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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

South Dakota Soldier killed in Iraq

PIERRE, S.D. - The Department of Defense announced today the death of a Soldier who was supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Staff Sgt. Zachary Tomczak, 24, of Huron, S.D., was a combat infantryman and squad leader with Company B, 2nd Battalion, 325th Airborne Infantry Regiment (AIR), 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne Division. Tomczak died of wounds sustained from enemy small arms fire on Tuesday, Sept. 25, in Baghdad, Iraq.

“We join family and fellow South Dakotans in mourning the tragic loss of this outstanding Soldier and warrior,” said Governor Mike Rounds. “It is with great honor and respect for all our men and women in uniform that we acknowledge the importance of the service and sacrifice they make every day to protect and guard our freedom. Please remember Zachary's family in your thoughts and prayers.”

“Staff Sgt. Zachary Tomczak, a leader, mentor, warrior, Ranger, hero,” began Capt. Jason L. Gardel, the rear detachment commander for 2nd Battalion, 325th AIR. “These are only a few words that I can use to express the loss that Staff Sgt. Tomczak will be to his fellow Soldiers.”

Tomczak joined the Army in June 2002. He completed Infantry One Station Unit Training in September 2002, the Basic Airborne Course in November 2002, and Ranger School in 2007 at Fort Benning, Ga.

He arrived to the 82nd Airborne Division, Fort Bragg, N.C., in November 2002 and was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 325th AIR as a machine gunner.

“The White Falcon Battalion (2nd Bn., 325th AIR) will miss him dearly,” added Gardel. “Staff Sgt. Tomczak and his family will forever be in our prayers.”

Tomczak had three previous deployments with 2nd Battalion, 325th AIR in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Tomczak's awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart, the Army Commendation Medal, the Army Good Conduct Medal with two clasps, the National Defense Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development Ribbon with the number 2, the Army Service Ribbon, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Expert Infantryman Badge, the Parachutist Badge, and the Ranger Tab.

The unit will hold a memorial service in Iraq. Further details about funeral arrangements will be announced when they become available.