

South Dakota National Guard Public Affairs Office

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SD National Guard to celebrate 150 years of service

RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota National Guard will mark 150 years of service to the state and nation on Friday, as they celebrate the Jan. 27, 1862 birth date of the organization’s formation.

With a proud 150-year heritage of serving as the state’s militia, the SDNG finds its origins dating back to 1862 as part of the Dakota Territory.

Since that time, SDNG units have served in nearly every major war or conflict since the Civil War, as well as provided assistance to the state in times of domestic emergencies such as floods, fires, tornadoes and winter storms.

“We are very proud to be celebrating this historic milestone in our organization’s history, and we look forward to continuing that lineage of service to our state and nation,” said Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, adjutant general of the SDNG. “Other than during World War II when there was a total mobilization of the South Dakota National Guard, these past 10 years clearly ranks among the most significant periods of our history.”

To commemorate this lineage of service, the SDNG is planning several celebrations to be conducted later this year.

The flagship dates for this celebration will be held on June 8 at Camp Rapid, Rapid City, as part of their Joint Force Headquarters Readiness Center open house and July 21 at Joe Foss Field as part of the Sioux Falls Air Show.

Both events will be open to the public.

Other recognition events are being planned throughout the state to coincide with local community events in which SDNG units are stationed. Dates and location for those events are to be determined and will be released upon confirmation.

The Beginning of the South Dakota National Guard

The journey of the Dakota militiaman begins during the Civil War with Companies A and B of the Dakota Cavalry.

On March 2, 1861, President James Buchanan signed the act establishing the Dakota Territory. By that time, Vermillion, Bon Homme and Elk Point were growing communities. The territory tended to be people who were genuine settlers, mostly immigrants from Germany, Norway and Sweden.

Earlier in the 1850s, the U.S. Army had established garrisons at Fort Pierre and Fort Randall on the Missouri River. Their mission was to protect the 5,000 settlers from the threat of Native American attacks.

However, when the Civil War started, the Army withdrew three companies from Fort Randall leaving it in an exposed position. This led to the Dec. 7, 1861 proclamation, by the Territorial Governor William Jayne, to raise two companies of volunteer militia.

Recruiting centers were then established in Yankton, Vermillion, and Bon Homme. The citizens were very patriotic with a lot of local pride, and in just over one month enough men had enlisted to assemble the first company of citizen-Soldiers. On Jan. 27, 1862, Capt. Nelson Miner, company commander, formed the unit in Yankton, Company A, Dakota Cavalry.

This was the first unit of the Dakota Territory Militia. This was the birth of the South Dakota National Guard.

History of the South Dakota National Guard

Since that fateful date in 1862, the SDNG has since seen combat during the Spanish-American War, World War I and II, Operation Just Cause and Operation Desert Storm. The National Guard was also called up during the Mexican Border Conflict, Korean War, Berlin Crisis and peacekeeping missions in Bosnia and Kosovo.

Since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, each of South Dakota's 28 National Guard communities has experienced a unit mobilization in support of Operation Noble Eagle, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. More than 4,600 Soldiers and 1,500 Airmen have deployed in support of these operations and continue to deploy today.

The National Guard is the only military component that holds a dual-mission consisting of both federal and state roles. The federal mission is to maintain trained and equipped units available for prompt mobilization for war or a national emergency. At the state level, the governor reserves the ability, under the Constitution, to call up members of the National Guard in times of domestic emergencies.

Throughout the years, natural disasters have called forth the Guard's spirit of teamwork and sacrifice to battle floods, fires, blizzards and tornado destruction. From the Rapid City Flood of 1972 to the 1997 Spencer Tornado to Hurricane Katrina and Rita in 2005, and most recently the

2011 Missouri River Flood, the SDNG has helped its fellow South Dakotans and Americans in times of need.

The South Dakota National Guard Today

Today's SDNG remains strong with nearly 4,400 Soldiers and Airmen available to execute its dual-mission on the state and federal level. The Guard is now in 28 communities throughout South Dakota and is comprised of 64 separate Army Guard units and detachments, and 16 Air Guard units. These units perform a variety of missions; everything from command and control, administration, engineering, field artillery, transportation, logistics, communications, maintenance, aviation, public affairs, military police, firefighting and medical.

The Guard is no longer a strategic reserve to the active component, but an operational force directly integrated into active-duty deployments and missions. The force structure of the SDNG is designed to meet the needs of the future force; giving the Guard an enhanced capability to respond in times of emergencies and natural disasters and to support Overseas Contingency Operations.

The SDNG had a significant impact on the state's economy with more than \$181 million dollars in expenditures and wages in 2011. The SDNG is also one of the largest employers in the state with more than 960 full-time employees, along with nearly 3,400 traditional Guard members who train on a part-time basis while pursuing a career or civilian education.

These full-time employees, along with state employees and civilian contractors, work to assist the traditional Guardsman by providing administrative, training and logistical support. This support collectively goes into helping units meet mobilization and readiness requirements.

The South Dakota Army National Guard remains strong with nearly 3,400 Soldiers available for state and federal missions. The nerve center for the SDARNG resides at the state headquarters at Camp Rapid in Rapid City; an 84-acre training site first developed in 1924.

The South Dakota Air National Guard is located on the southeast corner of Joe Foss Field in Sioux Falls and was federally recognized in 1946. It has nearly 1,100 Airmen assigned to its headquarters and the 114th Fighter Wing. The mission of the SDANG is to provide combat capability to the war fight, security for the homeland and to provide combat-ready units in three roles: federal, state and community.

The proud heirs of the militia tradition can be found in the men and women of today's SDNG. They stand ready to leave the comforts of home and family to help their friends and neighbors, defend the nation's interests and bring peace and hope to people throughout the world.

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