

South Dakota National Guard
Public Affairs Office
2823 West Main St.
Rapid City, S.D. 57702

Phone 605-737-6721
E-mail PAO@sd.ngb.army.mil

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

B Battery wraps up training and will head home for Christmas

By Spc. Charles Butler, unit public affairs representative

CAMP SHELBY, Miss. – Just days away from concluding their pre-deployment training, Soldiers of Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery are preparing to move back into the field for one last training exercise and then head home for Christmas.

Yesterday, the South Dakota Army National Guardsmen headed out for a five-day validation exercise that will test them on all of the skills they have mastered over the past two months training that will be needed for the unit's upcoming deployment. Soldiers will conduct convoy security missions comparable to operations they will encounter in Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

“This is to be some of the most intensive training that we have gone through thus far and will test our abilities,” said Sgt 1st Class Anthony Donovan of Chamberlain. “It will be nice to put all the tasks that we have been training on for the past six weeks together and use them in one exercise.”

Bravo Battery's most recent training was focused on perfecting the mounted combat patrol where Soldiers broke up into convoy sized elements and ran through multiple live-fire ranges. The troops learned to react to contact and shoot on the move. As the convoys traveled down the range roads, multiple targets popped up allowing the turret gunners atop humvees to engage the “threat” with disciplined and well-aimed fire. The training proved to be challenging and was conducted during both day and nighttime conditions.

“Shooting at targets on the move was excellent training for what we may encounter,” said Spc. Austin Jaeger of Sioux Falls. “It was something new for me to shoot on the move; usually we are stationary when we go to the range, so that was exciting.”

Last week, the Soldiers from the Salem and Sioux Falls based unit were visited by the battalion's leadership to check on the quality of training and ensure living conditions at Camp Shelby are meeting the unit's needs.

“They are doing an outstanding job representing South Dakota,” said Lt. Col. Jerald Somsen, the battalion commander. “The Soldiers are really taking ownership of their duties and are extremely well led and trained”.

Even though the troops are focused on the final training exercise, knowing they will be coming home for Christmas makes all the hard work worth while.

Sioux Falls businesses, community members and fellow South Dakotans raised the necessary funds to purchase a chartered aircraft that will fly the entire unit home for a well deserved four-day holiday break.

“It’s great to see all the support we are getting from home,” said Maj. Kory Knight of Hartford, the battery commander. “I would like to let everyone know how thankful all the Soldiers of Bravo Battery are of everyone who contributed in making this precious holiday break with our families a reality. It will be a Christmas to remember.”

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Photo Cut Lines

20071208-A-0933B-004: Lt. Col. Jerald Somsen, commander for 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, visits with Soldiers of Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, on Dec. 8 during mounted combat patrol training at Camp Shelby, Miss. (Army photo by Spc. Charles Butler)(Released)

Link to photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/20071208-A-0933B-004.jpg>

20071208-A-0933B-005: Maj. Bruce Cater, executive officer for 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, visits with Staff Sgt. Kurt Bies of Salem on Dec. 8 during mounted combat patrol training at Camp Shelby, Miss. (Army photo by Spc. Charles Butler)(Released)

Link to photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/20071208-A-0933B-005.jpg>

20071206-A-0933B-002: Spc Benjamin Cook, Sioux Falls, prepares his M-2 .50 caliber machine gun before heading out to the firing line on Dec. 6 during mounted combat patrol training at Camp Shelby, Miss. (Army photo by Spc. Charles Butler)(Released)

Link to photo: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/released/20071206-A-0933B-002.jpg>

FOR MORE INFORMATION, please contact Maj. Orson Ward at (605) 737-6721, or cell (605) 431-8753.

NOTE: Since the terrorist attacks on America, the South Dakota National Guard has mobilized more than 3,100 Soldiers and 700 Airmen in support of the Global War on Terror.

Currently, more than 150 Soldiers and Airmen from the South Dakota National Guard remain on duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. More than 4,000 National Guardsmen are available in South Dakota to provide support for state and national emergencies and homeland defense.