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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

South Dakota's "Coyote One" training in Germany for April deployment to Afghanistan

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota Army National Guard Embedded Training Team, known as "Coyote One," departed for Germany Wednesday, March 5, where its members will receive training to prepare them for a 10-12 month tour in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

The 16-member unit will spend the next three weeks at the Combat Maneuver Training Center in Hohenfels, Germany, where they will train with NATO forces from Canada, France, Germany and Norway, as well as forces from Afghanistan. The training in Germany is part of the unit's pre-deployment training it has been conducting at Fort Riley, Kan., since Jan. 23.

Lt. Col. John Weber, commander of "Coyote One", recently returned from a "site visit" in Afghanistan where he got first-hand experience and knowledge of the mission his unit can expect to take on.

"Our mission, as of now, is to train and advise the Afghan police and that is not a traditional mission for us," said Weber. "We'll rely on our basic Soldier skills and provide them with concepts of leadership, organizational and operational skills."

Weber said he became familiar with the various communications systems, convoy operations and other missions that his team will have to perform. He also learned things about the Afghan culture that will help the group.

The Afghan Army is learning to fight the head-on battles with Taliban and al Qaeda forces but there is an equal emphasis getting the Afghan Police Force trained and proficient in order to keep law-and-order in the communities.

"Coyote One" is made up of senior NCOs and officers with variety of military backgrounds that include expertise in artillery, engineer, communication and transportation fields, but according to Weber the most important skills come from each individuals leadership strengths and experience outside the military.

“I think the biggest factor will be the skills these Soldiers bring from their civilian jobs,” said Weber. “They’re administrators, computer folks and we even have a postmaster.”

With “Coyote One” working at an advisory level, Weber points out that his team’s mission will include intense problem solving as well as dealing with people where leadership skills will prove most important.

Weber is especially proud of the fact that all of his team members are volunteers.

“That speaks well of South Dakota,” he said. “It’s a patriotic state and it is made up of people who want to make a difference by serving their country.”

The team is expected to be on the ground in Afghanistan by mid-April.

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

NOTE: Since the Sept. 11 attacks on America, the South Dakota National Guard has mobilized more than 3,100 Soldiers and 730 Airmen in support of the Global War on Terrorism. More than 230 Soldiers and Airmen from the South Dakota National Guard remain on duty in Iraq, Afghanistan and other areas throughout Southwest Asia. More than 4,000 National Guardsmen are serving in a non-active duty status in South Dakota and continue to provide support for state and national emergencies and homeland defense.