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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Partnership provides unique training opportunity

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. – The South Dakota Air National Guard and the U.S. Civil Air Patrol conducted a joint intercept training mission this weekend in the skies over northeast Nebraska.

The Sioux Falls Composite Squadron of the South Dakota Civil Air Patrol Wing used its Cessna 182 aircraft in the exercise to simulate a potential threat. The CAP aircraft was intercepted by F-16 Fighting Falcons originating from the Air National Guard base in Sioux Falls and were escorted to law enforcement authorities at a nearby airport.

The purpose of this exercise was to help military personnel maintain a level of readiness to properly deal with potential terrorist threats made by aircraft.

“The pilots gained valuable experience using all the aircraft systems to find the target aircraft,” said Lt. Col. Russ Limke, director of operations with the Air Guard. “They then had to follow appropriate intercept procedures to deal with the situation being presented.”

This was also an important training exercise for practical physical reasons. The Cessna 182, a fairly typical private aircraft, weighs about 3,000 pounds and has a cruising speed of around 167 mph. The F-16, by contrast, weighs almost 30,000 pounds and has a cruising speed of about 577 mph.

“We look forward to working with the South Dakota Air Guard on this mission,” said Col. Michael Beason, commander of the South Dakota CAP Wing. “It's important that the Air Guard pilots are able to train in conditions that are realistic. This provides that realism.”

The Sioux Falls Composite Squadron of the U.S. Civil Air Patrol is one of nine squadrons in the South Dakota Wing. Its headquarters squadron is located in Rapid City with additional squadrons in Aberdeen, Brookings, Custer, Philip, Pierre, Spearfish and Yankton. The U.S. Civil Air Patrol is an auxiliary of the United States Air Force.

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