

DAKOTA PACK

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD • WINTER 2011

SDNG unveils new buildings

Camp Rapid celebrates with three ribbon-cutting ceremonies

« DEPLOYMENTS

Three units deploy; six more alerted

« RECREATION

Lake Dahe hosts National Guard Walleye Tour



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Maj. Gen. Timothy A. Reisch
The Adjutant General

Maj. Brendan Murphy
State Public Affairs Officer

Capt. Anthony Deiss
State Public Affairs Deputy

2nd Lt. Chad Carlson
Editor

Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen
Design/Layout

CONTRIBUTORS

Sgt. Kathleen Holscher
Sgt. Tyler Vanhecke
Unit Public Affairs Representatives

Staff Sgt. Lance Schroeder
Sgt. Jacqueline Fitzgerald
Sp. Julieanne Morse
129th MPAD

CW2 Christian Johnson
Education Office

Lt. Col. Reid Christopherson
Master Sgt. Nancy Ausland
Tech. Sgt. Quinton Young
Staff Sgt. Trisha Smeenk
114th Fighter Wing

Sgt. Rebecca Linder
196th MEB

Sgt. Rebecca Linder
196th MEB

Master Sgt. Don Matthews
Visual Information Office



8537 Corbin Drive, Anchorage, AK 99507
Toll Free: 866.562.9300

E-mail: AlaskaNationalGuard@AQPpublishing.com
Web: www.AQPpublishing.com

Bob Ulin Chris Kersbergen • Darrell George
Publisher Advertising Sales

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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: chad.carlson@us.army.mil, 605.737.6268. 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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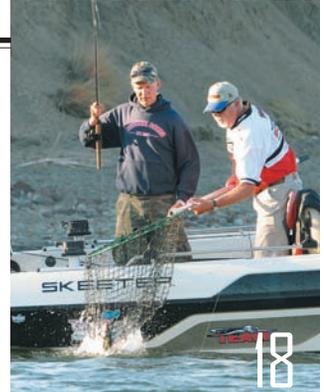
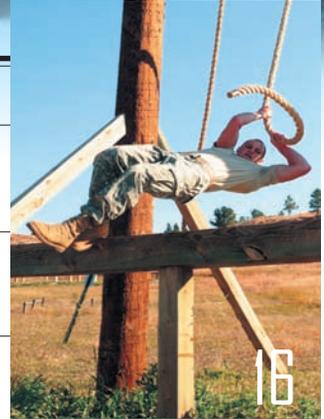
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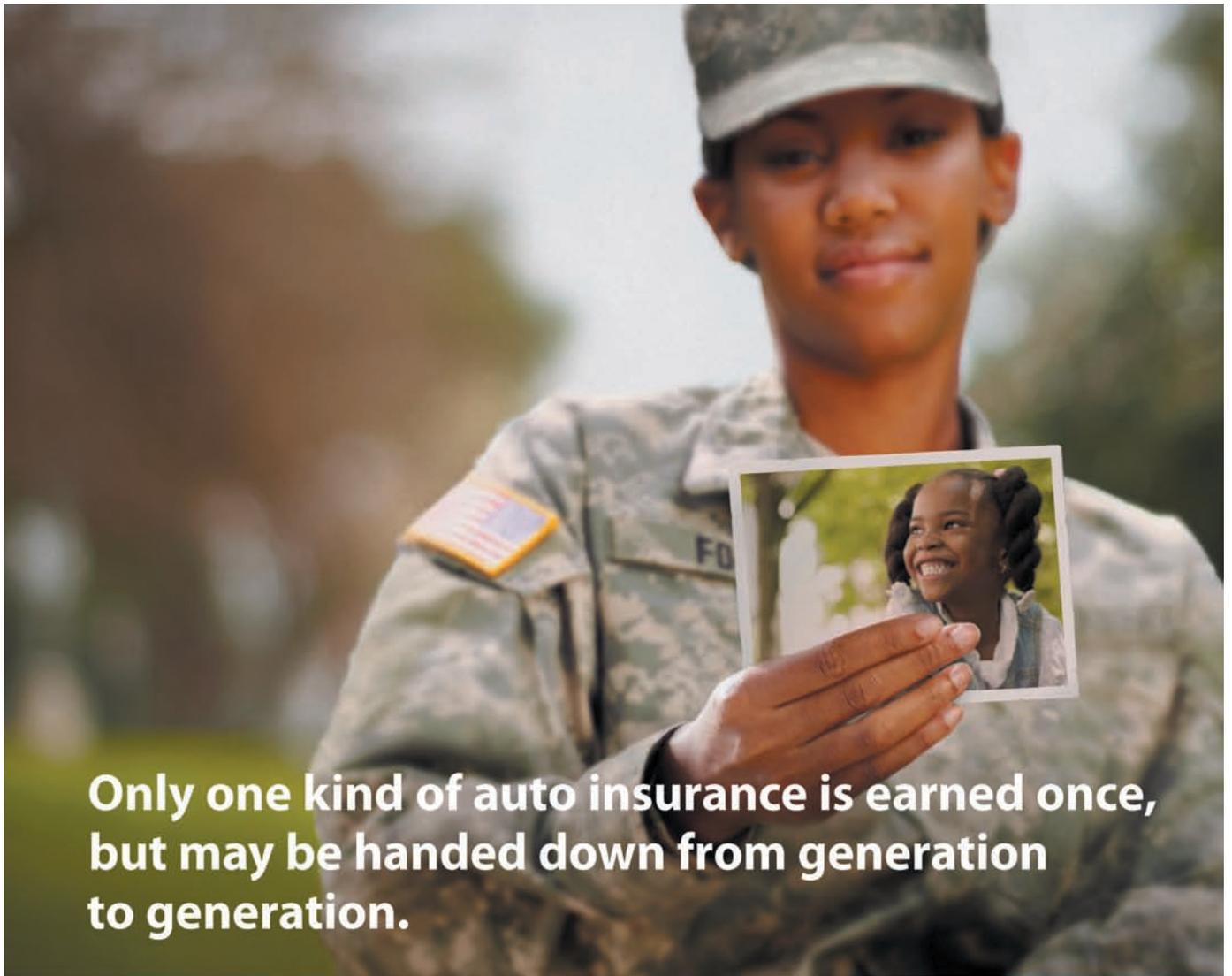
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On the cover

An aerial photo of the new Joint Force Headquarters Readiness Center and the ribbon cutting ceremony held at Camp Rapid, Oct. 27, to celebrate the completion of the new building. (Photos by Master Sgt. Don Matthews and Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen)



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Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch
The Adjutant General

Top vision and priorities for the South Dakota National Guard

Dear Guard Members,

By the time this edition of the Dakota Pack is in the mail, I will have completed eight months as your adjutant general. I've had ample time to assess this great organization and to develop my vision and my priorities for the South Dakota National Guard.

SD National Guard Vision

The most professional, competent and reliable state National Guard organization in the United States of America.

OUR #1 PRIORITY IS TO TAKE CARE OF OUR SOLDIERS AND AIRMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

My top priority is taking care of our Soldiers and Airmen and their families. Without question, they are our most precious resource! We are an all-volunteer force, and we have supported continuous mobilizations for the past 10 years. Never in our history has the National Guard been better trained, better equipped or more heavily relied upon than we are today. We must all pay special attention to how we are treating our personnel and their families, or we will pay a huge price in the end.

READINESS

My second priority is readiness. We have a duty to be ready to perform our state and federal missions on a continual basis. We have responded here in South Dakota to floods, fires, blizzards and ice storms. We have performed brilliantly during the countless mobilizations in support of OIF, OEF, OND and other contingencies. Our reputation is truly outstanding - and we will keep it that way.

ENSURE THE SDNG REMAINS RELEVANT

Ensuring the viability of the SDNG for decades to come is also a huge priority of mine. This involves securing missions that are integral to the Army and Air Force. During these times of federal budget cuts, it is especially important to be aligned with the national security priorities in order to survive the DoD draw-downs that are inevitable.

EMBRACE DIVERSITY

Embracing diversity is a priority that I expect all SDNG members to fully engage in. I am committed to increasing the numbers of women and minorities in our ranks. We will set specific goals and track our progress. Both genders and all races and ethnic groups must be able to reach the highest positions of this organization.

ENHANCE COMMUNICATIONS

Another key priority for me is enhancing communications. Members of large organizations typically believe that they don't get the information they need. We all have a desire to be "in the know," and it is a priority of mine to do better in this area. We must, however, also focus on external communications, and specifically on strategic communications. I also want to harness Facebook, Twitter and other like tools to spread information regarding the SDNG in the most effective means possible.

ARMY AND AIR GUARD MEMBERS WORKING CLOSELY TOGETHER

Having the Air and the Army Guard work together more closely in the future is a priority that is close to my heart, and the Missouri River floods of 2011 laid a great foundation on which to build. I want our Air and Army Guard to establish common goals, look for opportunities to train together and learn from one another.

THE STATE PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

The State Partnership Program is on National Guard Bureau Chief Gen. Craig McKinley's "Top 5 Priorities List," and it is also a priority for me. We have an excellent partnership with Suriname, and I want to involve even more Soldiers and Airmen in the future.

DEVELOPING LEADERS

Developing leaders is crucial to the ongoing success of the SDNG. This involves mentorship and individual goal-setting. Leaders at every level must take the time to tell subordinates about the potential that we see in them. I am living proof that encouragement and mentoring make a huge difference. We do not want our "rising stars" to get out of the Guard before they have achieved their full potential.

SAFETY

Safety needs to be a priority for every member of this organization. No training event could possibly justify the injury or loss of a Soldier or Airman. Commanders, officers, NCOs, leaders and followers at all levels must ensure that we are following the safety standards at all times.

ENHANCE THE JOINT STAFF

Finally, I want to enhance the joint staff. I expect senior leaders of both the Air and Army Guard to work together in determining the best training opportunities for the joint staff and develop innovative ways to utilize the joint staff throughout the training year.

The 10 priorities listed above certainly do not encapsulate all of the things that are important to our organization, but I articulate them here so our great organization will understand specifically the 10 areas that I want to see progress made in. I absolutely believe that the SDNG is already the most professional, competent and reliable state National Guard organization in the United States. With your engagement and support, we can make it even better!

Sincerely,



Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman
State Command Sergeant Major

A year of service, honor and warriors

My fellow Soldiers and Airmen,

We just finished another fiscal year and are closing in on the calendar year – what a great experience for all of us to have lived through!

The year made history with the spring and summer flooding. As an organization we came together and conquered the “Mighty Mo” with engineered berms, vigilance on the walls and just some great work ethic. With blood, sweat and maybe a few tears, the communities we were in felt a sigh of relief as the Guard came to the rescue. The Army and Air came together like no other time before and bagged sand and sat overwatch on many miles of temporary walls to hold back the river. Citizens of this state felt a comfort that no other organization could render. We stepped in and gave more than 40,000 days with more than 1,300 Soldiers and Airmen to the fight. As citizen-Soldiers and Airmen we felt pretty damn good giving back to them.

Just a few short months ago, we finished the Black Hills Veterans Honor March. One hundred seventy-five hearty souls came in and marched the full or mini-marathon. The finish line was manned by Command Chief Master Sgt. Welch from the Air Guard, and myself, giving a handshake and coin to each and every competitor. Their dedication and determination to walk, march or run 16 to 26.2 miles was an inspiration to both of us. I hope that this great event can grow and prosper with its original intent to honor all veterans.

Our optempo is still high, and we are supplying some of this country’s best warriors to the cause in Afghanistan, Iraq and other hot spots around the world. After a decade of deployments, our families and these warriors deserve the best care and attention that we can give back. The momentum is not slowing, and we have many in harm’s way.

We all are busy with life’s trials and tribulations. Take some time, smell the roses, and enjoy your family, friends and what life in this great state has given you!

Sincerely,

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Spc. Jensen laid to rest



Spc. Dennis Jensen

RAPID CITY – A Soldier serving in Afghanistan with the 200th Engineer Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, died in a non-combat related accident, Aug. 16.

Spc. Dennis Jensen, 21, of Sioux Falls, formerly of Vermillion, died from injuries suffered while working with bridge materials near Camp Leatherneck, in Helmand province, in southern Afghanistan.

The accident happened when Jensen was struck by two steel bridge decking panels, which fell from a forklift after a securing strap broke.

Jensen was immediately transported to Bastion Airfield Hospital where he was pronounced dead. He was wearing all the appropriate safety gear during the time of the accident.

The 200th deployed in May for a one-year mission to maintain, repair and replace existing military bridges throughout Afghanistan.

Jensen is survived by his mother, Christine Bestgen of Lead, and father, Glenn Jensen of Yankton, and sister, Melissa Jensen of Minneapolis, Minn.

SDARNG change of command ceremonies:

196th MEB

SIoux FALLS – Col. Kevin Griese, of Pierre, took command of the SDARNG’s 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade from Brig. Gen. Ted Johnson during a change of command ceremony, Sept. 11, at the Sioux Falls National Guard armory.

Griese, who has been a member of the National Guard for 29 years, will now oversee the unit that Johnson led while deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan, in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from May 2010 to May 2011.

As the commander of the 196th, Griese is responsible for the command and control of approximately 2,000 Soldiers, which is composed of the 139th Brigade Support Battalion, 153rd Engineer Battalion, 1/147th Field Artillery Battalion and its subordinate units. Taking over the mission, Griese will continue to ensure that these units are equipped, manned, trained and prepared to carry out their state and federal missions.

196th Regiment (RTI)

SIoux FALLS – The SDARNG’s 196th Regional Training Institute held change of command ceremonies Sept. 10–11.

Lt. Col. John Holter, of Rapid City, took command of the 196th Regiment (RTI), during a change of command ceremony, Sept. 10, at the Fort Meade parade grounds.

Holter took command from Col. Kevin Griese, of Pierre.

Lt. Col. Orson Ward, of Lead, took command of 2nd Battalion (Modular Training), 196th Regiment (RTI), during a change of command ceremony, Sept. 11, at the Sioux Falls National Guard armory.

The 196th Regiment, located at Fort Meade, with second battalion located in Sioux Falls, is one of the premier regional training institutes throughout the National Guard and earned “A Learning Institute of Excellence” rating by the United States Army Training and Doctrine Command in 2010.

Ward took over the responsibilities from former commander Lt. Col. Douglas Bogenhagen, of Omaha, Neb.

153rd Engineer Battalion

HURON – Lt. Col. Patrick Parady, of Howard, took command of the SDARNG’s 153rd Engineer Battalion from Lt. Col. Joseph Eining, of Dell Rapids, during a change of command ceremony, Sept. 10, at the Huron National Guard armory.

Parady, who has been a member of the National Guard for 26 years, will now oversee the Huron unit that Eining commanded since August 2009.

As the commander of the 153rd, Parady is responsible for the command and control of approximately 870 Soldiers in 14 separate units and communities throughout South Dakota.

The 153rd assists assigned units in meeting training, administrative and logistical requirements to maintain the unit’s readiness in support of their state and federal missions.

1–147th Field Artillery Battalion

WATERTOWN – Lt. Col. Bruce Carter, a Watertown native now living in Rapid City, took command of the SDARNG’s 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, from Lt. Col. David Chase, of Wahpeton, N.D., during a change of command ceremony, Sept. 10, at the Watertown National Guard armory.

Carter, who has been a member of the National Guard for 25 years, will now oversee

the battalion that Chase commanded since July 2008.

As the commander of the 147th, Carter is responsible for the command and control of three Multiple Launch Rocket System batteries and one forward support company – totaling approximately 480 Soldiers in six communities throughout eastern South Dakota.

Joint Force Headquarters

RAPID CITY – Capt. Anthony Deiss, a White River native now living in Rapid City, is the new detachment commander of the SDARNG’s Joint Force Headquarters, in Rapid City.

Deiss received command Sept. 10 from Maj. Brendan Murphy, of Rapid City, who commanded the unit since May 2009.

JFHQ is one of four major commands in the SDARNG, and is a critical element for all 64 units across the state, providing command and control of essential services in administration, intelligence, training, logistics, maintenance, communications, Soldier and family services, and other support functions.

With more than 200 members assigned, the main focus for JFHQ is to support the nearly 3,400 members of the SDARNG, and to provide trained and equipped, ready forces capable of mobilizing and deploying in support of state and federal missions.

740th Transportation Co.

By Sgt. Kathleen Holscher

740th Unit Public Affairs Representative

MILBANK – Capt. Jeremy Schafer assumed command of the SDARNG’s 740th Transportation Company, of Milbank, during a change of command ceremony, Aug. 7, at the Milbank High School.

Schafer, of Wolsey, received command from Capt. Robin Flint, who commanded the unit since April 2009.

The mission of the 740th is to provide transportation of both dry and refrigerated containerized cargo, general non-containerized cargo and bulk water and fuel products.

The unit is headquartered in Milbank with more than 100 members assigned, and has a detachment in Aberdeen with more than 80 members in its ranks. The 740th uses M915 tractor-trailers to complete assigned missions.

129th Mobile Public Affairs Det.

RAPID CITY – Maj. Wayne Asscherick, of Rapid City, took command of the SDARNG’s 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment during

a change of command ceremony, Sept. 11, on Camp Rapid. Asscherick took over the responsibilities from former commander Maj. Kathleen Dirk, of Rapid City.

The 129th MPAD provides public affairs support to units across the state, as well as to deployed units in support of a combined, unified or joint operation.

Zimmerman named state secretary of veterans affairs

PIERRE – Gov. Dennis Daugaard appointed Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman, of Rapid City, as the state’s first secretary of veterans affairs.

Zimmerman is currently the state command sergeant major of the SDARNG, the highest-ranking noncommissioned officer position in the state. In that role, he is the adjutant general’s personal advisor on all enlisted matters and acts as a representative and advocate for more than 3,400 Soldiers in South Dakota.

“I am so pleased that Larry Zimmerman has agreed to take on this role,” Gov. Daugaard said. “Larry is very well-respected for his work advocating for those enlisted in the Army National Guard, and he is the perfect person to represent my administration as we ensure meeting our obligations to South Dakota veterans.”

Zimmerman’s commitment to the Army National Guard ends Feb. 1, 2013, and he will assume his role as secretary of veterans affairs at that time.

Six units alerted to deploy

RAPID CITY – Six SDARNG units have been alerted for deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 730th Area Support Medical Company of Vermillion, the 1978th Contingency Contracting Team of Rapid City, the 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment of Rapid City and Sioux Falls, the 235th Military Police Company of Rapid City and Sioux Falls, the 927th Survey and Design Team of Sioux Falls and 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion of Pierre, have all received mobilization alert orders for deployments to Afghanistan in 2012 and 2013.

The 730th and its 75 assigned members are scheduled for deployment in July 2012. The mission of the 730th is to provide Echelon 1 (basic emergency medical services) and Echelon II (emergent or inpatient/outpatient care designed to return service members back to duty

or evacuate them on to definitive care as quickly as possible) health support. They are composed of combat medics, lab technicians, radiologists, dental technicians, mental health technicians, medical doctors, nurses, physician’s assistants and maintenance and support staff.

The 1978th and its four assigned members are scheduled for deployment in December 2012. The mission of the 1978th is to plan for and coordinate all contracting functions at a brigade or combat team level.

The 129th and its 20 members are scheduled for deployment in February 2013. The mission of the 129th is to provide public affairs support to units across the state, as well as to deployed units in support of a combined, unified or joint operation. This detachment uses print and broadcast journalists to help tell the story of the South Dakota National Guard. The unit’s headquarters is located in Rapid City, and a detachment is in Sioux Falls.

The 235th and its 124 assigned members are scheduled for deployment in February 2013. The mission of the 235th is to provide security for U.S. military personnel, installation and facilities and to guard prisoners of war and civilian internees. The unit’s headquarters is

located in Rapid City and its detachment in Sioux Falls.

The 927th and its 14 assigned members are scheduled for deployment in May 2013. The mission of the 927th is to plan, conduct, prepare and provide planning studies and tests for identified engineer work projects. They also provide guidance, legal descriptions, certification and surveys for engineer projects.

The 152nd and 69 assigned members of its Headquarters and Headquarters Company are scheduled for deployment in July 2013. The mission of the 152nd is to provide multi-functional combat support and combat service support to forces throughout an assigned area of operation. Multi-functional areas include supply, transportation, maintenance and ordnance support.

CORRECTION: Flood Duty
The 740th Transportation Company was not listed as a participating unit in last quarter’s issue. The 740th had Soldiers on every rotation except the first one. At the end of AT, the unit sent more than 40 Soldiers to Dakota Dunes and a week later sent 25 to Pierre. They were the last Soldiers still on duty at both locations when troops were sent home.

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Members of Det. 48 bow their heads during the final benediction of the unit's activation ceremony at the Army Aviation Support Facility, Aug. 5.

Photo by 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson

Detachment 48 Operational Support Airlift deploys

By 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY – The South Dakota Army National Guard held an activation ceremony for the Rapid City-based Detachment 48 Operational Support Airlift Command, Aug. 5, at the Army Aviation Support Facility near Rapid City Regional Airport.

The eight-member unit has since deployed on a one-year tour to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

“I know you’re going to do an excellent job,” said Gov. Dennis Daugaard, during the ceremony. “Your hard work will be saving lives and maintaining peace. Your presence, and the presence of other American military, will also bring new life to the people of a whole new nation.”

Det. 48 is a fixed-wing aviation unit composed of pilots and operations specialists, which operate the C-12 King Air. The Soldiers are taking on a new mission of providing aerial surveillance in support of ground commanders in the field.

“Normally, we transport people and DoD personnel,” said CW5 Kenneth East, Det. 48 commander. “On this deployment we’ll

conduct aerial surveillance. This is a new mission that the C-12 is taking on that is very unique and different from our regular stateside mission.”

Last year, Det. 48 flew more than 400 flight hours and 100 stateside missions. They also transported more than 250 personnel ranging in rank from a four-star general to a private.

As a result of their new mission, members of Det. 48 spent time conducting specialized training new to the unit.

“We have two Soldiers serving in flight operations roles who will basically be the surveillance eyes and ears for ground commanders,” said East. “Those two Soldiers conducted six weeks of training that went very well. In fact, both of them were recommended as flight operation instructors while we were over there.”

This is the second mobilization for Det. 48, having deployed to Afghanistan for seven months in 2008.

“The fact it has been called back to federal service in this short period of time is a

testament to the significant value that it has on the War on Terror,” said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard.

Most of the unit’s training leading up to the deployment remained consistent with the training they normally conduct.

“We need to maintain a required amount of hours each month on the C-12, and that has remained the same leading up to this deployment,” said East.

The unit conducted several weeks of pre-mobilization training at Fort Hood, Texas, prior to leaving for Afghanistan.

“Our unit morale is really high,” said East at the activation ceremony. “We’ve got quite a range of knowledge and experience, and everybody works well together. We’re anxious to get going, get the job done and come home.”

“To all of our Soldiers here today, for your service to our state, and for your service to our nation, and people of other nations, I say thank you very, very much,” said Daugaard.

451st Firefighter team joins the war effort

By Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen
SDANG Public Affairs Office

STURGIS - Seven firefighters from the 451st Engineer Detachment (Firefighting Team), SDARNG, were officially activated, Sept. 10, during a deployment ceremony at the Sturgis National Guard armory.

The unit has since deployed on a one-year tour to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"The 451st is a firefighting unit," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard, during the ceremony. "Firefighters are relied upon greatly for their special skills and personal bravery both inside and outside of the military. It seems coincidental that we would be activating this unit just one day prior to the 10th anniversary of the terror attacks on this nation which led to the start of the War on Terror."

A total of 2,819 people were killed in the twin towers, 343 of them were firefighters and paramedics who risked their lives to save others.

"It takes a special person to be willing to risk their own life to save others," said Reisch. "The 451st is made up of just those kind of people. A unit like this is extremely valuable both during peacetime and during a time of war."

The 451st provides firefighting service and support in a theater of operations including fire protection of aviation and major facilities. The firefighters are equipped with firefighting gear, a tactical firefighting truck and an M916A2 tractor with a 6,000-gallon water tender.

The unit conducted several weeks of pre-mobilization training at Fort Hood, Texas, prior to leaving for Afghanistan.

"I am anxious," said Sgt. Max Stoltenburg, of Aberdeen, at the activation ceremony. "I am looking forward to the deployment and working with the guys on a regular basis instead of just one weekend a month, two weeks a year. We are like a big family, and we work well together. We are one of the best fire teams out there, because we work hard and we know what we are doing. You don't have to tell us twice, and we will get the job done."

"I couldn't be more proud of this unit," said Reisch. "I have no doubt in my mind that you are ready and that your performance during this deployment will add to the impressive legacy of the South Dakota National Guard."

Seven members of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 451st Engineer Detachment (Firefighting Team), of Sturgis, were officially activated during a ceremony at the Sturgis National Guard armory, Sept. 10.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen

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641st Aviation Regiment returns home

By 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY – Friends and family gathered at Range Road Armory in Rapid City to welcome home nine members of the South Dakota Army National Guard’s Detachment 3, Company A, 641st Aviation Regiment, as they returned home after a yearlong deployment to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn, Sept. 17.

The 641st, a fixed-wing aviation unit, was stationed at Joint Base Balad, Iraq, where they transported more than two million pounds of cargo, 8,000 passengers and flew more than 150 missions, all at night, using night vision goggles.

“It’s safer at night; you have the cover of darkness,” said CW3 Fred Loofbourow, Det. 3 commander, on why the 641st conducted all of their missions at night. “It’s also a performance issue; you have better year-round mission capability because it’s cooler at night, so you get better performance out of the aircraft, better lift capability and better distance.”

This is the 641st’s third deployment since Sept. 11, 2001. They deployed twice in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, first from January 2005–January 2006, again from October 2007–May 2008 and their latest deployment from October 2010–September 2011 in support of Operation New Dawn.

“This is a testament to the high value of professionalism of this particular unit and the value that it serves to the United States Armed Forces and to the quality of the Soldiers in this unit,” said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, South Dakota National Guard adjutant general.

The aviation regiment, consisting of 33 personnel, from four detachments located in Oregon (Headquarters), Washington, Oklahoma and South Dakota, provides command, control and communications, staff transport and liaison, casualty transport and air movement of critical equipment, supplies and personnel.

“The South Dakota National Guard has a tremendous legacy. It goes all the way back to 1862, but never in our long history has the National Guard been better trained, better



The SDARNG held a homecoming ceremony for nine members of Detachment 3, Company A, 641st Aviation Regiment at Range Road Armory in Rapid City, Sept. 17. Pictured right to left are: Sgt. Matt Day, CW3 Fred Loofbourow, CW3 John Schneider, CW2 Julie Loofbourow, Sgt. Ronald Diekman, Sgt. Clint Walker, Sgt. Tyler Clavel and Spc. Charles Brookens (CW2 Robert Heckel not pictured).

Photo by 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson

equipped or more heavily relied upon than they are today,” said Reisch, to the audience welcoming home the Soldiers. “This unit,

the 641st, has enhanced and added to that legacy by the outstanding way that they have performed this past year in Iraq.”

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842nd Engineer Company deploys for war

By Capt. Anthony Deiss
SDNG Public Affairs Office

SPEARFISH – The South Dakota Army National Guard's 842nd Engineer Company was activated for federal service during a ceremony at the Donald E. Young Center on the Black Hills State University campus in Spearfish, Sept. 21.

The Northern Hills-based 842nd mobilized nearly 160 Soldiers for a one-year deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

"For your courage, for your persistence and determination to resist terror, wherever it may be found, and to take the War on Terror to the enemy, we thank you," said Gov. Dennis Daugaard, during the ceremony.

The 842nd's mission will be providing horizontal construction and engineering support such as building and maintaining roads, developing airfields, and providing limited clearing operations.

"The unit is also capable of building entry and traffic control points, as well as building up the bases the Soldiers live on to improve the quality of life of our service members," said Capt. Allen Godsell, 842nd commander.

"We are also able to take our mission out into the communities of Afghanistan – working to improve the quality of life of the Afghans – and share that knowledge with them so they can take part in building their own country."

The 842nd is located in three Black Hills communities, with their headquarters located in Spearfish and two detachments in Sturgis and Belle Fourche. They are equipped with bulldozers, scrapers, cranes, loaders and 20-ton dump trucks.

Along with their military equipment and specialties, Godsell said the Soldiers' civilian lives also play an important role in their mission. With careers as police officers, jailers, or as teachers, these skills provide an additional capability if asked to perform detainee operations or on humanitarian missions.

"It isn't just their job in the military that makes them great as National Guard Soldiers, but also the civilian skills sets they bring to battlefield that makes them more of an asset when we serve with the active-duty Army," said Godsell. "The members of the 842nd are high-quality individuals that bring a wealth of experience to this deployment."

This is the second mobilization for the 842nd, having deployed to Iraq for 16 months in 2003–2004. The unit contains 43 veterans, and it's this



Capt. Allen Godsell



Photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss

Spc. Tiffany Hamilton caresses her daughter Taliyah during the ceremony.

experience the unit's leadership will rely on to help develop the younger Soldiers.

"You've got to take care of your Soldiers in order to accomplish your mission over there," said 1st Sgt. Marcus Stacey, 842nd senior noncommissioned officer, who also mobilized with the unit to Iraq. "We have fantastic leadership in our NCOs who deployed the first time, and we have gone a long way to push some of that knowledge down to the younger enlisted Soldiers."

The 842nd spent nearly 20 months training and preparing for mobilization. From engineering tasks to common soldiering skills, Stacey said the unit especially focused on training that will keep the Soldiers safe.

"Our training has focused heavily on survivability and communications, which are critical to bringing our Soldiers home successfully," he said.

Now that the unit is finally activated, the unit leadership said the Soldiers are ready.

"We have been on notice for nearly two years now, and the unit is ready to go," said Godsell. "It's a blessing to have the time to prepare, because it did change our mindsets and gave us the ability to work with a unit on the ground there and to know exactly how to take care of Soldiers when we arrive."

"Now that the activation is over, the Soldiers are ready to climb

on that bus and fly down to Fort Bliss to complete our mobilization training," added Stacey. "It has been a long process, but we are ready to begin our tour in Afghanistan."

The 842nd will spend another month in-processing into the active-duty Army and conduct more theater-specific training at Fort Bliss, Texas, before departing to Afghanistan.

Sgt. Corbin Peterson holds his daughter, Blakeley, as his wife, Krista, watches during the activation ceremony.



Photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss

Guard breaks ground on readiness center

By Capt. Anthony Deiss and Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen
SDNG Public Affairs Office

WATERTOWN – The South Dakota Army National Guard broke ground, Aug. 23, on a new \$25 million Watertown Readiness Center, which will enhance training and readiness for National Guard forces for years to come.

The 80,000-square-foot readiness center is located on 30 acres of land, about one mile from the current National Guard armory, and will feature classrooms, administrative space, military vehicle parking, equipment storage and an auditorium.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard, Sen. Tim Johnson, Rep. Kristi Noem, as well as senior SDNG officials and local government and business leaders were on hand for the ceremony.

“As the men and women of our National Guard continue to answer the call at home and around the world, it is important that we provide them with the resources, including the facilities they need to do their job,” said Johnson.

“Today, we gather to celebrate this great facility to support such great men and women of our South Dakota National Guard,” said Daugaard.

The new readiness center will replace Watertown’s aging National Guard armory, which has been in existence since 1958.

“This new readiness center will provide the National Guard with more space and will help them meet their readiness training goals,” said Johnson. “For those of you who have worked

in the 53-year-old armory, you can attest that this is a much needed project.”

The Watertown Readiness Center has been given high priority in keeping with South Dakota’s plan to replace older, inadequate armories and sites, which will save in operating costs and provide areas for training to meet readiness objectives for state active-duty missions and overseas deployments.

“On occasion you would see the National Guard activated for overseas duties on behalf of our nation ... now it’s the norm,” said Daugaard. “The 147th Field Artillery has been activated three times in the past decade. It’s something we need and our Soldiers deserve. Our National Guard Soldiers are carrying a heavier burden these days than years ago.”

“Many armories were built in South Dakota during the 50s and 60s, but very few have been built in the decades that followed,” said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general for the SDNG. “The South Dakota Army National Guard currently has 29 armories in operation across this state – 14 of them are more than 40 years old and nine are more than 50 years old.”

Reisch said the federal budgets of the future will certainly make the funding of projects like this more and more difficult to come by, and long-range plans are needed to address future requirements. The process of funding new armories is lengthy and can take upward of 15 years. The Watertown Readiness Center has

been in the works since 1996.

“Today is a historic day as we officially “break ground” for the construction of our long-standing dream of having a world-class National Guard readiness center ... right here in Watertown,” said Maj. Martin Yost, administrative officer, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery. “This project represents nearly two decades of planning to bring this day to a reality.”

“Because of the vision of people like Brig. Gen. Ernie Edwards and Dean Gackstetter, as well as the commitment from the municipal leadership and the citizens of this community, Watertown has cemented their place as one of six regional readiness centers that will support the South Dakota National Guard for many years to come,” said Reisch.

In addition to providing better training and readiness capabilities for Soldiers, the state-of-the-art facility is also designed to meet Leadership Energy and Environmental Design Silver criteria – making the building energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

The readiness center is expected to be complete in the spring of 2013.

“This great nation will continue to rely on the National Guard long after we pull out of Iraq and Afghanistan, and facilities such as the one that will be built on this site will help to ensure that the South Dakota National Guard will always be ready when needed either at home or abroad,” said Reisch.



SDNG Guard leadership and state officials take part in the groundbreaking celebration at the future site of the South Dakota Army National Guard Watertown Readiness Center; Aug. 23.

Joint Force Headquarters Readiness Center



Photo by Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen

The new Joint Force Headquarters Readiness Center, valued at \$37.8 million, features a large assembly hall, 404 workstations, 10 classrooms, five conference rooms, kitchen and dining facility, and an arms vault.

Barracks and classroom building 802



Photo by Staff Sgt. Lance Schroeder

Building 802, valued at \$14.4 million, features a large auditorium, classrooms, a distance learning center, battalion and company supply rooms, and sleeping quarters.

Troop Medical Clinic



Photo by Sgt. Jacqueline Fitzgerald

The \$1.9 million addition/alteration to the Troop Medical Clinic features four offices, three exam rooms, two labs, vision test room, hearing test room, dental exam, treatment exam rooms and a pharmacy.

Camp Rapid unveils three new state-of-the-art buildings

By Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY – The South Dakota Army National Guard held a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Camp Rapid, Oct. 27, for three new state-of-the-art facilities, which will enhance training and readiness for National Guard forces for years to come.

The ceremony showcased three new buildings: the Joint Force Headquarters Readiness Center, Building 802 – Barracks and Education, and the Troop Medical Clinic addition/alteration.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard, Sen. Tim Johnson, as well as senior SDNG officials and local government and civic leaders, were on hand for the ceremony.

“We’re here to celebrate buildings in one way, but we’re also here to celebrate the National Guard,” said Daugaard. “They are our own South Dakotans who come and rescue us and help us.”

The National Guard is no longer a strategic reserve, but an operational force, meeting the needs of today and ready to face the challenges of tomorrow, said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard.

“The National Guard leaders here will attest – it is our job to make sure these troops have the best training facilities possible as we move forward,” said Reisch, during the ceremony.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen

South Dakota Army National Guard’s Joint Force Headquarters Staff Sgt. Jason Gebhard, network administrator, explains the state-of-the-art communications system in the brand new Joint Force Headquarters Readiness Center.

To help the National Guard move forward, the three new buildings combined provide the needed space for 404 workstations, an assembly hall, exercise rooms, classrooms and distance learning centers, kitchen and dining facility, company supply room and arms vault, auditorium, sleeping quarters for up to 600 troops, pharmacy, medical exam rooms and labs.

The new facilities are a part of South Dakota’s plan to replace older, inadequate armories and sites, which will save in operating costs and provide areas for training to meet readiness objectives for state active-duty missions and overseas deployments.

“What it’s really done is allow us to bring

in all the various staff sections and directorates into one building,” said Reisch. “It has fostered the communication necessary to run the National Guard.”

In addition to providing better training and readiness capabilities for service members, the state-of-the-art facilities are also designed to meet Leadership Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Silver criteria – making the buildings energy efficient and environmentally friendly.

The readiness center and barracks and education building include a geothermal heat exchanger for heating and cooling, automated temperature-control monitor, anti-terrorism/force

protection measures, security fencing and site lighting, among other features.

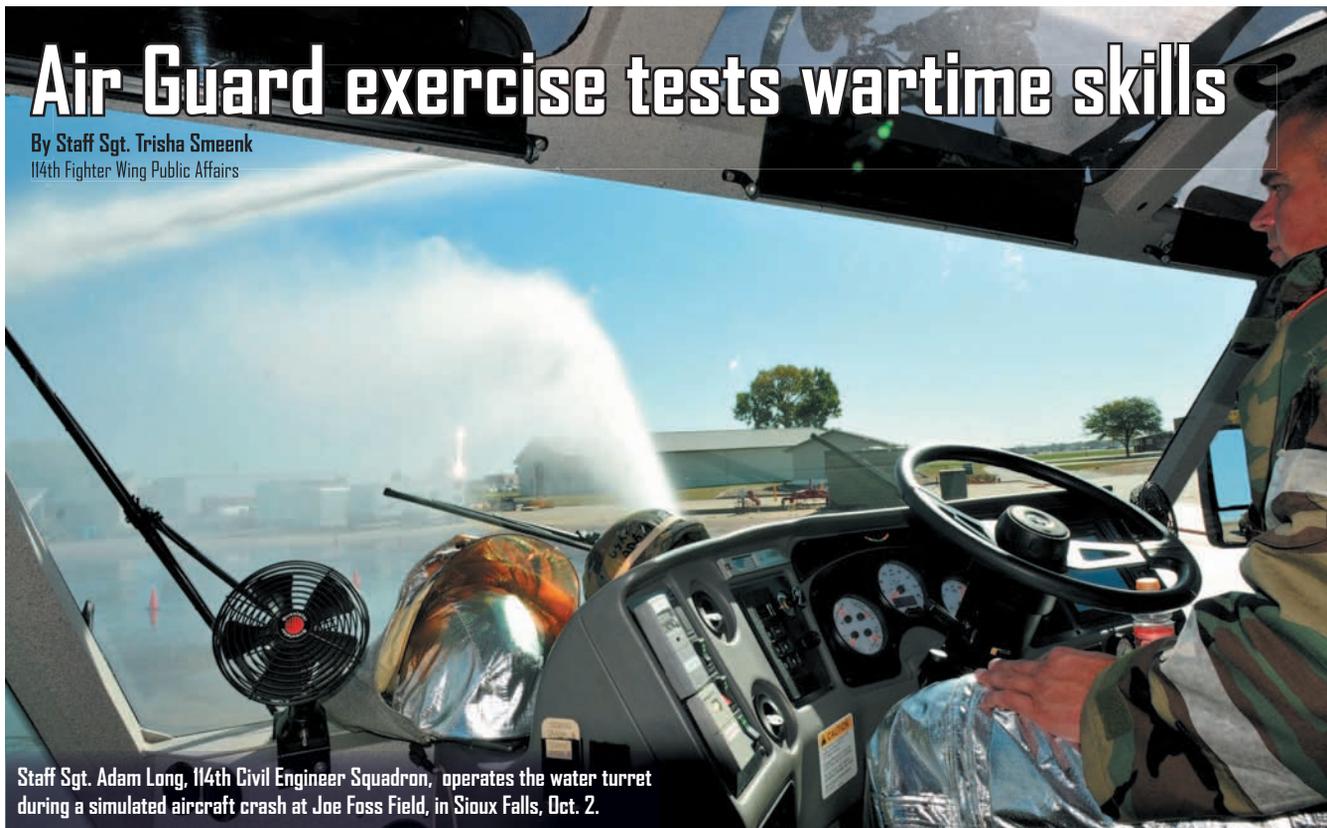
All three buildings combined cost \$54.1 million, which makes this the largest construction project in Camp Rapid history. The planning process began in the late 1980s and became a reality when ground was broke in May 2009.

Sen. Tim Johnson said he was able to secure funding for Camp Rapid by using his position as chairman of the Military Construction Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations.

“I know that this is a wise investment,” said Johnson. “Investments in the Guard are investments in the community and the security of our nation.”

Air Guard exercise tests wartime skills

By Staff Sgt. Trisha Smeenk
114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



Staff Sgt. Adam Long, 114th Civil Engineer Squadron, operates the water turret during a simulated aircraft crash at Joe Foss Field, in Sioux Falls, Oct. 2.

Photo by Tech. Sgt. Quinton Young

SIoux FALLS - The 114th Fighter Wing completed its latest Phase II Operational Readiness Exercise during their October Unit Training Assembly at Joe Foss Field, in Sioux Falls, Oct. 2. OREs are preparation for the higher headquarters Operational Readiness Inspections which are used to gauge the effectiveness of an Air National Guard unit's preparation for their wartime tasking.

Immense planning and preparation must take place to pull off an exercise of this proportion. The exercise allows members to practice possible scenarios they may encounter in a real world event. Airmen practiced in their chemical protective overgarment, trained with a new Airman's manual and learned proper procedures to take when under attack.

Senior Airman Luke Olson, a weather technician with the 175th Fighter Squadron since 2008, participated in his first ORE.

"I didn't know what to expect initially but I thought my first ORE was a success," said Olson. "Obviously there are always areas we can learn from, and the ORE is a helpful tool to get everyone on the right page as far as communication when we get ready for operations."

Communication technology is in constant change. One task of Air National Guard units

is to keep up with and even stay ahead of the cutting edge of technology. Chief Master Sergeant Bruce Lee, NCOIC of airfield operations, has seen these changes first hand.

"Younger Airmen are very advanced in technology, and we all need to keep up to date," said Lee. "During planning, we found we were moving ahead technologically which was much needed. We could no longer say 'this is the way we used to do it' for communications. Communications has advanced with the use of programs such as the Virtual Operation Center and Desktop Communicator, which help speed up the sharing of information."

Faster sharing of information means the unit must be prepared at a moment's notice for whatever comes their way. The use of these new programs is ensuring that not only is the information shared faster, but also that the reaction of the Airmen is almost instantaneous.

The last Operational Readiness Inspection took place in 2005 at Volk Field, Wis. A Phase II ORE has not taken place at the unit since then due to high operations tempo and aircraft conversion.

Historically, the 114th Fighter Wing has performed very well on higher headquarters inspections. The next Operational Readiness Inspection is expected in 2014.

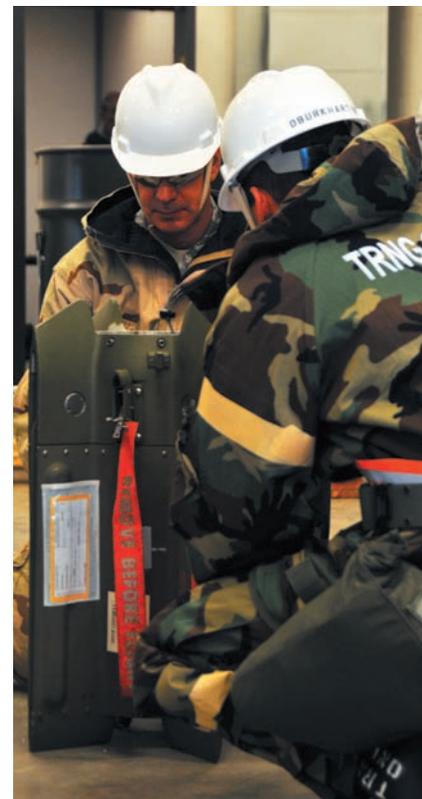


Photo by Tech. Sgt. Quinton Young

Staff Sgt. Paul Henry, 114th Maintenance Group munitions handler, performs a pre-assembly inspection on part of a GBU-12 laser guided bomb.

SOUTH DAKOTA AIR NATIONAL GUARD
OUTSTANDING
AIRMEN OF THE YEAR



Senior NCO of the Year
Master Sgt. Adam J. Punt
114th Comptroller Flight



NCO of the Year
Tech. Sgt. Scott A. Richardson
114th Maintenance Group



Airman of the Year
Senior Airman Brittnie B. Bunkers
114th Force Support Squadron



First Sergeant of the Year
Master Sgt. Kenneth A. Grunewaldt
114th Mission Support Group



Honor Guard Member of the Year
Master Sgt. Lisa G. Eisenhauer
114th Maintenance Group

NCO & SOLDIER

OF THE YEAR

By Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen
SDNG Public Affairs Office



The South Dakota Army National Guard named Sgt. James Dvorak, of Yankton, Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, and Spc. Tyler Eissler, of Rapid City, Soldier of the Year, Oct. 2, at the Duke Corning Armory on Camp Rapid. Each award is the top honor for both the noncommissioned officer and enlisted corps within the state's Army National Guard.

State Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman, SDARNG, said the NCO and Soldier of the Year competition recognizes the best Soldiers to represent the state in regional and national competitions.

"We have chosen the NCO and Soldier of the Year, but all five of the Soldiers who participated in this competition are winners," said Zimmerman. "These Soldiers have already surpassed their fellow Soldiers at the company, battalion and brigade levels and came here and did a fantastic job."

Dvorak and Eissler will represent the SDARNG at the Region 6 Best Warrior Competition held in Idaho, June 2012, where they will compete against Soldiers selected from seven other states.

They will again be tested both physically and mentally with events they've seen before such as an interview board, land navigation course, obstacle course, weapons qualification test and a physical fitness test.

NCO OF THE YEAR – SGT. JAMES DVORAK

Dvorak, a plumber with the Training Center in Rapid City, joined the National Guard in September 2000.

He is a combat veteran who deployed to Iraq with the 153rd Engineer Battalion from 2003–2005.

On the civilian side, Dvorak lives in Yankton with his wife, Crystal,

and two daughters, Ashlyn, 7, and Alexis, 5. He works for the South Dakota State Human Services Center as a psychiatric nurse. When he is not working or spending time with family, he participates in triathlons and marathons.

He recognizes that it takes support from his unit and family to be successful in the NCO of the Year competition because of the time it takes to prepare.

"My unit has been very supportive giving me extra time if needed to study, and motivating me to do my best in all of the events," said Dvorak. "My wife is going to be very proud of me, because she put up with a lot of my training by allowing me to take the time to study. I trained to be the best Soldier that my unit and family expected me to be for this competition."

Dvorak competed against Sgt. 1st Class Tom Martin, supply sergeant with the Combined Service Maintenance Shop in Rapid City and Staff Sgt. Tom Rauenhorst, fire direction control chief with Charlie Battery, 1-147th Field Artillery Battalion in Yankton.

"I want to thank the other two NCOs in this competition for making me step up," said Dvorak. "They made it challenging. I am going to try my best to represent South Dakota well at region and bring home that title."

SOLDIER OF THE YEAR - SPC. TYLER EISSLER

Eissler, a motor transport operator with the 1742nd Transportation Company, Sioux Falls, joined the National Guard in October 2008.

He is currently a full-time college student at Western Dakota Tech in Rapid City where he is studying fire science with the goal of becoming a firefighter. When Eissler is not studying, he is working part-time as a state wildland firefighter and a parenting specialist at Wellspring.

"I feel honored to earn the title of South Dakota's Soldier of the Year," said Eissler. "I trained and studied during my time off and pushed myself to learn everything I could to prepare myself for this competition."

Eissler said his mother has helped push him to go beyond what is expected of him.

"She is always proud of what I do," said Eissler. "She is always encouraging me to go after what I want."



Photo by Spc. Julieanne Morse

Sgt. James Dvorak weaves through a wooden ladder on West Camp Rapid's obstacle course.

Participating in the Soldier of the Year competition has taught Eissler the importance of becoming a well-rounded Soldier.

"It has made me realize that you have to do well at more than just your job," said Eissler. "You have to be proficient at everything you do as a Soldier."

After three years in the Army National Guard, Eissler does plan on staying in the organization until retirement, and may even become an officer.

"I love everything about the Guard," said Eissler. "The structure, the organization, the physical fitness and all the guys in my unit – they are like my brothers."

Zimmerman congratulated and presented each of the Soldiers with a coin of excellence for participating in the competition.

"It gives me shivers just to think about how you two are standing up above and beyond the 3,400 Soldiers in the South Dakota Army National Guard," Zimmerman said to the two winners. "The South Dakota Guard stands out as one of the top five in the nation. You two are nothing but top-notch. Train hard, work hard and be proud to wear the coyote patch, be proud that you are representing the South Dakota Army National Guard."



Photo by Spc. Julieanne Morse

Spc. Tyler Eissler flips Spc. Christopher Punt over during an unarmed combatives bout for the South Dakota National Guard State Soldier of the Year Competition.

Gone Fishing

Lake Oahe hosts National Walleye Tour

By Capt. Anthony Deiss
SDNG Public Affairs Office

More than 20 South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers from across the state participated in the National Guard FLW (Forrest L. Wood) Walleye Tour and Soldier Appreciation Fishing Tournaments held on Lake Oahe near Pierre, Aug. 25-27, and had the opportunity to fish with some of the best professional anglers from across the country.

Three Guard members competed as co-anglers in the FLW Walleye Tour Tournament for a chance at prize money and rating points, while 19 Soldiers participated as co-anglers in the Soldier Appreciation Tournament to earn bragging rights among their peers.

"The National Walleye Tour is the premier walleye event in the nation," said Corey Stigen, account manager for FLW Outdoors. "We had 113 boats and professional anglers that competed in this tournament."

FLW Outdoors is the nation's largest fishing tournament organization where anglers worldwide can compete for millions during the course of 191 tournaments in 2011. FLW Outdoors partners with the National Guard to host tour, major, open, walleye and college regional fishing events. Soldier appreciation tournaments are also held with these events to honor and thank Guard members for their service.

"I can't thank the Soldiers enough for what they do day-in and day-out around this country," said National Guard pro Mark Courts, of Harris, Minn. "It means the world to me to represent 350,000 men and women who represent our country so well."

Soldiers Col. Kit Cline, Sgt. 1st Class Casey Baumgarn and Staff Sgt. Josh Bryant competed as co-anglers in the FLW Walleye Tour Tournament, pairing up with a different pro angler each day. The 113 co-anglers fished with the pros for two

days with a goal to catch a up to a total of five walleyes daily – two being larger than 20 inches and three being up to, but less than 20 inches. After two days of fishing, all 113 pros and 113 co-anglers competed individually to have the highest fish weight total. The top 10 pro and co-angler finishers went on to compete as pairs in a third day of fishing, and a chance for top rating points and cash earnings.

While the co-anglers are able to compete for prize money and rating points, Bryant said it's more about the experience.

"It's an honor to come out here and fish with these great fishermen and professionals. It's a once-in-a-life-time opportunity," said Bryant, recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer, of Redfield. "It was an awesome experience, and I learned a lot from these professional fishermen."

Cline, of Rapid City, and assigned to Joint Force Headquarters, placed 18th overall with a catch of five walleyes on day one, weighing in at 16 pounds, 1 ounce, and five walleyes on day two, weighing in at 14-2. Bryant finished in 41st place with a 27-9 two-day total, and Baumgarn, of Webster, finished in 107th place with a 17-7 two-day total. Retired Master Sgt. Gary Kafka, of Pierre, place 4th overall as a co-angler with a total of 15 walleyes and a weight of 48-10.

In conjunction with the final day of the FLW Walleye Tour Tournament was the

"It means the world to me to represent 350,000 men and women who represent our country so well."

**— Mark Courts
National Guard sponsored
Professional Angler**



Soldier Appreciation Tournament. In this tournament, 10 FLW pro anglers took 19 National Guard members – in teams of two – fishing to compete among their peers in a one-day, winner-take-all event. Each team was allowed to bring in three walleyes.

"These Soldiers went out with the pros that did not make the final top-10 cut, and they had a great day of fishing," said Stigen.

After competing all day, the Soldiers took to the stage and weighed in directly before the pros.

"The feedback we get from the pros is awesome," said Stigen. "They love taking the Soldiers out."

"It's us giving back a little bit. I know it's not a lot, but in every town that we go to and do this, the Soldiers really appreciate it, and we appreciate it more," said Courts. "We appreciate what these guys do for us in defending our country and around the states. With all the disasters you guys have had around the Dakotas this year, in Minnesota, and down south with tornados, you guys are right there at all times."

Brothers Sgt. Jason Wellnitz and Spc. Matt Wellnitz, both of Milbank and assigned to the 740th Transportation Company, won the



National Guard pro angler Mark Courts (right) reels in a walleye with the assistance of co-angler David Dedecker.

Photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss

Soldier Appreciation Tournament. The team, fishing with Chevy pro Jason Przekurat, of Stevens Point, Wis., caught three walleyes for a total of 13 pounds to take the title.

This was such a great experience," said Sgt. Jason Wellnitz, in a FLW press release. "This is the first time I have done anything like this, and it was incredible. I fish quite a bit, but this was my first time on Oahe, and we learned so much from Jason [Przekurat]."

However, no matter where they finished in the standings, Guard members in both tournaments had a great time learning from the pros.

"Everyone that comes out here as an amateur is going to learn a few things and catch a lot of fish with these pros," said Baumgarn, recruiting and retention noncommissioned officer. "All of these people here are so appreciative of us being Soldiers. It's an awesome experience, and it's a morale booster for the Soldiers."

"Jason Przekurat was a real pro and walked us through everything, put us on fish, and we had a ton of fun," said Spc. Matt Wellnitz, in a FLW press release. "I am not a fisherman but have fished a little before now. This was my first time on Oahe as well. What a great day!"



Sgt. Jason Wellnitz and Spc. Matt Wellnitz, both of Milbank and assigned to the 740th Transportation Company, SDARNG, hold up their winning walleye catch, along with Chevy pro Jason Przekurat, during the FLW Soldier Appreciation Tournament.

Courtesy photo by FLW



Staff Sgt. Josh Bryant, left, co-angler and SDARNG recruiting and retention NCO from Redfield, reels in a walleye as pro angler Dave Hennings nets the catch.

Photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss

Rounding out the Soldier Appreciation teams and place finishes were:

2nd: Master Sgt. Eric Jennings, Rapid City, and Sgt. Travis Tipton, Pierre, fishing with pro Kevin Carstensen, three walleyes, 11-2.

3rd: Sgt. 1st Class Bob McGeehon, Rapid City, and Senior Master Sgt. Steve Abraham (Air National Guard), Rapid City, fishing with Off! pro Chris Gilman, Chisago City, Minn., three walleyes, 10-5.

4th: Pfc. Trevor McDaniel, Aberdeen, and Staff Sgt. Kurt Bies, Salem, fishing with pro Terry Filkens, Lake City, Minn., three walleyes, 10-1.

5th: CW5 (retired) Bill Waeckerle, Akaska, and Staff Sgt. Steve Haiten, New Salem, N.D., fishing with Amp/Diet Mountain Dew pro John Balla, Bartlett, Ill., three walleyes, 9-13.

6th: CW2 Matt Spaans, Rapid City, fishing with pro Marianne Husky, Shawano, Wis., three walleyes, 9-11.

7th: Sgt. Shawn Wellnitz, Milbank, and Spc. Nick Boerger, Milbank, fishing with National Guard pro Bill Shimota, Lonsdale, Minn., three walleyes, 9-7.

8th: Staff Sgt. Matt Baumgarn, Webster, and Sgt. 1st Class Chad Haaland, Volga, fishing with pro Kevin McQuoid, Isle, Minn., three walleyes, 7-11.

9th: Spc. Cody Krieger, Ft. Pierre, and 1st Sgt. Kory Urban, Huron, fishing with Eggo pro Brian Brosdahl, Max, Minn., three walleyes, 6-3.

10th: Sgt. 1st Class Chancey Shrake, Pierre, and Staff Sgt. Kevin Sabers, Salem, fishing with pro Daniel Stapleton, Wentworth, three walleyes, 4-10.

Kelpin ends tenure as ESGR state chair

By Capt. Anthony Deiss
SDNG Public Affairs Office

In 1996, Donald Kelpin decided he wanted to volunteer his time helping those who help others – National Guard and Reserve service members. As a volunteer for the South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, or SD ESGR, he helped to resolve issues between local employers and service members in communities throughout the state.

Nearly 15 years later, Kelpin is at the top of the SD ESGR ranks as the state chair, steering the efforts of the state's committee; providing leadership, guidance and support to nearly 50 volunteers statewide.

On Oct. 1, Kelpin turned over the reins of the state chair position to Ronald Mielke, a retired brigadier general who served as the assistant adjutant general for the South Dakota Air National Guard from 1995–2002.

Mielke will continue Kelpin's efforts that have left a lasting impression on how employers and service members understand their rights and responsibilities toward one another.

"Don's leadership and dedication as the state chair has been truly outstanding," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general for the South Dakota National Guard. "The South Dakota National Guard will be forever in his debt."

For eight years, Kelpin served in the state chair's role, where he volunteered more than 5,000 hours overseeing all the activities of ESGR's military outreach, employer outreach and ombudsman services. ESGR is a Department of Defense volunteer agency that seeks to promote a culture in which all American employers support and value the military service of their employees. ESGR recognizes outstanding support, increases awareness of the law, and resolves conflicts through informal mediation.

"It's been a rewarding eight years, and I had the opportunity to work with and know the leadership of the Guard and Reserve all the way through the ranks, and to work with the employers and our volunteers," said Kelpin, of Sioux Falls. "It's been an absolute blessing to have the opportunity to do it, and it's been an honor to serve in this capacity for as long as I have."

Before 9–11, the National Guard and Reserve would not fully know the burden to be placed upon them, or their employers that



Mr. Donald Kelpin

support them, in the midst of upcoming and continual deployments in two wars during the span of a decade.

Kelpin stepped into the chair's seat at a critical time, just as the South Dakota National Guard began to see troops deploy at rates not seen since World War II. His leadership would prove invaluable to both organizations.

"The Guard members and Reservists of South Dakota, during one of the most intensive periods of reliance upon our nation's reserve components, have experienced exceptional support from the ESGR committee," said Lt. Col. Reid Christopherson, Air National Guard advisor to the SD ESGR Committee. "As state chairman, Don Kelpin has provided unprecedented leadership and support. His tireless contributions have clearly distinguished him as a patriot and friend."

During his tenure, Kelpin saw more than 4,600 Army Guardsmen and more than 1,000 Air Guardsmen deploy overseas.

"The changes that have taken place after 9–11 have really changed the significance of the work ESGR does today," said Kelpin. "With nearly 50 percent of our military found in the Guard and Reserve, and most of our service members having been activated at least once – some three or four times – it puts an awful lot of pressure on the employers.

"We changed a lot of programs to make them more effective," continued Kelpin. "We wanted to be a more effective spokesman

for the employers, as well as the service members."

Kelpin volunteered as an ombudsman during his first seven years in ESGR, where he provided education, information, consultation and mediation services between employers and service members. In October 2003, he stepped up to serve as the acting state chair and was then selected to the state chair's position for two consecutive three-year terms.

"I served two years longer than what I was supposed to," said Kelpin. "I was the vice chair. I took over when Al Cornella was the state chair, and he became the overseas base closing commissioner with Sen. Tom Daschle."

At Cornella's request and with ESGR's national headquarters' approval, Kelpin stayed on as chair.

"Cornella's (overseas base closing) program ran longer – two years longer – than he expected, and we restructured the committee dividing the state up into four regions, which we didn't have before. Al said he would step down and let me to continue to run with it," he said.

Now more than ever, Kelpin said ESGR and the role of the National Guard and Reserve will be important for years to come.

"Critically important is the job we have and are doing right now," he said. "The Guard and Reserve is no longer the strategic reserve force that it was originally intended to be. It's part of our frontline defense in the United States today, and I don't see that changing in the near future with the downsizing of our regular standing military. There is going to be continued emphasis put on our Guard and Reserve. That's going to make our job with ESGR even more important."

Kelpin said when he first started, they were processing approximately 30–35 Patriot Awards a year – an award service members submit for outstanding employer support – working to get those numbers up.

"During the past few years, we have averaged 400 nominations a year. This year, with many service members on state active duty for the Missouri River flooding, we've processed about 1,000 Patriot Awards," said Kelpin. "That speaks volumes for the volunteers, service members and employers of South Dakota."

Additionally, several South Dakota employers have been nationally recognized

for their support. In the last eight years, four employers have won the Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award – the highest recognition given by the U.S. government to employers for their support of their employees.

Just 15 employers are chosen nationwide for this annual award. Past recipients include South Dakota State University in 2005, South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks in 2006, Winner School District in 2008, and this year’s recipient, St. John’s Lutheran Church of Yankton in 2011.

“We’ve also had a record four years and four months without one single employer or service member complaint having to be elevated to the national level with the federal Department of Labor,” said Kelpin.

ESGR volunteers have seven days to resolve a complaint involving the loss of a job or wages, and 14 days to resolve all other issues.

“SD ESGR resolved all cases at the local level without referring to the Department of Labor for almost four and a half years,” said Kelpin. “I credit that success to ESGR’s really excellent ombudsmen, the service members and employers we have here in South Dakota. That’s a record that will probably never be broken by anybody ever again.”

Kelpin, however, gives all the credit to his team.

“It’s been a team effort, and I cannot say enough about our teams – the employers, the military and our dedicated volunteers. They deserve all the credit,” he said. “We’ve been ahead of the ESGR national curve in South Dakota.”

For three years now, the SD ESGR program has been providing Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act training with employers. SD ESGR ombudsmen also work in conjunction with the Department of Labor – something that will become a requirement next year for all ESGR committees across the nation.

Kelpin has also received recognition for his efforts. He was awarded the Secretary of Defense Medal for Exceptional Public Service in 2011, the Spirit of Volunteerism Award for Lifetime Achievement in 2008 and 2010, the Williamson Militiaman Award in 2007, and the Presidential Volunteer Service Award in 2005 for 4,897 volunteer hours.

“It was such a great honor to receive those awards,” he said.

But by no means is Kelpin done serving with the ESGR program. He still plans to continue serving as a volunteer for years to come.



Photo by Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen

“ESGR is an extremely important organization working with Guard and Reserve members and employers, and I plan on continuing to pledge my support for years to come,” said Kelpin.

Don Kelpin, state chair of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (left), and Maj. Gen. Timothy Reisch, adjutant general of the South Dakota National Guard (right), witness Craig Nelson, jail administrator for the Brown County Sheriff’s Office, signing the ESGR Statement of Support.

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Air Guard receives Spruance Safety Award

By Lt. Col. Reid Christopherson
114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

The Airmen of the South Dakota National Guard's 114th Fighter Wing, South Dakota Air National Guard, have once again distinguished themselves as one of the top Air National Guard fighter units in the nation.

The 'Fightin' Lobos' were selected as the 2011 recipient of the Air National Guard's William W. Spruance Safety Award, Aug. 29.

The trophy is awarded annually to the Air National Guard unit which made the most significant contribution to accident prevention. The presentation was made by Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, director of the Air National Guard, at the annual conference of the National Guard Association of the United States in Milwaukee, Wis.

"The selection for this prestigious award provides strong affirmation by U.S. Air

Force leaders of their confidence in the contributions of the South Dakota Air National Guard to our nation's defense," said Col. Russ Walz, commander of the 114th Fighter Wing. "Recognitions such as the William W. Spruance Safety Award provide significant validation of our unit's readiness to continually step into new missions."

The 114th Fighter Wing was recently selected as one of the few Air National Guard units in the nation to convert from the Block 30 F-16, which it has flown since 1992, to the newer and more advanced Block 40 F-16. During the past two decades, the unit has deployed eight times to allied bases in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq, flying combat missions in Southwest Asia.

"This award serves as yet another testament to the superiority of the 114th

Fighter Wing over virtually every other wing in the nation," said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG.

The award was named for retired Brig. Gen. William W. Spruance (1916-2011), former assistant adjutant general for the Air National Guard in the state of Delaware. After surviving a near-fatal crash as a passenger in a T-33 aircraft in 1961, resulting in extensive burns, he began a lifelong and legendary safety mission that took him to dozens of bases in the U.S. and around the world to make more than 2,000 presentations on flying safety and crash survival.

This is the third time the trophy has been awarded to the South Dakota Air National Guard. It was previously received in 1987 and 1995.

Army recruiters win regional competition

By Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen
SDNG Public Affairs Office

The South Dakota Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion was recognized as the top recruiters in Region 6 from May through July and were awarded the Lewis and Clark Challenge trophy for the fifth time in the history of the competition.

The SDARNG R&R Battalion placed ahead of Montana, Alaska, North Dakota, Idaho, Oregon, Washington and Wyoming in the annual challenge – designed to recognize recruiters for their efforts during the typically slow summer months.

The winner of the Lewis and Clark Challenge is determined by the number of Soldiers enlisted, the academic, physical and moral fitness of the Soldiers, and the number of Soldiers who were shipped to basic training. All three areas are accumulated for the final score.

South Dakota rose to the top by having 68 out of 70 Soldiers shipped to basic training, and 97 percent of their enlistments are high school graduates.

"Our recruiter's perseverance in finding new recruits has paid off," said Lt. Col. Joseph Jacobson, Recruiting and Retention Battalion commander. "I am proud of every member of our recruiting force. In my opinion our region is the best in the nation, and achieving this award means we are the best of the best."

The entire Region 6 traveled to Whitefish, Mont., Aug. 23, for the three-day Lewis and Clark Challenge event to participate in sales and motivational training workshops, team building activities and network with successful recruiters from other states.

The event ended with a banquet where the SDARNG R&R Battalion received the traveling trophy to be displayed in the Recruiting and Retention office until next year.

"It's going to be tough to win again next year," said Jacobson. "Region 6 is really good. Any of the other states could have won this year, but we are going to do our best and continue to exceed the standards and keep the trophy next year."



Changes made to Tuition Assistance process

By CW2 Christian Johnson
SDARNG Education Office

What is GoArmyEd?

GoArmyEd is the virtual gateway for all eligible Active Duty, National Guard and Army Reserve Soldiers to request Tuition Assistance online, anytime, anywhere for classroom and distance learning. It allows Soldiers to manage their education records including college classes, testing, on-duty classes and Army Education Counselor support.

Are there any obstacles for Soldiers with the ARNG switching to GoArmyEd?

Yes. Soldiers will need to be more proactive when applying for TA. Soldiers cannot apply after the drop/add date at their school which is typically 10 days into a term. My office will not have the flexibility it had previously. For example we will not be able to grant exceptions to policy and procedures. A board at Army Continuing Education System will make any determinations on cases for Soldiers that apply late.

What are the benefits of the ARNG switching to GoArmyEd?

Soldiers will no longer need a CAC reader to log in to apply for their TA, which was a major challenge to the previous TA system. Soldiers can also create their own Helpdesk cases if they run into an issue during our no-duty hours.

Will your office still have a role in Soldiers' TA?

Our office will have a HUGE role. Our TA manager, who will be reviewing and approving actions, will also play a key role in resolving issues in GoArmyEd. We will also be helping schools resolve issues they encounter with GoArmyEd. Our office will also award the STATE 50 percent tuition assistance from the applications received in GoArmyEd.

What actions do Soldiers need to take?

The first step all Soldiers should take NOW is to set up an account. There is a step-by-step

video with instructions on the GoArmyEd website at www.goarmyed.com. We also have tools available on our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/SDNGEducation.

Who should a Soldier contact if they have a problem with GoArmyEd?

Soldiers should contact their school, their unit, and our office at esosd@sd.ngb.army.mil or (605) 737-6621. They may also want to visit our Facebook page to check for an answer. If they run into a case that needs to be resolved immediately, they can call the GoArmyEd Help Desk at 1-800-817-9990 or create a case on the website.



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SNAPSHOTS



Photo by Master Sgt. Nancy Ausland



Photo by Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen



Photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss

(Clockwise from top left) Lt. Col. Harrison Lippert, 114th Fighter Wing chaplain, receives pre-flight instructions from Col. Russ Walz, 114th Fighter Wing commander, prior to his flight in the F-16 aircraft at Joe Foss Field, in Sioux Falls, Aug. 16.

Spc. Duayne Ruona, of Buffalo, brushes the hair of his daughter, Isabel, 2, before the 451st Engineer Detachment (Firefighting Team) activation ceremony at the Sturgis National Guard armory, Sept. 16.

The 114th Fighter Wing's F-16 block 40 aircraft sit on the flightline as the sun sets at Joe Foss Field, in Sioux Falls, Aug. 25.

Participants in the 8th annual Black Hills Veterans Honor March take off from the start line, Sept. 24, near Rochford, as they embark on the 26.2-mile march along the Mickelson Trail toward the finish line in Deadwood.





Photo by Spc. Julieanne Morse



Photo by Sgt. Rebecca Linder



Photo by Sgt. Tyler Vanhecke-927th Survey and Design team UPAR

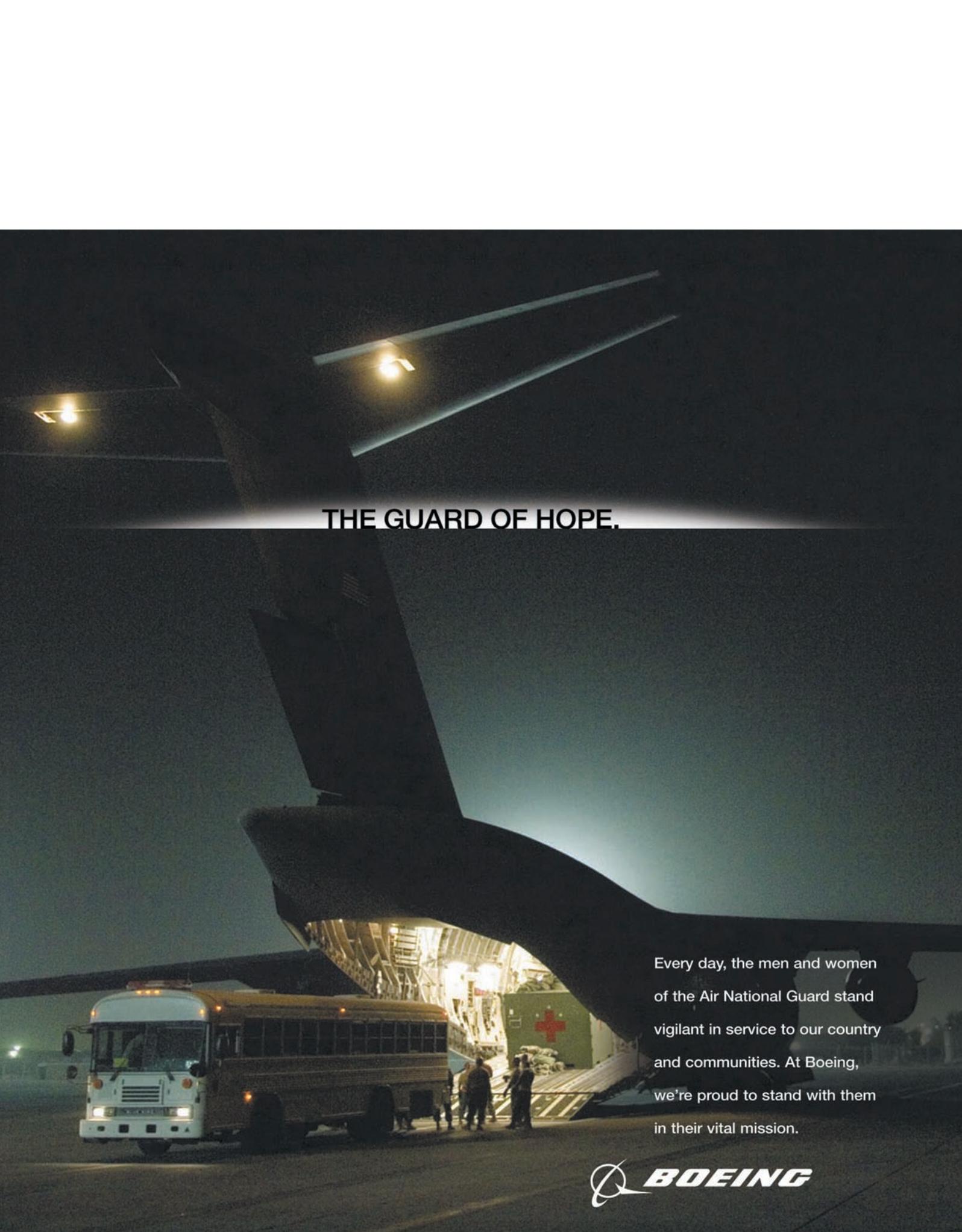
(Clockwise) Spc. Christopher Punt, a competitor in the South Dakota Army National Guard Soldier of the Year competition, clears a wooden beam by swinging on a rope during the obstacle course Oct. 1, in Rapid City.

Ten-year-old London Van Sickle, a student at Journey Elementary in the Harrisburg school district, helps land an OH-58 helicopter flown by members of the South Dakota National Guard Counterdrug program, during the annual Red Ribbon Week billboard unveil event on Sept. 26.

The South Dakota's Army National Guard's 927th Survey and Design team clean the ditches east of Brandon as part of the Adopt-a-Highway program, Aug. 21.



Photo by Master Sgt. Nancy Ausland



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