

# South Dakota National Guard

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **South Dakota Air National Guard receives Spruance Safety Award**

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. – The Airmen of the 114<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, South Dakota Air National Guard, have once again distinguished themselves as one of top the Air National Guard fighter units in the nation. The Fightin’ Lobos were selected as the 2011 recipient of the Air National Guard’s William W. Spruance Safety Award on Aug. 29, 2011.

The trophy is awarded annually to the Air National Guard Unit which made the most significant contribution to accident prevention. The presentation was made by Lt. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt III, director, Air National Guard at the annual conference of the National Guard Association of the United States in Milwaukee, Wis.

“The selection for this prestigious award provides strong affirmation by U.S. Air Force leaders of their confidence in the contributions of the South Dakota Air National Guard to our nation’s defense,” said Col Russ Walz, commander of the 114<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing. “Recognitions such as the William W. Spruance Safety Award provide significant validation of our unit’s readiness to continually step into new missions.”

The 114<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing was recently selected as one of the few Air National Guard units in the nation to convert from the Block 30 F-16, which it has flown since 1992, to the newer and more advanced Block 40 F-16. Over the past two decades the unit has deployed eight times to allied bases in Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq flying combat missions in Southwest Asia.

“This award serves as yet another testament to the superiority of the 114<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing over virtually every other Wing in the nation,” stated Tim Reisch, the adjutant general of the S.D. National Guard.

The award was named for retired Brigadier General William W. Spruance (1916-2011), former Assistant Adjutant General for Air in the State of Delaware. After surviving a near-fatal crash as a passenger in a T-33 aircraft in 1961, resulting in extensive burns, he began a lifelong and legendary safety mission that took him to dozens of bases in the U.S. and around the world to make over 2,000 presentations on flying safety and crash survival. This is the third time the trophy has been awarded to the South Dakota Air National Guard. It was previously received in 1987 and 1995.

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