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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Guard unit to return after one year in Afghanistan

RAPID CITY, S.D. – After spending one year in Afghanistan, 130 Soldiers from the 235th Military Police Company, South Dakota Army National Guard, will arrive back in South Dakota at 10:15 a.m. (MDT) on Thursday, Jan. 17, at the Westjet Air Center next to the Rapid City Regional Airport and then be transported by bus to meet with their families at the Range Road Armory.

The public is encouraged to attend an official welcome home ceremony at 1 p.m. on Thursday, Jan. 17, at the Rapid City Civic Center Theater.

“We are all looking forward to seeing these troops back in South Dakota,” said Maj. Gen. Steven Doohen, adjutant general. “I am tremendously proud of their service and I hope everyone turns out to welcome these Soldiers home.”

The 235th Military Police Company is headquartered in Rapid City with detachments in Custer and Sioux Falls.

While in Afghanistan, the unit’s total strength was made up of 130 Soldiers from the South Dakota Army National Guard along with 27 Soldiers from the 1125th Military Police Company, Missouri Army National Guard.

The unit began its 12-month “boots-on-ground” deployment in January of 2007 and conducted various security missions in support of Operation Enduring Freedom from four separate locations; Bagram Air Base, Forward Operating Base Salerno located just north of Khwost, FOB Fenty at the Jalalabad Airfield in northeastern Afghanistan, and at Camp Eggers in Kabul.

The unit’s operations included law-and-order and convoy security missions, provincial reconstruction team site security, customs inspections, and detainee security. The unit also provided additional support to the bases where unit members were stationed. With a mobilized reactionary force, the 235th provided immediate military response in case of an incident or attack.

Unit members arrived in the United States last night at Fort Carson, Colo., where they will complete the demobilization process prior to returning to South Dakota.

Tentative Arrival and Ceremonial Timeline

10:15 a.m. - Arrival in South Dakota, Westjet Air Center, Rapid City Regional Airport.

10:45 a.m. - Depart for Range Road Armory aboard buses.

11:15 a.m. - Arrive at Range Road Armory.

11:15 – 12:30 p.m. - Family time and parade preparation.

12:30 – 1 p.m. – Parade: The start point will be at the Range Road Armory. The parade will travel west along Range Road to Raider Road, north along South 44th Street to West Chicago Street, east along West Chicago Street to West Omaha Street, north on North 8th Street to the Rapid City Civic Center.

1 - 2 p.m. – Official Welcome Home Ceremony at the Rapid City Civic Center Theater.

235th Military Police Company Deployment Statistics

- Traveled 21,210 miles escorting logistical convoys.
- Provided 146,026 hours of security for detainees.
- Successfully conducted 349 Bagram security zone missions. Missions included village assessments, Afghan National Police training, route reconnaissance and screening, explosive ordinance disposal escort, VIP escort, listening and observation post operations, cordon and search operations, humanitarian aid and quick reaction force operations.
- Provided 14,336 hours of law-and-order at FOB Salerno, FOB Fenty and Camp Eggers.
- Successfully conducted 1,215 mobile reactionary force missions. Missions included route reconnaissance and screening, explosive ordinance disposal escort, VIP escort, listening and observation post operations, humanitarian aid, quick reaction force missions and indirect-fire patrols.
- Provided 165 personnel security details including the following VIPs:
 - Secretary of Defense Robert Gates
 - Deputy Secretary of Defense Gordon England
 - Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. George Casey
 - Vice President Dick Cheney

- Secretary of the Army Peter Geren
 - Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Peter Pace
 - Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Adm. Michael Mullins
 - Commander of Combined Joint Task Force 82 Maj. Gen. David Rodriguez
 - South Dakota Governor M. Michael Rounds
- Conducted customs security inspections on 822 containers, 300 pallets and 4,100 service members.
 - Spent 365 days in Afghanistan and 427 days away from home.
 - Nine Soldiers became fathers while in Afghanistan.
 - Received five Bronze Star Medals, 17 Meritorious Service Medals, 46 Army Commendation Medals, 63 Army Achievement Medals, four Joint Service Commendation Medals, 135 NATO International Security Assistance Force Medals and two Army Combat Action Badges with five pending approval.

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MEDIA ADVISORY – Media representatives are welcome to cover the arrival of the 235th Military Police Company at the Westjet Air Center, Rapid City Regional Airport, at a designated media viewing area. No interviews of returning Soldiers will be allowed until the end of the official welcome home ceremony the Rapid City Civic Center Theater. The South Dakota National Guard is requesting that all media representatives maintain an observatory distance until this time as not to impede the movement of these Soldiers as they reunite with families and friends.

The South Dakota National Guard Public Affairs Office recommends that media capture the reunion of the Soldiers and their families as they depart the bus at the Range Road Armory. Media will not be allowed into the Range Road Armory during family time and parade preparation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION - please contact Maj. Orson Ward at (605) 737-6721, 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 200 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.