer Company and Joint Force Headquarters. The task force responded to the call that came from the SDNG Joint Operations Center in Rapid City in the early morning of March 23.

109th RSG changes hands

A change of command ceremony was held for Lt. Col. Thomas Croymans who took command of the 109th Regional Support Group from Col. Timothy Reisch on Saturday,

May 2, at the Range Road armory in Rapid City.

JFHQ has new commander

A change of command ceremony was held for Maj. Brendan Murphy who took command of the Joint Force Headquarters from Maj. Todd Bartunek on Saturday, May 2, at the Duke Corning armory on Camp Rapid.

Command change for 115th NSC in Brookings

Capt. Jayme Trygstad, of Volga, took command of the 115th Network Support Company from Capt. Ryan Brekke, of Sioux Falls, during a change of command ceremony on Saturday, May 2, at the Brookings Readiness Center.

Det. 48 changes command

A change of command ceremony was held for Chief Warrant Officer 4 Michael Huss who took command of Detachment 48, Operational Airlift Support Command from Chief Warrant Officer 5 Jerry Duba on Sunday, May 3, at the Army Aviation Support Facility near Rapid City Regional Airport.

Command change for Company C, 1/189th AV

A change of command ceremony was held

for Capt. Jon Murphy who took command of Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment (General Support Aviation Battalion) from Maj. Scott Linquist on Sunday, May 3, at the Army Aviation Support Facility near Rapid City Regional Airport.

Troops take to the streets for city-wide clean-up

MILBANK – Soldiers from the 740th Transportation Company are used to hauling everything from military cargo and equipment to vehicles; however, they took to the streets in May to pick-up and haul away junk. The mission was part of Milbank's annual city clean-up. The unit used 20 trucks and fanned out across the town—including nearby Big Stone—to take old items that residents no longer wanted and left on their curbs.

Soldiers picked-up everything from tree limbs to various household items such as old furniture, carpet and toys. The 740th has been helping with the city clean-up effort for several years and residents seem to appreciate the day-long effort that the Soldiers put into sprucing up the city for spring. Each truck made several trips to the city landfill where trash was then segregated before it was dumped in its final locations. The 740th hauled over 50 loads of trash to the landfill.

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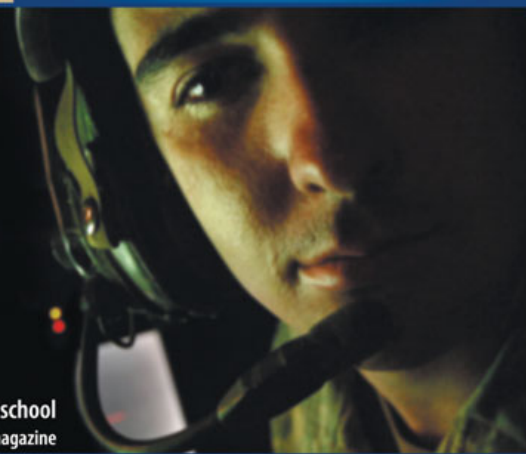
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New Army assistant adjutant general announced

By Sgt. Lance Alan Schroeder
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

RAPID CITY – Soldiers of the South Dakota Army National Guard (SDARNG) welcomed their new assistant adjutant general at a change of authority ceremony Saturday, May 2, at the Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid.

Col. Timothy A. Reisch of Howard, assumed the duties of assistant adjutant general for the South Dakota Army National Guard from Brig. Gen. Keith W. Corbett of Brookings.

"I truly look forward to working with Colonel Reisch," said Maj. Gen. Steven R. Doohen, adjutant general for the South Dakota National Guard, as he presided over the ceremony. "He is a very hard worker, a great strategic thinker, and I know he is the right man to help me work through any issues facing the South Dakota Army National Guard."

As the assistant adjutant general, Reisch will be responsible for maintaining the Army Guard's troop readiness, to include all training and mobilization exercises for the SDARNG. He has been confirmed by the South Dakota Senate for the position and received a promotion to the rank of brigadier general.

"When we drive through the gate of Camp Rapid and see the flag at half-staff, it reminds us that we are a nation at war," said Reisch, reflecting on the state of the Guard today. "We in South Dakota have units at war or preparing to go to war. As I take over as the assistant adjutant general, I realize that our state's National Guard has never been more competent than it is right now. I am going to do my best to maintain that competency and take it to an even higher level in the future."

The ceremony served as a fitting close to the career of Brig. Gen. Corbett, who retired from the military after 33 years of distinguished service. Corbett has served as the assistant adjutant general for the SDARNG since April 2006, and is currently the dean of the College of General Studies at South Dakota State University in Brookings.

"Tim Reisch is a great friend and Soldier who will do an outstanding job as assistant adjutant general," said Corbett. "I can't think of a better person, or a better friend, to take the position. He knows what it entails and I know he can do it!"

Reisch's previous military assignments include three company commands, several staff



Maj. Gen. Steven R. Doohen (left), adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard, passes the guidon to Col. Timothy A. Reisch at a change of authority ceremony Saturday, May 2, at Camp Rapid. Reisch is assuming the authority of assistant adjutant general of the South Dakota Army National Guard. (Army photo by Sgt. Lance A. Schroeder)



Brig. Gen. Timothy A. Reisch, the new assistant adjutant general for the South Dakota Army National Guard, gets "pinned" by his father and his wife Anne, during a promotion ceremony Sunday, May 3, at Duke Corning Armory, Camp Rapid. (Army photo by Pfc. Alexander Abraham)

positions, and two battalion commands. He has served as chief of the Exercise Division of the SDARNG, and was selected to attend the United States Army War College, from which he graduated with a master's degree in Strategic Studies in 2005.

Before being confirmed by the Senate for his new position, Reisch's previous assignment was commander of the 109th Regional Support Group.

The new assistant adjutant general has spent his civilian career serving the public. He was elected to the office of Miner County Sheriff in 1982 at the age of 24, and went on to win four subsequent elections. Reisch served in the South Dakota Sheriffs' Association, instructed for the D.A.R.E. program in the Howard,

Carthage, and Canova Elementary School systems, and was nominated D.A.R.E. Officer of the Year for eastern South Dakota in 1998.

In 2000, Reisch was appointed deputy secretary of the South Dakota Department of Corrections by Governor William J. Janklow, and has been serving in Governor M. Michael Rounds' cabinet as secretary of corrections since his appointment in 2003. In this position, Reisch provides direction and coordination for more than 900 employees in the Department of Corrections and is responsible for an annual budget of over 90 million dollars.

Reisch is married to wife, Anne, and has five children: Terra, Tim, Trevor, Tamara and Taylor.

New state command sergeant major assumes duties



Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman, the seventh state command sergeant major for the South Dakota Army National Guard, speaks during a change of authority ceremony Saturday, May 2, at the Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid, while Col. Terry Ommen, Brig. Gen. Keith Corbett, and Col. Timothy Reisch look on. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

By Sgt. Theanne Tangen
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

RAPID CITY – Members of the South Dakota Army National Guard honored State Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bekaert as he passed the duties of state command sergeant major to Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman during a change of authority ceremony Saturday, May 2, at the Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid.

Col. Terry Ommen, guest speaker for the event, explained the ceremony is an important military ritual which demonstrates the transfer of duties, responsibilities and authority between command sergeant majors.

"I want to thank every Soldier," said Bekaert. "You are the best of the best."

Bekaert served as the sixth state command sergeant major since February 4, 2006. He accepted a position at Fort Stewart, Ga., as an active duty command sergeant major.

The state command sergeant major is the highest ranking noncommissioned officer in the South Dakota Army National Guard, serving as the adjutant general's personal advisor on all enlisted matters. He also serves as a representative and advocate for more than 3,400 Soldiers in South Dakota and spends the



State Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bekaert (left) hands over his duties to Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman (center), with the Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. Steven Doohen's full support, at a change of authority ceremony Saturday, May 2, at the Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

majority of his time observing their training and addressing their concerns.

"I am excited and looking forward to the opportunity," said Zimmerman. "Taking care of Soldiers is my goal."

Zimmerman will be the seventh state command sergeant major for South Dakota.



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147th Field Artillery holds activation ceremonies

By Staff Sgt. Robert Young
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

YANKTON – The South Dakota National Guard held activation ceremonies for the 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery (FA) at various communities throughout the state April 18 and 19.

The ceremonies gave local residents, civic leaders, and state military leaders the opportunity to recognize and honor the Soldiers of the 147th FA who will deploy to Kuwait in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Capt. Kerry Nilson, C Battery commander, acted as master of ceremonies for the Yankton activation ceremony. Guest speakers included Governor M. Michael Rounds, Maj. Gen. Steven Doohe, South Dakota National Guard adjutant general, Mayor Dan Specht and Lt. Col. David Chase, 147th FA Battalion commander.

In his address, Chase commended the families and communities for their support of their National Guard Soldiers.

“When we deploy, we don’t just deploy the guys wearing the uniform, we deploy communities,” Chase said. “For each Soldier that’s deployed, a family is deployed.”

Chase also emphasized the high standards and positive attitude of the South Dakota units, and encouraged the Soldiers to continue the tradition.

“Throughout the world, the South Dakota Guard has a reputation for excellence, deployment after deployment,” said Chase.

C Battery received mobilization orders in September 2008. The unit will mobilize along with four other companies from the battalion: A Battery (Aberdeen), 147th Forward Support Battalion (Mitchell, Sioux Falls, and Webster), and 147th Headquarters and Headquarters Battery (Watertown and Sisseton).

Unit members will travel to their mobilization station at Fort Hood, Texas, to make final preparations prior to their 12-month overseas deployment.

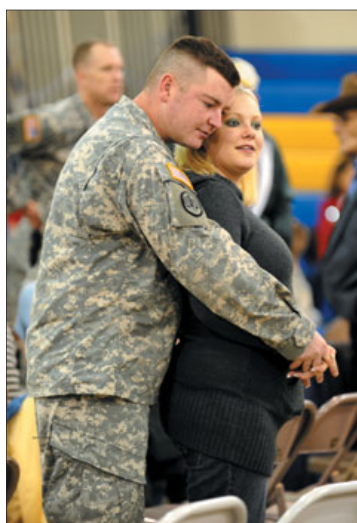
During this deployment, the 147th FA Battalion will not perform the traditional mission of a field artillery unit. The unit will conduct security force missions in substitution of its typical mission of providing enemy suppression and remote fire support.

The last time C Battery mobilized, it served in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from July 2004 to September 2006.



South Dakota Governor M. Michael Rounds shakes hands with Spc. Dallas Reasonover of Sioux Falls, a member of the Forward Support Company, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, during a deployment ceremony Saturday, April 18, at the Mitchell Christian School. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

Staff Sgt. Jeff Koeppel of Worthing, a member of the Forward Support Company, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, receives a handshake from his seven-year-old son, Spencer, during the receiving line thanking Soldiers for their service following a deployment ceremony Saturday, April 18, at the Mitchell Christian School. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)



Spc. Mike Peters of Alcester, a member of the Forward Support Company, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, embraces his wife of four months, Misty, during a deployment ceremony Saturday, April 18, at the Mitchell Christian School. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)



Sgt. Alysia Adams of Gregory, a member of the Forward Support Company, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, holds her 18-month old son, Raymond. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

First general to command South Dakota MEB

By Sgt. Theanne Tangen
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

SIOUX FALLS – Brigadier General Theodore D. Johnson of Rapid City, assumed command of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) from Col. Jeffery Marlette of Lowry, on Sunday, April 5, during a change of command ceremony at the Sioux Falls armory.

Johnson is the first South Dakota Army National Guard general to take command of a unit like the MEB, a position that was historically filled by a colonel. Due to the change in rank structure, complexity and diversity of the position, and new guidance from Army National Guard leadership; Johnson's wartime mission will be challenging.

Johnson has held numerous leadership positions over his distinguished career that makes him the right person to command the MEB. He currently serves as the senior coordinating staff officer for both the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard.

Johnson assists in preparing more than 4,500 Soldiers and Airmen to respond in times of state or national emergencies. Johnson's past leadership experiences and his current job as the director of the Joint Staff will allow him to command both active duty and National Guard troops while in potentially austere conditions.

The mission of the 196th MEB is to enable, enhance and protect the freedom of operational and tactical actions of the supported maneuver/combat force and mitigate effects of hostile actions in a theater of war. The MEB Soldiers train in a variety of jobs including engineering, transportation and artillery.

"There are a variety of sections that fall under the 196th, and training is a challenge," said former commander Col. Jeffery Marlette. "The tasks are demanding, but it's what we do and it's why we serve. I'm going to miss it. It's hard to give it up."

The 196th MEB has a long and diverse history. The brigade initially formed in 1897 and went through many adaptations to accommodate the needs of the modern Army. Its most recent change occurred in 2007 as part of the Army wide transformation. Prior to that, the 196th MEB was known as the 147th Field Artillery Brigade and deployed as a part of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.



Maj. Gen. Steven R. Doohen, the adjutant general for the South Dakota National Guard (middle left), hands the flag of the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade to Brig. Gen. Theodore D. Johnson (middle right), signifying the transfer of command from Col. Jeffery Marlette (left), as he and Command Sgt. Maj. Paul Kurle observe during the change of command ceremony held on Sunday, April 5, at the Sioux Falls armory. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

Within the next year, the 196th MEB will prepare for a deployment to Afghanistan. "Preparing for mobilization is always a challenge for commanders and their staff to get Soldiers ready," said Marlette. "I have tremendous confidence and no doubt that Brig. Gen. Johnson will do a wonderful job here."

The 196th MEB currently consists of the headquarters element that provides command and control for three battalions: 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, 153rd Engineer Battalion, and the 139th Brigade Support Battalion—along with 13 supporting units and 18 detachments—totaling about 2,000 Soldiers

in 27 communities throughout the state.

"My first task will be to get to know the Soldiers and their families. It's one of my priorities," said Brig. Gen. Johnson. "Col. Marlette did a great job putting this team together and I'm looking forward to continuing the progress."

The MEB's wartime mission will provide functional support to brigade combat teams and other support brigades throughout Afghanistan. Johnson could command more than 3,000 active duty and reserve component Soldiers, while exercising command and control over a diverse tactical combat force.



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Force Support Squadron merges organizations

By Lt. Col. Tami Mielke
114th Fighter Wing

The stand-up of the 114th Force Support Squadron (FSS) merged personnel and services into one squadron effective April 1. FSS is part of a program action decision approved by the Chief of Staff of the Air Force as a total force initiative. This new organization streamlines processes, maximizes support to members and families, and improves operational efficiency associated with maintaining two separate organizations.

The new FSS combines: Force Development Flight, Manpower and Personnel Flight, Airman and Family Services Flight, Sustainment Services Flight, and Recruiting & Retention.

The Air Force looked for opportunities to join similar entities and functions which was one of the driving forces behind the merger. A primary example is a casualty situation. Casualty Affairs, Mortuary Affairs and the Family Liaison Officer programs worked closely, but fell under different organizations and commanders. Each cares for the families of fallen Airmen and will now be organized as one team. This merger also helps streamline the way the Air Force provides services to Airmen and their families. When it comes to people programs, family support and quality of life there will be one organization that handles it all. Completion of this initiative Air Force wide is expected by 2010.

This squadron will provide cradle-to-grave support during an Airman's entire career from the time of enlistment through retirement and beyond. Whether it involves feeding, lodging, training and developing, promoting, deploying members and caring for their families, to retiring the member or providing burial entitlements, this squadron's focus is to take care of people.

Enlisted Airmen AFSCs will not change below the superintendent level, however officer career fields will change dramatically as Personnel and Manpower and Services AFSCs are combined into a new career field. The officers and superintendents will need to fully understand the full range and spectrum of all functions within the FSS. As we embark on this new transformation one thing will remain constant; providing outstanding support to commanders, members and families from the front line to the home front.



Col. Steven C. Warren, 114th Mission Support Group commander, hands Lt. Col. Tami Mielke, 114th Force Support Squadron Commander, the new 114th FSS flag during the stand up ceremony at Joe Foss Field on May 3. (Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Christopher Stewart)

Miss Mitchell B-25 Bomber

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Fighter pilot finds new profession

Lt. Col. Clark Hunstad, 114th Fighter Wing pilot, South Dakota Air National Guard, poses next to a F-16 Fighting Falcon at Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls.
(Photo by Jesse Ekeren)

From University of Minnesota Magazine

When third-year dental student Clark Hunstad was a cadet at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, being a dentist was the farthest thing from his mind. He was a parachute instructor and jumpmaster on the Academy's "Wings of Blue" parachute demonstration team and made more than 620 free-fall jumps. He graduated from USAFA with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1990 and his sights were set on flying jets.

He went to pilot training school and flew F-16s for the Air Force. During his active duty Air Force career, he received a master's degree in Aeronautical Science from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. He was also an F-16 instructor pilot and a flight commander in an operational fighter squadron. Currently, he has more than 2,400 flight hours in the F-16.

During his tour of duty, he was stationed in Oklahoma, Utah, Arizona, Texas, and finally, South Korea. There, he became friends with a fellow fighter pilot, Nate Graber, who like Hunstad, hails from South Dakota.

"His father is a dentist and he suggested I look him up when I went back," says Hunstad. At the time, that just seemed like a passing conversation.

By 2000, Hunstad's active duty Air Force commitment was up, and he was ready to move on to a mostly civilian life. Returning to South Dakota with his wife Roxanne and two children, Hunstad joined the South Dakota Air National Guard, again flying F-16s. As so many Air Force pilots do, he also found a full-time job in commercial aviation, flying B-727s for a major carrier based in Chicago.

"But my timing wasn't the best," he said. The events of Sept. 11, 2001, dealt a severe blow to the travel industry, and airlines in particular, ending Hunstad's short career as a commercial pilot. He found a temporary full-time job with his National Guard fighter squadron, which at that time had plenty for him to do. "We got real busy after Sept. 11," he says. Soon after that, Roxanne, who was a travel agent, returned to school to become a dental hygienist.

This was the perfect time to contemplate his next career move and that process moved forward every time he visited his new dentist, Denny Graber. Hunstad had contacted the Sioux Falls dentist and father of his flying buddy in South Korea. "I noticed that he had pictures of jets on the wall," says Hunstad. He and Graber, as it turned out, had a lot in common.

Graber had flown F-100s and F-4s, which he calls "hot rod jets," in the South Dakota Air National Guard. Eventually, talk turned from jets to dentistry. Graber remembers, "I knew Clark was thinking about his next career. Each time he visited the dental office, I could see the wheels turning." Hunstad said, "I remember those talks and thinking that dentistry sounded like a neat thing and wondered how Denny made the transition into the profession."

Graber shared his enthusiasm for both flying and dentistry. "Clark had gone to the Academy, so I knew he could handle dental school," says Graber. "The Academy is challenging. For example, they give you more to do than you have time for and they make you prioritize." His encouragement proved to be the tipping point for Hunstad's new career choice.

Now a lieutenant colonel in the South Dakota Air National Guard, Hunstad still flies whenever he has a break from school. So, while many students hit the beach, he spends his spring breaks at places such as Langley Air Force Base, Virginia. "I love flying," he says, "so it's fun to be able to keep up those skills while serving in the Air Guard."



THE FIGHTING EDGE

Soldiers conduct hand-to-hand combat training

Story and photos by Capt. Anthony Deiss
Public Affairs Specialist

FORT MEADE – Sometimes the only weapon a Soldier may have on the battlefield is his or her own two fists, and the only advantage they may have in a life-or-death struggle with the enemy is the hand-to-hand combat training they receive.

Instructors at the South Dakota Army National Guard's 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) are giving Soldiers that fighting edge with its Modern Army Combatives Program (MACP) held March 9-13 at Fort Meade.

"In combat, it's not about who can win a fight, but who can survive long enough for their buddy to show up with additional support," said Maj. Randall Griebel, the lead instructor for the MACP.

The MACP is designed to train Soldiers in close-quarters combat and prepare them to defeat an enemy in hand-to-hand combat. Soldiers learn fighting techniques to help them survive a situation where using a weapon is no longer an option.

"We are learning how to defend ourselves without the use of a weapon," said Capt. Shannon Machmiller, a civil affairs officer with the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade in Sioux Falls. "They are teaching us to become more effective warriors."

Spc. Tyler Sieh (right), a truck driver with the 740th Transportation Company in Milbank, prepares to 'close the distance' between himself and his opponent, during training for the Modern Army Combatives Program held at the 196th Regiment, Regional Training Institute on March 12, at Fort Meade.

The MACP has been offered as part of the curriculum at the 196th Regiment (RTI) since the spring of 2007. The program offers Army National Guard Soldiers from across the country the opportunity to train on different fighting styles and become certified to teach these techniques to other Soldiers.

The Army's MACP originally began in 1995 when the commander of the 2nd Ranger Battalion ordered a re-invigoration of the combatives training after realizing the traditional combatives training methodologies didn't reflect the realities of the modern training environment or the modern battlefield.

"The Army's original fighting program had no real foundation or curriculum for training Soldiers. Iraq and Afghanistan began to show what Soldiers really need to learn to fight and survive," said Griebel. "The result was the development of the Modern Army Combatives Program. This training lays the foundation for any hand-to-hand combat Soldiers may find themselves conducting on the battlefield."

The program has four different levels of combat fighting styles; however, the RTI only teaches and certifies Soldiers to become level one and two instructors.

"This is a train-the-trainer program," said Griebel. "We expect these Soldiers to take these techniques back to their units and train other Soldiers."

Training begins with ground grappling techniques from Brazilian Jujitsu and progresses through throws and take-downs from wrestling and Judo. Soldiers learn progressive moves that are combined into drills, where two opponents spar with one another, providing more realistic training.

"We are learning a lot of moves," said Machmiller. "It's very intense training."

"The training begins with ground grappling because it is easier to teach and learn," said Griebel. "We want Soldiers to learn quickly and apply the techniques effectively."

Soldiers at this level-one program learn basic moves such as closing the distance, achieving the clinch and how to gain a dominant body position said Griebel. The idea is to get their body in a position to inflict punches and apply a choke or a submission move.

Although Soldiers don't actually throw punches at each other, the chokes and submission moves learned are real – allowing Soldiers to push each other to the brink of

pain without inflicting any serious harm.

Griebel says the course also lays the foundation for advanced, follow-on training.

To become level three and four certified, Army National Guard Soldiers must receive training from the active Army at Fort Benning, Ga. Levels three and four teach the stand-up fighting skills of boxing and Muay Thai and

"In combat, it's not about who can win a fight, but who can survive long enough for their buddy to show up with additional support,"

Maj. Randall Griebel
MCAP Lead Instructor

the weapons fighting skills of Kali and western martial arts.

The central theme of all the techniques in

the MACP is the idea that Soldiers practice them against a fully resistant opponent.

"This is realistic training," said Spc. Tyler Sieh, a truck driver with the 740th Transportation Company in Millbank. "In the beginning, I was kind of flailing around with little coordination or control over my opponent. By the end, I actually had moves I could apply to defeat them."

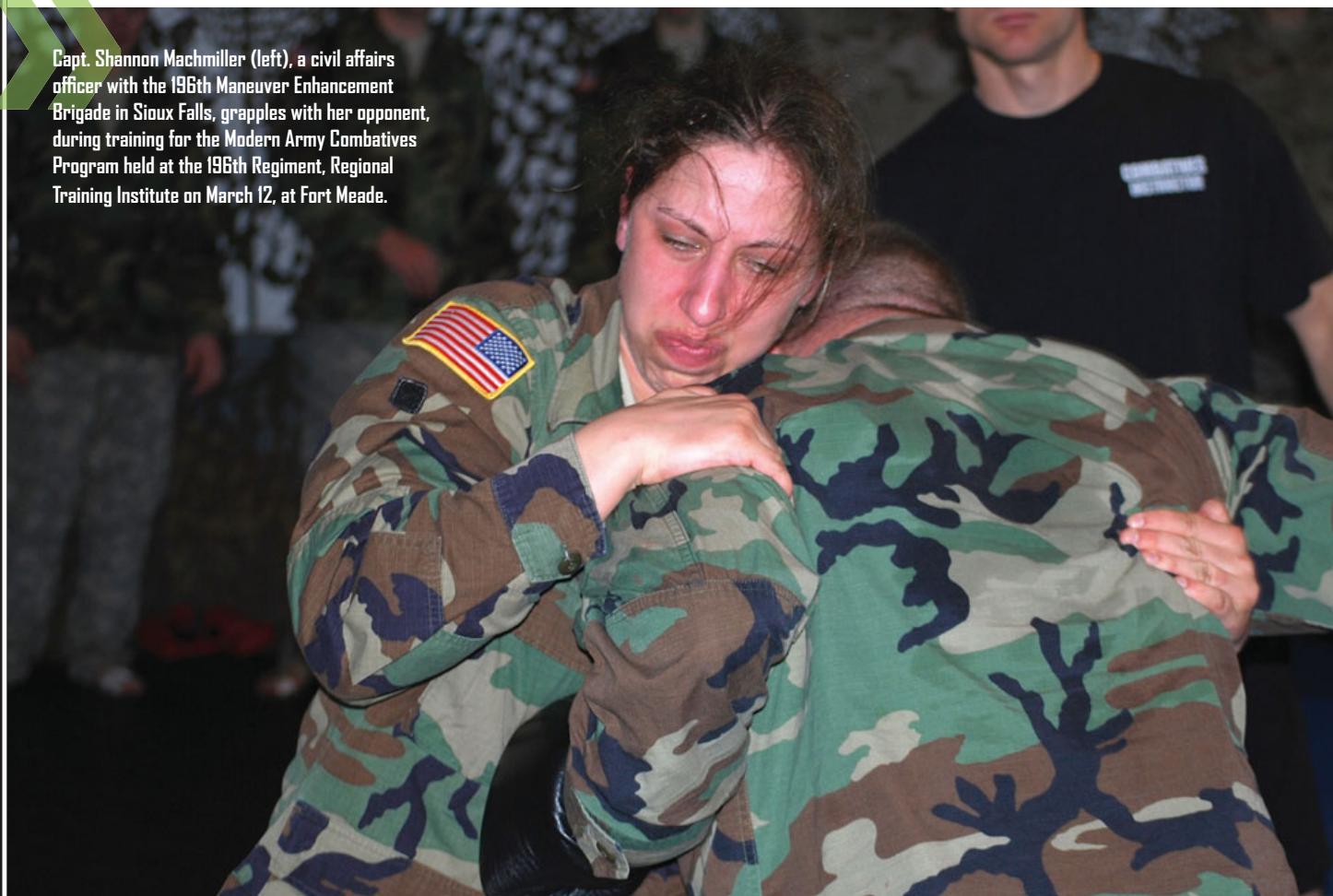
"As soon as I get back to my unit, I hope to start having classes," continued Sieh, a student at South Dakota State University in Brookings. "Our unit shares the armory with the high school, and since they have wrestling pads, it will be an ideal surface to use for training."

Capt. Machmiller, a police officer with the Brookings Police Department, said she can see value in training not only Soldiers within her unit, but also other police officers in her civilian occupation.

"We don't get a lot of ground fighting training for my job," said Machmiller. "If I do get into a scuffle with a person – I can hold my own until another officer arrives."

"This training is great," said Sieh. "If I ever find myself in a life-or-death situation I now feel more confident in handling the situation."

Capt. Shannon Machmiller (left), a civil affairs officer with the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade in Sioux Falls, grapples with her opponent, during training for the Modern Army Combatives Program held at the 196th Regiment, Regional Training Institute on March 12, at Fort Meade.



Exploding ordinance, detecting improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and clearing buildings of enemy insurgents is common place for combat engineers from the 211th Engineer Company (Sapper), South Dakota Army National Guard.

More than 100 members from the Madison and De Smet units are fine tuning these skills as they prepare to deploy for war in September in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Known as Sappers, the Soldiers of the 211th are among the most elite engineers of the U.S. military – able to perform a variety of combat engineering missions such as placing or clearing minefields, demolitions, field defenses, as well as other hazardous duties.

“The Sapper unit is expected to operate as infantry in addition to our combat engineer special skills,” said Capt. Heath Abraham, unit commander.

“Sapper companies also train for route clearance and urban operations; two key training tasks that distinguish the Sapper company from other engineer companies.”

The main mission for the 211th in Afghanistan will be the clearing of IEDs along movement and supply routes; however the field training exercise (FTX) the unit conducted from April 2-5, focused on the infantry type missions the unit may be expected to perform in theater.

“The FTX focused on those potential missions outside route clearance such as mobile operations on urban terrain, entry control points and base defense,” said Abraham.

Another skill many 211th engineers possess is working with C4 explosives; giving Sappers a unique ability in their route clearance mission, allowing them to provide limited neutralization of IEDs.

“If an IED is found it is secured and then it can be detonated to destroy the threat,” said Sgt. 1st Class Mark Ferber, readiness noncommissioned officer (NCO).

Ferber also says the unit’s experience with C4 gives it the ability to take on missions to detonate found weapons caches – adding to the unit’s versatility.

In April, 30 Soldiers also attended a two-week school at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., to learn how to operate route clearance vehicles and conduct missions with them.

“Route clearance is inherently dangerous, but the military has tried to mitigate the hazards as much as possible with the development of route clearance equipment,” said Abraham.

Abraham said the unit will be using specially designed vehicles that are built to survive a bomb blast and protect the troops inside.

“With the safe design of the equipment,

CLICK... CLICK... BOOM!

Combat engineers prepare for explosive mission

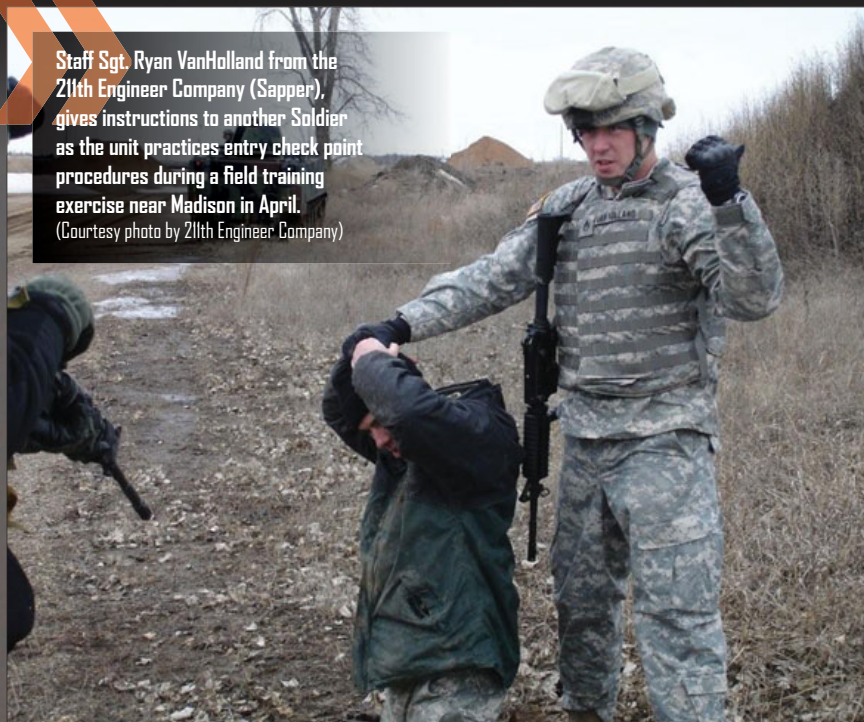
By Capt. Anthony Deiss
Public Affairs Specialist

Spc. James Wait, a combat engineer with the 211th Engineer Company (Sapper), pops a M81 fuse igniter to initiate a C4 fuse during the 2008 Golden Coyote exercise in the Black Hills. After ignition, Soldiers have approximately five minutes to get from the blast area to a safe zone, a distance of 700 meters. (Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Joshua Seybert)



Staff Sgt. Ryan VanHolland from the 211th Engineer Company (Sapper), gives instructions to another Soldier as the unit practices entry check point procedures during a field training exercise near Madison in April.

(Courtesy photo by 211th Engineer Company)



A Soldier from the 211th Engineer Company (Sapper) of Madison and De Smet stands guard at a gate atop a M114 Armored Personnel Carrier, as the unit practices entry check points procedures during a field training exercise near Madison in April.

(Courtesy photo by 211th Engineer Company)

Soldiers from the 211th Engineer Company (Sapper) approach a vehicle during entry check point training at a field training exercise near Madison in April.

(Courtesy photo by 211th Engineer Company)



the quality of training we have been able to get thus far in our preparation, and the quality of Soldiers here in the 211th, I am confident we will be successful in our deployment," added Abraham.

The company is made up of three Sapper platoons and will support a brigade combat team capable of detection and limited neutralization along routes and within areas of support to enable force application, focused logistics and protection.

With all the training and preparation the 211th is making, Abraham says the unit still has many challenges that lie ahead.

"A challenge engineers always face is the variety of missions they are tasked with," said Abraham. "Engineers are expected to be able to do a multitude of missions and operations outside the scope of their general mission, ours being route clearance."

"The terrain in Afghanistan will also pose a very real challenge to us with our route clearance mission," continued Abraham. "Those of us with route clearance experience, gained in our first deployment to Iraq, will be limited to how much of that experience we can actually apply since we are going from a country with a basically flat and open terrain to a country whose terrain varies quite drastically."

Nearly half the unit has deployment experience, with most unit members having deployed to Iraq with the 153rd Engineer Battalion from December of 2003 to February 2005. This wealth of experience will come from the unit's noncommissioned officer ranks, and will help the unit to traverse the differences between Iraq and Afghanistan.

"We have excellent NCOs within the 211th," said Abraham. "Nearly all our veterans are from the Iraq war and know first hand the responsibility and duties of the NCO while deployed."

With all the challenges and unknowns that face this deploying unit, these Soldiers are keeping a positive attitude toward completing the mission.

"Excitement is the general feeling of these Soldiers as they prepare for deployment," said Abraham. "The 211th is a very young unit and they joined the National Guard knowing they would probably be called on to serve their state and country overseas in a combat zone."

South Dakota NATIONAL GUARD

YEAR OF THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER

TODAY'S NCO - NCO VISION

Today's NCO is an innovative, competent and professional enlisted leader grounded in heritage, values and tradition. Today's NCO embodies the Warrior Ethos, champions continuous learning and is capable of leading, training and motivating diverse teams. Today's NCO is an adaptive leader who is proficient in joint and combined expeditionary warfare; continuous-simultaneous full-spectrum operations; and is culturally astute and resilient to uncertain and ambiguous environments.

Today's NCO must lead by example, train from experience, maintain and enforce standards, take care of Soldiers and adapt to a changing world.

Today's NCOs are accomplished military professionals who have combined civilian and military educational opportunities to become the Army's preeminent body of leadership. NCOs are known as the "backbone of the American Army" and are the standard keepers for the military - training, leading, coaching and mentoring Soldiers. They are an invaluable and essential part of the Army.

The NCO Corps provides invaluable service and sacrifice in the line of duty. They continually prove their dedication and their willingness to make great sacrifices on behalf of our Nation.



HISTORY - THE UNITED STATES ARMY

Army NCOs trace their roots to the beginnings of American military history. They helped Washington preserve the Continental Army at Valley Forge, stood with Winfield Scott at Chippewa, and directed Zachary Taylor's guns at Palo Alto. They carried the Nation's colors at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, fought yellow fever in Cuba with Walter Reed, and led Pershing's and Eisenhower's legions into Germany. Whether helping local populations build a village in Southeast Asia or teaching young Iraqi Soldiers to conduct operations, American NCOs are leading from the front and are some of our nation's best ambassadors. Over time, through various changes in tactics and technology, Army NCOs have emerged as the Army's small-unit leaders, trainers' and guardians of standards.

Our NCO Corps is unrivaled by any Army in the world, envied by our allies and feared by our enemies. Throughout the Army's history, the NCO has been a pivotal figure, but never more so than today with our full spectrum of operations - tank-on-tank fighting as during the invasion of Iraq; the guerrilla/insurgency war ongoing in Iraq and Afghanistan; and peacekeeping operations in Kosovo. As NCOs embrace their ever-growing responsibilities in the 21st Century, this volume will help them remember how they came to be the "backbone of our Army."

Kenneth O. Preston
Sergeant Major of the Army

INITIATIVES SUMMARY

The purpose of the Year of the NCO initiative is to enhance NCO's education, fitness, leadership development and pride in service through the implementation of programs and policies that support the sustainment and growth of the NCO Corps. The Year of the NCO recognizes the leadership, professionalism, commitment, courage and dedication of the Noncommissioned Officer Corps and will better inform and educate Congress, government institutions, and the American people of the roles, responsibilities, and the quality of service of our NCO Corps. The NCO Corps is a national treasure.

FITNESS

The fitness initiatives strive to enhance the fitness levels of the NCO Corps through superior mental and physical fitness programs; improved education on health and fitness; expanded health screenings to increase personal health factor awareness; and instilling a comprehensive fitness culture. The fitness initiatives acknowledge the need to sustain and improve both the physical and mental fitness of our NCOs. The Army will accomplish this by implementing Phase 1 of the Master Fitness Course to be delivered through Structured Self Development. Phases 2 and 3 will be implemented in 2009.

Also in development is a health screening program at each of our institutions and the first of five phases of mental health courses - delivered through structured self development. These initiatives combine to make up a comprehensive and integrated physical and mental health strategy for the NCO Corps.

EDUCATION

Under the Education Initiatives, the Army sustains and enhances the Noncommissioned Officer Corps through increased access to improved military and civilian education programs and a structured development process. The education category contains initiatives that support the enhancement, growth and sustainment of NCO capabilities. It includes both current and proposed initiatives. Current development initiatives will be accelerated in 2009 and new development initiatives executed that bring the Noncommissioned Officer Education System back in balance in support of the Chief of Staff of the Army's initiatives.

Current education and development initiatives to be implemented in 2009 include:

- The Army Career Tracker pilot
- Phase 1 implementation of Structured and Guided Self Development
- Launch of the Warrior University Web site, which includes College of the American Soldier
- Transformation of NCO Education System

Two new education initiatives to be implemented in 2009 include expanding the number of online colleges nested under Service members Opportunity Colleges Army Degrees (SOCAD), and digitizing the Learning Resource Center at the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy.

LEADERSHIP

The leadership category combines initiatives that both acknowledge NCOs' leadership value to our Army and enhance the NCO Corps' leadership capabilities. Among other initiatives, the Army will accelerate the implementation of the Senior NCO Management and Utilization System. We will fully implement the NCO Leadership Skills Inventory, matching NCO capabilities with assignments to special duties. The NCO Congressional Fellowship Program will be implemented that enhances NCO development and will, for the first time, assign two sergeants major to the House and Senate Armed Services Committee as official Army Legislative Liaison Officers.

PRIDE IN SERVICE

The pride in service category acknowledges the value of NCO leadership and service to our Nation by increasing public knowledge of NCO roles and responsibilities and showcasing contributions of the NCO Corps throughout the history of the Army. This category focuses on initiatives that are potentially impactful to the NCO Corps. "The Long Hard Road," a compilation of NCO experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, will be updated and re-published. Also undertaken this year will be the launch of The Year of the NCO Web site, the increased publication of the NCO Journal, the renovation the NCO Museum at Fort Bliss and the production of "Army Strong" television commercials focusing on NCO Leadership.

1ST CLASS ACT

NCO upholds Corps values

By Capt. Anthony Deiss
Public Affairs Specialist

To hold the position of state command sergeant major is just one goal Sgt. 1st Class Eric Kinslow is trying to achieve between coaching softball games and coordinating charity Poker Runs for disabled veterans.

Ask Kinslow about all the organizations he is associated with, and you may see why he would be a good candidate for the highest ranking enlisted position in the South Dakota Army National Guard (SDARNG).

However, good luck finding the readiness noncommissioned officer (NCO) for the 115th Network Support Company in Brookings. If he's not attending a Mason's or Yelduz Shrine meeting you may find him at the local American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars building. And if he's not there he may be volunteering with the 4H Club or being a Boys State counselor.

Kinslow's willingness to help others and to give of his free time is not surprising. It's a common value shared within an institution of which his is a part: the Noncommissioned Officer Corps.

"Being an NCO means leading by example and mentoring others," said Kinslow, 34. "It means going an extra mile to assist a Soldier in whatever they need."

A 17 year veteran of the SDARNG, Kinslow has served with units like Detachment 1, 740th Transportation Company of Aberdeen, and the 727th Transportation Company of Brookings. It was in these units where Kinslow learned the values of what it meant to be an NCO.

"I have been fortunate to have had some of the best NCOs to guide me through what to do, and what not to do, early in my career," said the recent recipient of the Brookings County NCO of the Year Award. "NCOs like Master Sgt. Jack Deblonk, Master Sgt. Lona Kuecker (Ret.) and Staff Sgt. Ron Mead (Ret.), taught me what it meant to take care of Soldiers."



Sgt. 1st Class Eric Kinslow, from the 115th Network Support Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, kneels next to his support network; his family, (from left to right) daughter Sadie, wife Laura and son Toby. (Photo courtesy Sgt. 1st Class Eric Kinslow)

Kinslow takes pride in knowing that when he started working full-time for the SDARNG in the 727th Transportation Company, every one of his first sergeants became a command sergeant major.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Robert Foster taught me to always take care of the Soldiers and they will take care of you," said Kinslow. "Command Sgt. Maj. James Hoekman instilled a work smarter, not harder approach to training as well as train to standard, not to time."

"Sgt. Maj. Bryan Debaere was also very influential in my career, making me an expert

on NCOERs, and making sure I was cross-trained in other jobs, which worked out well," he added.

One NCO who influenced Kinslow to excel held the job he aspires for; State Command Sergeant Major, held by Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Bekaert. "If I can do it-anybody can do it," Bekaert always told Kinslow. "He has always inspired me to go for what I want and not to give up until I get it."

It was these role models that made Kinslow strive to become an NCO rooted in excellence.

"I had excellent role models that have

Sgt. 1st Class Eric Kinslow, from the 115th Network Support Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, volunteers, along with other unit members, to help install new playground equipment for the Camelot Intermediate School in Brookings last July. (Photo courtesy Sgt. 1st Class Eric Kinslow)



inspired me throughout my career and now it is my turn to inspire those around me to continue the tradition of this great organization,” said Kinslow.

With becoming an NCO, Kinslow knew the position would mean upholding many responsibilities and facing challenges.

“Mentorship is one of the most important responsibilities. As a senior NCO, you need to groom the junior enlisted and NCOs to take your place, and you need to mentor junior officers, so the team will be successful in every mission assigned,” said Kinslow. “The biggest challenge is knowing when it’s time to take care of yourself, because you are always so busy taking care of Soldiers and assisting your officers, to make them great leaders.”

But Kinslow, a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, knows with big challenges comes big rewards. “The biggest rewards come when you see the fruits of your labor, achieve success and others thank you for getting them there.”

Kinslow also says it helps to have a strong support network at home.

Originally from Frederick, Kinslow resides in Brookings with his wife Laura, and two children Sadie and Toby; who he says have been a major influence on supporting his career.

“My family has endured a lot, more than I probably know, and anyone who has been in this business understands that when [Soldiers] are away Murphy’s Law takes over at home,” he said. “They have always been there for me and continue to support me.”

For Kinslow, the family has a key role in the support they give to their Soldier.

“The family is the first leg of the three legged stool and without them the Soldier will topple over,” said Kinslow. “My wife was even in the Guard for a while and worked at my battalion where she inspected my records, so she has supported me in more ways than one.”

“The National Guard has afforded me countless opportunities that I wouldn’t normally have had,” continued Kinslow. “It has given me an education, wife and family, and has provided me with an opportunity to travel all over the U.S. and numerous foreign countries.”

Kinslow says he hopes to pass along to younger, upcoming NCOs the same things he’s learned from his mentors. To take care of Soldiers, do what is right, always be honest and learn all you can.

“The biggest impact I hope to make on Soldiers is that I made a difference in their life,” said Kinslow. “And we are both better for knowing one another.”



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UNITED CONCORDIA

RIVER RISING

Guardsmen assist both South Dakota and North Dakota in flood operations

By Capt. Anthony Deiss
Public Affairs Specialist

The South Dakota Army National Guard (SDARNG) placed more than 350 personnel on state active duty March 27, to assist in flood operations conducted by emergency management agencies in North and South Dakota in response to massive flooding along rivers in the eastern region of both states. Several winter storms produced large amounts of rain and snow causing rivers to rise well above their banks, threatening many homes and businesses.

South Dakota experienced moderate flooding along Moccasin Creek, where the James and Elm Rivers meet near Columbia. North Dakota experienced historic flooding conditions along the Red River near Fargo, with waters rising to nearly 43 feet – more than 22 feet above flood stage – breaking the previous 112 year record set in 1897. Guard personnel throughout South Dakota were called up to support the flood efforts on both fronts.

Eighteen Soldiers helped conduct sandbagging operations along Moccasin Creek to help protect power transformers and electrical equipment. The members were also standing by in the Aberdeen area to provide additional support to local emergency management agencies if needed. Support for this flood effort came from units within the 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, including Alpha Battery of Aberdeen, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery of Watertown, the Forward Support Company of Webster, and units from the 200th Engineer Company in Pierre and Chamberlain.

Three Humvees, 11 heavy expanded mobility tactical trucks (with fuel, wrecker and cargo transport capabilities), four bridge boat transporter trucks and two boats were used in the operation.

The main effort for the SDARNG went to support North Dakota's flooding emergency. More than 2,000 North Dakota National Guard personnel were called up to help support their state, along with 2,400 Guardsmen from, Montana, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Missouri and South Dakota through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC). The SDARNG was tasked to support the massive flood operation with both equipment and more than 340 personnel to keep the Red River at bay.

Units from Company A, 139th Brigade Support Battalion of Redfield, Watertown and Miller, the Headquarters Support Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion and 153rd Forward Support Company of Huron and Parkston, the 1742nd Transportation Company of Sioux Falls and Flandreau, the 842nd Engineer Company of Spearfish and Company C, 1st Battalion, 189th Aviation Regiment provided personnel and equipment such as Humvees, 5-ton dump trucks, M915 tractors and trailers, palletized load system trucks, fuel trucks and wreckers and UH-60 helicopters, all in an effort to fill sandbags, transport personnel and sandbagging materials and to patrol dikes.

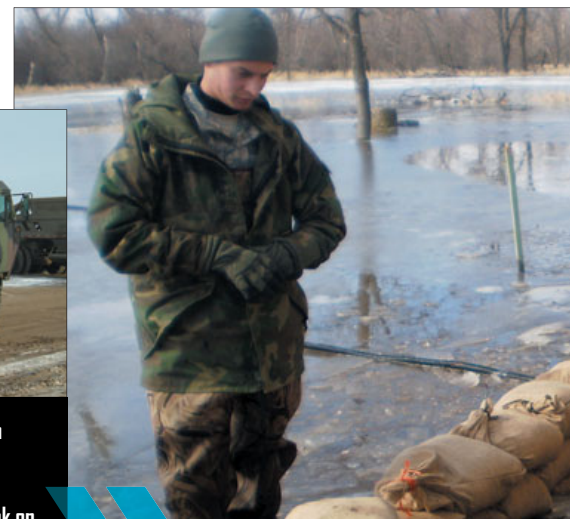
All SDARNG personnel from both operations were released from duty after a week of support, and were recognized by the state of North Dakota, the city of Fargo and the NDNG for their service.



Soldiers from Battery A, 1st Battalion 147th Field Artillery of the South Dakota Army National Guard, perform sandbagging operations on Thursday, March 26 along Brown County Highway 14 to help stop flood waters from flowing into Moccasin Creek. (Courtesy photo by Battery A, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery)



A Heavy Expanded Mobile Tactical Truck from the South Dakota Army National Guard, is loaded with sandbags for emplacement around transformers and electrical equipment in the Aberdeen area around Moccasin Creek on Thursday, March 26. (Courtesy photo by Battery A, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery)



Spc. Bryan Becker (left) observes Spc. Tony Lunzman, both from Aberdeen's Battery A, 1st Battalion 147th Field Artillery, South Dakota Army National Guard, dump buckets of water to keep a home from flooding on Saturday, March 28, in the Tocoma Park area adjacent to the James River. (Courtesy photo by 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery)

Soldiers and volunteers unite for flood

By Pfc. Jacqueline Fitzgerald
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Pfc. Jess Krantz (left) and Spc. Eric Peters of Watertown, and members of the 139th Brigade Support Battalion, SDARNG patrol the dike to check the water level and look for weak spots on Saturday, March 28. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

FARGO, N.D. – Flooding levels on the Red River remained high on Monday, March 30, but residents put their minds to rest knowing that National Guard members were constantly checking the dikes for leaks and weak points. More than 340 members from the South Dakota Army National Guard (SDARNG) assisted with mitigation efforts.

Residents in Fargo, like Jim Burdine, organized community watch systems, and worked side-by-side with National Guardsmen to ensure authorities were notified of problems along the dikes. Unlike the flood of 1997, the

2009 flood brought about a “game plan” and individuals like Burdine took it upon himself to take action.

“We had meetings to update those in our neighborhood and over 1,000 meals had been served from our garage,” said Burdine. “People lost sleep and having Guardsmen here to give us a little breather really helped.”

Members of the 153rd Engineer Battalion, Huron, rotated through 12-hour shifts at check points throughout town. Their mission was to alert authorities if a leak or breach occurred on the dike as well as aid officials in reminding

residents that homes near the dike were restricted after daylight hours.

“There was always someone watching the dikes and that helped put people at ease,” said Pfc. Jess Krantz of Watertown, member of the 139th Brigade Support Battalion. “We had an important job that gave people a chance to rest, and it makes us feel good to make up the difference.”

Thousands of volunteers poured into the Fargodome that Sunday morning to fill sandbags to build a surplus for emergency requirements. Sandbagging was closed down over the weekend due to overwhelming support and production throughout the week. More than 3.5 million sandbags were filled to hold back flood waters from the Red River.

“If we win this thing it’s going to be because of the folks working here,” said D.J. Guerrero a volunteer worker at the Fargodome. “I call them angels. The angels are going to win this for us.”

Guerrero is a retired Marine and has been actively involved in the community. He had worked at the Fargodome since the city designated it for sandbagging operations earlier that week. He greeted workers as they entered the bagging area and helped direct them to the right areas.

Guerrero appreciated the National Guard presence in Fargo. “It’s great to see the uniformed Guardsmen in the crowd. That let’s old men like me know we’re covered and don’t have to worry about being out on the dikes. We couldn’t have asked for better replacements.”



Members of Detachment 1, 3662 Component Repair Company, North Dakota Army National Guard help fill sandbags at the Fargodome in effort to battle the flood on Sunday, March 29. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

Defending a school from floodwaters

By Sgt. Theanne Tangen and Pfc. Jacqueline Fitzgerald
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

FARGO, N.D. – Water from the Red River seeped past a water barrier at 1:15 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, March 29, and began filling the Oak Grove Lutheran School. Members from the South Dakota Army National Guard's 1742nd Transportation Company, North Dakota Army National Guard's 957th Multi-Role Bridge Company (MRBC), Army Corps of Engineers, Oak Grove faculty and local residents responded to the dike breach by pumping water from the school's courtyard and buildings to keep water from spreading throughout.

Guardsmen worked around the clock stacking sandbags, positioning pumps and barricading the other three buildings on campus to protect them from water damage. The success at Oak Grove can be credited to a team effort. After the 1997 flood, preparations were made that kept the recent influx of water and damage to a minimum.

"The kids at Oak Grove worked hard around the campus to defend against the rising water," said Becky Richards, mother of two Oak Grove students and resident of Morehead, Minn. "It's unfortunate the new flood wall didn't work as planned. My kids are shocked their efforts didn't win the fight (against the flood)."

During the flooding, men and women in

uniform walked the dikes, patrolling parts of town, and even directing traffic. "A lot of people were happy to see us," said Sgt. Matt Wells of Sioux Falls, and member of the 1742nd Transportation Company. "Kids were shaking our hands, and that's a really good feeling. We're all more than happy to be up there giving a helping hand, and it was really great to see how positive the people were."

UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters dropped "Sand bombs," two thousand pound bags of sand used to reduce gushing water from a breach in the dike, allowing time for authorities to take further action. This same advanced breach mitigation technique was used during Hurricane Katrina.

"We helped save a school that morning," added Wells. "We got to work with community members on this site and it went really well. Some were stressed, but everyone is really motivated to get in there and make a

difference."

Soldiers lined up to form chains to move countless numbers of sandbags for several hours around buildings and against the dike. Their goal was to reach the problem area in the wall. However, the distance between the dry dike and the hole in the flood wall was longer than officials expected. To speed up the process, Soldiers used motorized rafts to reach the leak.

The 957th MRBC used a boat to inspect a leak in the middle of the permanent dike. Once the problem spot was pin pointed, they started hauling sandbags on the boat to plug the hole. Units worked into the night and continue to stabilize and monitor the dike.

"It was great being up there helping the community protect buildings and seeing things get done. The people really came together to protect their homes and that's a great thing to see," said Pvt. Nicholas Vandekieft, Maurice, Iowa, 1742nd Transportation Company.

Pvt. Nicholas Vandekieft (left) of Maurice, Iowa, and Sgt. Matt Wells of Sioux Falls, both from the 1742nd Transportation Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, help toss sandbags with other North Dakota National Guard members in an effort to stop floodwater from entering Oak Grove Lutheran School in Fargo, N.D., on Sunday, March 29. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

Pvt. Nicholas Vandekieft of Maurice, Iowa (left), Sgt. Matt Nedved (center) and Pfc. Cody Hanson of Sioux Falls, all Soldiers from the 1742nd Transportation Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, toss sandbags to help stop flood water from entering Oak Grove Lutheran School in Fargo, N.D., on Sunday, March 29. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

JISCC opens lines of communication for N.D. in flood effort

By Sgt. 1st Class David Dodds

N.D. Army National Guard, 116th Public Affairs Detachment

GRAND FORKS, N.D. – A cross-border team of National Guard Soldiers used a new technology in the flood fight to cut through the communication fog that's hindered past civil emergency operations in the nation.

Two Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISCC) systems were deployed in North Dakota since overland and river flooding began to plague the entire state in late March. The systems, one from North Dakota and the other from South Dakota, allow civilian emergency responders to communicate seamlessly with each other as well as with military personnel on the ground.

It's the first time these Guard assets have been deployed in a "real world" emergency in either North Dakota or South Dakota. The portable system can be set up in about an hour almost anywhere.

"We were set up and ready, fully functional and all signals were good to go," said Warrant Officer Eric Nagel, with the North Dakota National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters, from Fargo, which saw some of the most severe flooding.

Nagel said the JISCC systems allowed National Guard dike patrollers in Fargo to use VHF handheld radios to keep in constant communication with their military command posts and with civilian first responders.

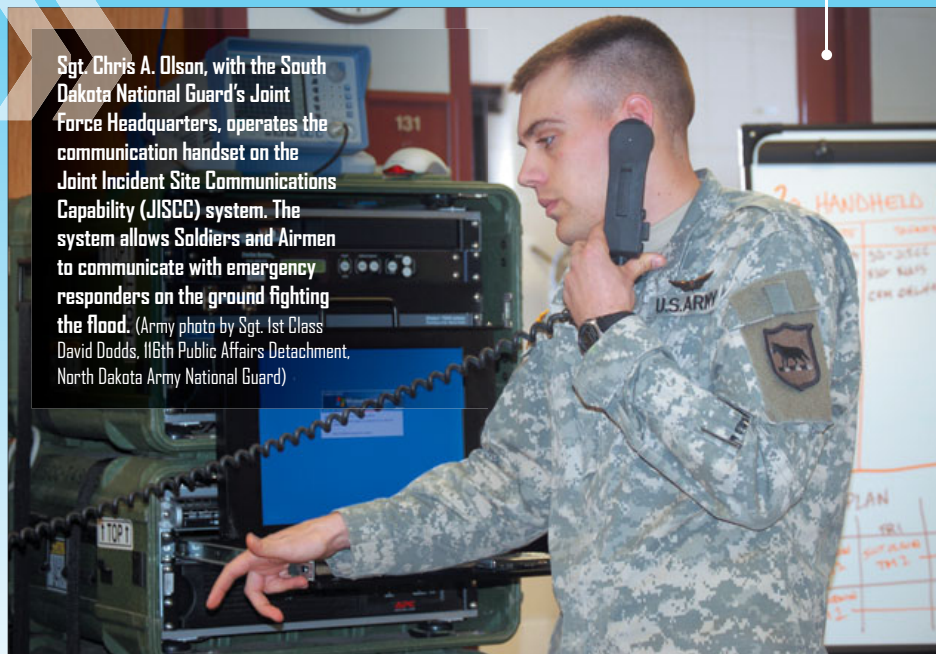
The JISCC system in Fargo also served as a backup to the Tactical Operations Center (TOC) there, in the case that the TOC's communication system went down. The Fargo TOC had been responsible for coordinating all flood-fighting missions in eastern North Dakota. In Grand Forks, about 70 miles to the north, down the swelling Red River, the South Dakota JISCC served as a contingency for the TOC there.

"It was nice that we had another entity with the same capabilities that we could count on as the flood fight moved up north," Nagel said.

The JISCC is part of the National Guard's response to communication problems during the emergency response to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and again after Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. In both cases, emergency responders were unable to effectively talk with each other as a result of incompatible communication systems.

JISCC provides voice, data, video and radio accessibility between local, state and federal agencies. The system is so flexible that a county sheriff on a cell phone can call up a military

Sgt. Chris A. Olson, with the South Dakota National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters, operates the communication handset on the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISCC) system. The system allows Soldiers and Airmen to communicate with emergency responders on the ground fighting the flood. (Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class David Dodds, 116th Public Affairs Detachment, North Dakota Army National Guard)



commander who is using SINCGARS (Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System), a common military radio.

During the past five years, the National Guard Bureau's Communication Directorate has issued more than 70 JISCC systems in 54 states, the District of Columbia and U.S. territories at about \$500,000 apiece.

Capt. Lew Weber, with the South Dakota National Guard's Joint Force Headquarters, said JISCC teams rely on local incident commanders to provide contact numbers, signals and frequencies for the area. He said the benefits of JISCC systems continue to grow as word spreads about their capabilities, especially among civilian agencies.

"The biggest challenge up to this point is that a lot of those people don't know these things exist," Weber said.

He said one JISCC system fits in the back of an 18-foot trailer. It includes a durable satellite dish, 20-foot by 20-foot tent, light tubes and generators, allowing it to be set up anywhere, from a hardened modern structure to the middle of nowhere.

Spc. Tyler Skoglund, Sioux Falls, one of nine South Dakota National Guard members who joined Weber in North Dakota flood-fighting operations, said it's been exhilarating to actually deploy the JISCC system in a non-training scenario.

"It was a great learning experience," he said. "I was excited from the moment I got the call to come up there. This is what I signed up to do."

Weber said the JISCC systems are equipped with multiple laptop computers, Internet capabilities and telephones for military personnel to use.

"And it's not just for the military and first responders," he said. "In the case of an emergency situation, we can provide these services to civilians, too."



Mission Complete

153rd helps keep Red River levees secure



153rd Engineer Battalion members Sgt. 1st Class Chris Schimke, of Huron, (left) Staff Sgt. Tom Pdzimak, of North Sioux City, (center) and Staff Sgt. Shaina Ballinger, of Chamberlain, look out over the flooded streets near Fargo City Hall from the top of a dike on Saturday, March 28. These Soldiers, along with leadership from the 153rd, went out on a recon a day earlier to become familiar with the dikes they were to be assigned to patrol through 12 hour shifts to report leaks or breaches. (Army photo by Sgt. Theanne Tangen)

Spc. John Hittle

Unit Public Affairs Representative
Headquarters Support Company, 153rd Engineer Battalion

HURON - With the activation chain starting at 2 a.m., parts of the 153rd Engineering Battalion were mobilized and moved out to Fargo, N.D., by 10 a.m. on March 27.

With the Red River expecting to crest at its highest level ever, North Dakota Governor John Hoven and North Dakota National Guard Adjutant General, Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk called South Dakota for help.

Capt. Jason Thomson, commander of the 153rd Headquarters Support Company, in Huron, said he doesn't know if an involuntary mobilization has ever been done by the 153rd Engineer Battalion for state active duty but this activation went off very smoothly.

"The alert roster was put into action," said Thomson. "The Soldiers were notified and reported on time which allowed the units to mobilize within 8 hours."

"I have to hand it to the full-time and [traditional] Guard members, for knowing their roles and following through on them," he added.

Through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact, and with North Dakota spread thin on National Guard members, the South Dakota contingent was activated to assist in any way possible. Within 24 hours upon arrival, the battalion was notified of their mission and on-line conducting security and breach watch of the Red River levee system.

"We assisted the Fargo City Engineer by acting as the first line of defense," said Thomson. "Protecting the citizens of Fargo - I consider that an honor."

The mission did not go unnoticed by the Fargo community. People from all walks of life opened their arms, homes and hearts to the troops. It did not matter if they were on the ground, in the air or at the command center; the outpouring of generosity and thanks was unforgettable.

"The hospitality and overwhelming support from the community of Fargo was remarkable," said Thomson. "These people are unbelievably strong willed."

People were opening their homes to the Soldiers, giving them food, hot beverages and snacks to help them get through the cold, wet nights.

One local resident brought out hot soup and could not thank the Soldiers enough for the peace, security and serenity they were providing the locals. She felt that more people were at ease because the Soldiers were out walking the levees, and they could sleep without fear of losing



Maj. Gen. David Sprynczynatyk, the adjutant general for the North Dakota National Guard, left, congratulates a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard for his efforts in fighting the Red River flood in Fargo, N.D. Sprynczynatyk gave thanks and presented 40 Soldiers with a commemorative coin. (DoD photo by Senior Master Sgt. David H. Lipp)

their property or lives if something did occur.

After about a week the battalion's mission was complete. The Soldiers knew that they had done their part but understood that this community had a long way to go before life would be normal again.

Prior to the departure of the South Dakota Soldiers, they had one last briefing to receive. According to a NDNG press release, Gov. Hoeven, Fargo City Mayor Dennis Walaker, and Maj. Gen. Sprynczynatyk wanted to speak with the troops.

"You in South Dakota are really good friends, people we can count on," Gov. Hoven told the three company formations from South Dakota. "I don't think any of us ever doubted that...and from all of us, we want to say thank you."

Sprynczynatyk presented commander's coins of appreciation to about 40 Soldiers and told all of them they would receive the Federal Humanitarian Service Medal and the State Emergency Service Ribbon.

"South Dakota responded within minutes, and I know some of you got the call in the middle of the night and you were at the armory by seven in the morning," Sprynczynatyk said, "That made a huge difference in our ability to fight the flood and prevent the loss of lives and property."

Fargo Deputy Mayor Dr. Tim Mahoney said, "One thing I've learned is you don't take knives to a gun fight and you don't fight floods without the National Guard."

ATTENTION RETIREES!



SOUTH DAKOTA

MILITARY RETIREES

Are you retired from the military and want to know what is happening in the South Dakota National Guard?

Visit us on the web and register at: www.sdmr.org and be kept current with the latest news and happenings.

If you do not have a computer please provide us with your **NAME/PHONE NUMBER & MAILING ADDRESS** and mail to:
PAD, 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, SD 57702-8186

SDMR conducts video teleconference meetings you can attend at these armories: Watertown, Brookings, Sioux Falls, Pierre, Huron, Mitchell, Fort Meade and Rapid City.

If you know of other military retirees, please tell them about our website, and video teleconference meetings in the armories listed above.

C/TVSDs are a veteran's best friend

Who is your County or Tribal Veterans Service Officer (C/TVSD)? If you don't know, you should. South Dakota statute mandates every county employ a Veterans Service Officer. These C/TVSDs are trained by the state Division of Veterans Affairs and charged with advocating on behalf of all veterans and their families to secure every benefit they have earned. There are many.

South Dakota pays a bonus up to \$500 for veterans who were residents of the state for at least six months prior to service and served at least thirty days after September 11, 2001. The bonus pays more for veterans who served in hostile areas. If you receive a bonus less than \$500 and then return to a hostile area, you are eligible for additional payments until the sum totals the \$500. You don't have to wait until separation to receive it. C/TVSDs have the application.

If your health suffers in any way as a result of active duty in the armed forces, federal law provides for disability payments to be paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs. This can be applied for while on active duty, a member of the National Guard or after discharge. Depending on circumstances, this process can be very streamlined or complicated. Either way, your C/TVSD stands ready to assist you.

Veterans struggling financially because of inability to work due to a disability (service-connected or not) or over the age of 65 can be eligible for a pension. Surviving spouses of veterans can also qualify for a small pension. Your C/TVSD can help you.

Education is paramount in a military career or in the civilian world. A true military mind strives for continuous improvement and education is a natural part of that process. Education benefits available to service members and veterans are many and diversified. Your C/TVSD will assist you in realizing an education utilizing all your benefits and the program best suited to your individual situation.

This is by no means a complete list of matters your C/TVSD can and will assist you with. That list includes any matter related to your status as a service member or veteran. You need to make it a point to meet your C/TVSD. You just might be surprised to learn you are eligible for a benefit you didn't know about. The Division of Veterans Affairs can tell you who your C/TVSD is; call (605) 773-3269!

Honor Flight takes off



World War II veteran and former U.S. Marine fighter pilot, Claude Hone, waits with other veterans to board the South Dakota Honor Flight. (Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Nancy Ausland)

By Master Sgt. Nancy Ausland
114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

In the early morning hours of May 1, the Sioux Falls airport was packed with some of the most prestigious South Dakotans alive today.

The inaugural flight of the South Dakota Honor Flight departed for Washington, D.C. with over 120 World War II veterans on board.

The trip is a charter direct to Washington, D.C. for a two-day visit to the World War II memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, and other sites honoring service men and women.

The program is free to veterans, while guardians—who provide medical and other support—travel along at their own expense.

South Dakota is planning flights from various departure points around the state this year.

One of the distinguished veterans on this first flight was Claude Hone. Hone enlisted as a Marine and served as a fighter pilot aboard the carrier Wasp. He flew support in the invasion of Guam, Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. He was one of the first eight marine pilots to strafe Tokyo airfield as the Zeros were taking off.

Hone returned to the Sioux Falls area in 1945 and also has the distinction of being the first South Dakota Real Estate Licensee – Number 1 – fifty-four years ago.

You may be familiar with his trademark question, “What On Earth Do You Want?” Hone is well-known in the Sioux Falls area and is proud to tell you that he is one of the few pilots who actually flew with the great Joe Foss.

Hone's story is just one of many stories of courage and valor that can be shared by our surviving World War II veterans. The South Dakota Honor Flight is one way we can recognize these great Americans and their contributions to our freedom.

KEEPING TABS ON A SAPPER

Engineer wears mark of honor

By Capt. Anthony Deiss
Public Affairs Specialist



Special Forces, Rangers and Sappers all share something in common; they are an elite group of Soldiers whose skills put them an echelon above the rest.

For 2nd Lt. Chris Long of the 211th Engineer Company (Sapper), South Dakota Army National Guard, being a Sapper is a level of Soldiering that carries a tab of additional responsibility.

“It is an honor to wear the mark of a Sapper – they must be technically and tactically proficient in both engineer and infantry operations,” said Long, platoon leader for the Madison and De Smet unit. “I hold myself to a higher standard because I believe it is expected of a Sapper.”

According to Long, a Sapper is an engineer Soldier who is an expert in mobility, counter-mobility and survivability. In basic terms, a light engineer capable of operating with light infantry units when needed.

Combat engineer Soldier 2nd Lt. Chris Long, a platoon leader from the 211th Engineer Company (Sapper), is one of several unit members who have earned and are authorized to wear the Sapper tab; a badge of honor worn on the uniform over the left shoulder unit patch.

These skills give a Soldier a specialized ability on the battlefield.

The mark which denotes this ability is the Sapper tab – a badge worn on the uniform over the left shoulder above the unit patch. To acquire this tab, Soldiers must attend a grueling month-long Sapper Leader Course (SLC) that pushes them to the brink of their mental and physical capabilities.

“The school is a very high operations tempo course with little to no down time,” said Long, a resident of Sturgis and full-time training officer for the 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) at Fort Meade.

The SLC is part of the U.S. Army Engineer School at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., and is a 28-day course designed to train joint-service leaders in small unit tactics, leadership skills, and warfighter tactics required to perform as part of a combined arms team in a contemporary operating environment.

The SLC has two phases and is open to enlisted Soldiers in the grades of specialist

in April 2008. “The last two weeks is when most students fail to achieve the standard, as you get two opportunities to successfully complete a leadership position in less than ideal conditions.”

Long says his class started with more than 60 students and finished with about 40, with only about 18 receiving the Sapper tab. Out of the 60, there were about five National Guard Soldiers from across the country who attended the course.

Much like the combat engineers of World War II who breached the obstacles on the beaches of Normandy, the engineers of the 211th will be clearing the way for U.S. forces in Afghanistan, as the unit will be deploying in September in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

With a mission to detect and clear roadside bombs along movement and supply routes, Soldiers within the 211th will look to Long for this expertise, as the unit may be required to perform infantry missions.



(promotable) and above, and engineer officers captain and below.

The first phase lasts 14 days and covers general subjects including medical, navigation, demolitions, air and water operations, mountaineering, and landmines and weapons used by enemy forces.

“Two of the exciting events in the first weeks are the helocast operations and the rappelling portion, both training events that are not totally uncommon, but Sapper school takes them to a higher level,” said Long.

The second phase is the remaining 14 days, and covers basic patrolling techniques and battle drills that emphasize leadership. The subjects include urban operations, breaching, patrol organization and movement, reconnaissance and raid and ambush tactics. It concludes with a three-day situation training exercise, and five-day field training exercise. These missions are a 60/40 mix of engineer and infantry missions.

“The last two weeks is entirely field leadership training with little to no sleep or food,” said Long who completed the course

“Sappers have the advantage of being flexible enough to perform a wide array of operations,” said Long. “We have the ability to perform an explosive breach, build a shelter and execute a raid or cordon and search.”

Long says this range of capabilities will allow the unit to operate fairly independently without much support.

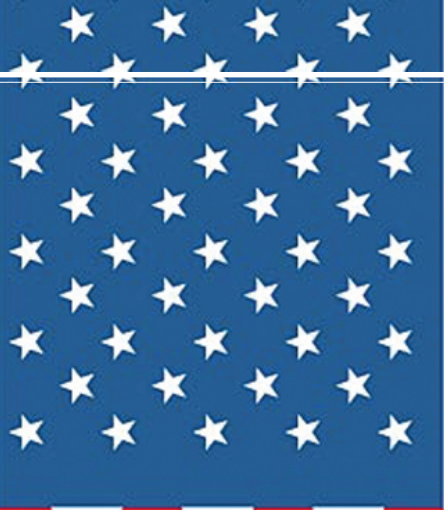
“In Afghanistan it is difficult to travel and support may not be able to reach you, so it is imperative we be able to operate independently and conduct various types of missions,” said Long. “I believe our wide range of training allows us to be better prepared for whatever is thrown at us.”

Currently, the unit has three Soldiers who bear the Sapper tab, with another three waiting to go to SLC before the unit deploys.

“I am excited for our deployment and I think the entire unit is also. Deep down, I think nearly everybody who puts on the uniform wants to do what we are about to,” said Long. “We are going to aid in the security of our own country, and at the same time, help the good people in Afghanistan prosper.”

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**2ND LT.
CHRIS LONG**



THE SACRIFICE OF FREEDOM

Iraqi native returning home as U.S. Soldier

By Randy Dockendorf

Specialist Sarah left her native Iraq as the target of insurgents. Now, she is returning to that nation as a United States Soldier.

Sarah saw her brother killed and her father kidnapped — never to be seen again — from their Iraqi home. She and the rest of her family barely escaped with their lives, relying on others to get them out of the country.

The family was targeted because Sarah's mother translated for U.S. and coalition forces. Maj. Lyle LaCroix of South Dakota, who worked with Sarah's mother, pressed for her family's safe departure from the country under a special immigration program for Iraqi interpreters. LaCroix then welcomed the family into his home while they resettled in South Dakota.

Nearly 18 months later, Sarah has joined the South Dakota National Guard (SDNG). Following in the footsteps of her mother, Sarah will serve as a translator during her 400-day deployment in Iraq.

"This is my first time back to Iraq since we left (as a family)," she said.

Even before arriving in her new homeland, Sarah envisioned serving as a U.S. Soldier.

"I was always thinking, if I go one day to the United States, I would always like to do something in the military," she said. "It's sure to give me some experience and teach me a lot of things. It will be a big change in my life. I have never done anything like this before."

Sarah inquired about serving in the U.S. military even before she became an American citizen, said SDNG recruiter Sgt. Shane Toupal.

"Sarah approached me even before she had her resident alien status. Maj. LaCroix was her sponsor, and he referred her to me," Toupal said. "Just as soon as her resident status went through, it was enough for her enlistment and to get her through the program. We hope she will have full citizenship before she deploys to Iraq."

Sarah anticipates becoming a citizen before she leaves for her mission. Back home from her training in Michigan, she took an examination and attended an interview in March as part of her naturalization process. She said that she needs final paperwork and will then be sworn in as a citizen.

Sarah has completed her basic training and is ready for deployment. Toupal has served not only as a recruiter but also as a support system during the process, she said.

"I really don't know how to thank Shane for everything he has done for me," she said. "Even when I went to basic, he was always encouraging me and supporting me. Shane has always contacted me every step of the way."

Sarah said she sees her military service as payback for the new life and freedom found in the United States.

"Everything seems good since our move from Iraq," she said. "I feel we have changed (as a family). Life here has been so great. We have all the opportunity to do whatever we want."

Sarah and her family present a phenomenal story, Toupal said.

"This is probably one of the more incredible stories of immigration that I have ever seen," he said. "These folks have already sacrificed so much for the United States as well as for the country of Iraq. I think it's a great testament to them (and) a great testament to our country."

Sarah's life story and her drive to serve in the U.S. military have drawn widespread attention, Toupal said.

"We have become the subject (of study) because this is such a unique experience for South Dakota and our National Guard," he said.

While recruited in South Dakota, Sarah will be deployed through a special translator program with the Michigan National Guard. The program is based in Michigan because of

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SPC. SARAH

that state's large number of Arabic-speaking residents, she said.

"Sarah will be doing a one-year deployment with the option to do another year of training troops before they go overseas," Toupal said. "Once Sarah has finished her tour of duty with the Michigan unit, we view her as rejoining the South Dakota National Guard."

Sarah will work with military units and civilians in translating documents, Toupal said. "Sarah's knowledge of the Arab culture, and specifically the Iraqi culture, will definitely be assets," he said.

Sarah brings a number of strengths besides her language skills, Toupal said.

"Sarah is a pretty wonderful young person," he said. "She is very motivated, and her enthusiasm and desire to be a good Soldier are assets for whomever she works for."

Sarah looks forward to seeing the changes in her former homeland, Toupal said.

"I think it shows a great deal of not only who she is as a person but who she is as an American," the recruiter said. "She is not even a citizen yet, but she is doing as much or more to serve this nation than many others."

Sarah has already lived through a lifetime of tyranny and war, Toupal said.

"I said to Sarah, you have seen more combat than many of the people who trained you," he said. "It shows what kind of young person she is, to know exactly what she is going into and think it's important enough of a mission to do it."

Despite the dangers of war, Sarah said she remains confident about her upcoming mission.

"Everything is going well," she said. "My mom is really trying not to be worried, but I will really be fine."

Sarah does not speak out about U.S. politics, but she has watched President Obama's televised speeches about drawing down American troop levels in Iraq. She would like to see some continuing U.S. presence in the region.

"They need more Americans to stay over and help stabilize the area. Some troops can be very helpful," she said.

Sarah will mark her 21st birthday in Iraq, serving both the land of her birth and the nation that she now calls home.

"In recruiting, I have been fortunate to meet some really wonderful people over the years," Toupal said, "and she is definitely one of the best."

Military Spouse Career Advancement Account Program

With Congressional authorization in Public Law 110-417, the Department of Defense is implementing the Military Spouse Career Advancement Account Program, providing resources and assistance to spouses of active duty service members, Guard and Reserve with a spouse on orders for one year, supporting their pursuit of a successful, long-term, portable career.

This centralized, virtual program, accessed through Military OneSource, will provide counseling and funding, up to \$6,000, to assist with licensure, certification or education opportunities leading to portable employment opportunities.

A spouse will call the Military OneSource Center (1.800.342.9647) and speak with a Career and Education Consultant.

The Military OneSource Career and Education Consultant will assist the spouse in selecting a career goal and entering a Career Plan into the online system "My Career Advancement Account."

Upon approval of the spouse's Career Plan for education, training, certification or licensure, Department of Defense will provide direct payment to the Payee (school, institution, or program) through the designated government Portal.

The spouse will report back to Military OneSource upon completion of the Plan and receipt of employment.

This Department of Defense funded program will be available April 2009. Program specifics are available for your review at www.militaryonesource.com HYPERLINK "http://www.militaryonesource.com/CommandersPage".

The DoD point of contact is Mr. Mike Tevnan, 703.908.1237 HYPERLINK "mailto:carolyn.baker@osd.mil", mike.tevnan@moscenter.us



Robert Louis Stevenson wrote that "we are a success if we look for the best in others, and give the best we have". Soldiers transitioning from military careers can bring valuable principles and standards to careers in public teaching. Soldiers entering a teaching career are naturals at finding the best in others.

Troops to Teachers is a U.S. Department of Education and Department of Defense program that helps eligible military personnel begin a new career as teachers in public schools where their skills, knowledge and experience are most needed. Troops to Teachers (TTT) was established in 1994 as a Department of Defense program. The National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2000 transferred the responsibility for program oversight and funding to the U.S. Department of Education but continued operation by the Department of Defense. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provides for the continuation of the TTT Program. TTT is managed by the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES), Pensacola, Florida.

Reflecting the focus of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, the primary objective of TTT is to help recruit teachers for schools that serve students from low-income families throughout America. TTT also helps relieve teacher shortages, especially in math, science, special education and other critical subject areas, and assists military

personnel in making successful transitions to second careers in teaching.

Funding is appropriated annually to provide financial assistance to eligible participants, referral services, and maintain a network of state offices to provide participants with counseling and assistance regarding certification requirements, routes to state certification, and employment leads, as well as links to state Departments of Education, state certification offices, model resumes, and other job listing sites in public education.

Pending availability of funds, financial assistance may be provided to eligible individuals as stipends up to \$5K to help pay for teacher certification costs or as bonuses of \$10K to teach in schools serving a high percentage of students from low-income families. Participants who accept the Stipend or Bonus must agree to teach for three years in targeted schools in accordance with the authorizing legislation. The Department of Education establishes the operating rules that govern the schools where Troops to Teachers participants who accept financial assistance may fulfill their three-year teaching obligation.

Educational and service eligibility requirements for counseling, referral services, and financial assistance are available on the TTT Home Page at the URL: www.ProudToServeAgain.com. The Lewis and Clark Region home page is www.montana.edu/ttt, and lists other resources such as districts with qualifying schools, current vacancies in the six states, and state offices for certification. Interested persons and eligible military members or veterans should contact the Lewis and Clark Region of Troops to Teachers at northerntrtt@gmail.com.

For information on other educational opportunities contact the State Education Officer:

Charlie Blasdel, ESO-SDARNG
 2823 West Main Street, Rapid City, SD 57702-8186
 Phone 605-737-6729 FAX 605-737-6668

HELPFUL EDUCATION WEBSITES:

www.minuteman.ngb.army.mil/benefits (Register for FTA here)
www.virtualarmory.com (ARNG education pgms & PDCs, applications for ESC svcs)
www.GIBILL.va.gov (Info on VA education benefits / Veterans' Administration)
www.dantes.doded.mil.gov (TTT, Spouse to Teacher, testing & certification pgms)
www.militaryonesource.com/ (Best all around resource: select "Education")



Each May, Military Appreciation Month, the nation pauses to reflect on the service and sacrifices of the men and women who serve in the armed forces. We set aside this month to honor and express our gratitude to those who protect and defend the United States and its citizens. In today's world, it is increasingly important that we particularly recognize those members of the National Guard and Reserve who help make up almost half of our entire military force. Every day citizen warriors from South Dakota and around the country make sacrifices to serve while balancing civilian jobs and the needs of their families. To all of South Dakota's Guardsmen and Reservists, on behalf of the entire nation, we thank you for your service.

Beyond our citizen warriors, another group also deserves our gratitude during Military Appreciation Month - the hundreds of South Dakota employers who employ Guardsmen and Reservists. Thirty-six percent of all National Guardsmen and Reservists are employed within the public sector and another 55 percent in the private sector. Our nation is grateful for our employers who serve the nation by providing citizen warriors with the comfort of knowing no matter when they're deployed, or for however long, they have jobs waiting when they return. Some employers continue health benefits during deployments; others send care packages and care for the families of deployed employees. No matter how you express your support, you provide the comfort and peace of mind that allows Guardsmen and Reservists to perform their difficult duties free of worry about their jobs back home.

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a Department of Defense agency that understands how vital the relationship is between citizen warriors and American employers. ESGR's 4,500 volunteers work throughout South Dakota and the entire country to develop and promote a culture in which all American employers

support and value the military service of their employees, abiding by and often going beyond the requirements of our nation's laws. We gain and maintain employer support for Guard and Reserve service by recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of the law and resolving conflict through mediation, not just during Military Appreciation Month, but throughout the year.

The South Dakota ESGR Field Committee offers at no cost valuable resources to help both South Dakota Guardsmen and Reservists and employers understand the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA). Instated in 1994, USERRA is the Federal law that protects the employment rights of individuals who undertake military service and prohibits employers from discriminating against members of the uniformed service. Last year alone ESGR briefed more than 2,277 employers and 3,720 Guardsmen and Reservists in South Dakota on USERRA rights and requirements. With tools such as helpful tips for pre and post-deployment, non-technical guides to USERRA, law reviews and free online USERRA training, ESGR offers full assistance for any military employment questions.

ESGR's goal is to be the 411 resource, not the 911 resource, to Guard and Reserve members, their employers, and their families. However, should a dispute arise, ESGR is able to provide a trained professional to help mediate military employment issues. In 2008, ESGR received more than 13,000 requests for assistance, with 219 in South Dakota, and successfully mediated nearly 1,900 cases across the country, with 13 cases in the state, all at no cost to either the service member or the employer. Our goal is to help make your jobs easier and stress-free; it's our way of saying thanks, and it is our way of supporting those who are part of our national defense. With the support of committed employers, deployed service members are spared concern for the jobs that support them and their families.

If you are a member of the National Guard and Reserve or an employer of a service member, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve is here to help. Visit us at www.ESGR.mil or call the ESGR Service Center at 1-800-336-4590. We all serve, whether as a service member, an employer, or a family member. ESGR recognizes and thanks you this Military Appreciation Month and all year long.

Donald W. Kelpin, South Dakota ESGR Field Committee Chair
(605) 737-6540

Warrior Challenge 2009

Camp Rapid was the site of the Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) First Annual Warrior Challenge. Two hundred warriors and cadre arrived May 2, from all over the state to compete in the team based exercise focused on basic skills covered in the first three weeks of Basic Combat Training (BCT). They also tested themselves on the Leader Confidence Course, the Obstacle Course and the TAC Ball arena.

"Since the beginning of the RSP, our warriors have wanted to be challenged, and really find out how they stacked up against other warriors," said Maj. Corey Norris, RSP commander. "It also gives us a check on what skills and knowledge they are retaining."

Since the RSP focuses its training on the first three weeks of the new 10 week BCT, the events were geared towards that training. Events included a written test of warrior knowledge, and performance based events such as land navigation, first aid and drill and ceremony.

"This is the closest these warriors will get to BCT until they actually get there," said Sgt. 1st Class Daryl Bird, drill sergeant, Detachment 2, RSP of Sioux Falls. "They arrived late, were up early, and were constantly on the go."

"I'm was tired, but it was fun, the obstacle course was awesome!" said Tyson Mullen, RSP warrior.

Saturday's final event to determine the winning team for the Warrior Challenge was the TAC Ball arena. Where the top four teams squared off in a battle for first place with a team for Detachment 1 of Fort Meade, being the victors.

Sunday morning started with the Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA). The PFA is similar to the Army's APFT with the same events; except warriors are assessed at one minute per event, instead two minutes and then complete a one mile run. This is based off of the Army's minimum Fitness Standards for warriors to begin BCT.



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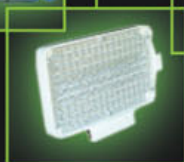
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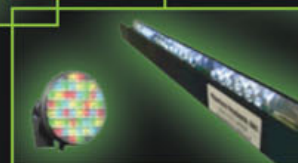
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