

South Dakota National Guard

Public Affairs Office

Phone: 605-737-6721 Email: pao@sd.ngb.army.mil
Web: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil>
www.facebook.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard
www.flickr.com/SouthDakotaNationalGuard



April 5, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New recruits needed despite smaller Guard force

Story by Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – Although the South Dakota Army National Guard is reducing the number of Soldiers in its force structure, Guard officials say there is still a need for new recruits.

In December, the SDARNG announced it would trim its force of nearly 3,400 Soldiers by 258 traditional-Guard positions and 19 full-time positions by Sept. 30. Despite the cutbacks, the Guard is still seeking new members to join its ranks.

“Even though we are reducing the force, we project that we will lose additional Soldiers due to retirements, transfers and separations,” said Lt. Col. Joseph Jacobson, who oversees the Guards recruiting and retention efforts throughout the state. “We continue to recruit new Soldiers to replace the projected losses. It is always good to have new people to help build the future of the South Dakota Army National Guard.”

According to Jacobson, SDARNG recruiters have been through their ups and downs during the past 10 years when it comes to citizens interested in serving in the Guard.

“There was a huge amount of patriotism and a lot of people interested in joining the military following 9/11,” said Jacobson. “Interest in the Guard stabilized once we began deploying units to Iraq and Afghanistan, but we have consistently stayed at or above our recruiting goal the entire time.”

In a strained U.S. economy and with troop reductions on the horizon, Jacobson said now is a great time for South Dakotans to join the Guard.

“There are so many careers in the Guard to choose from now compared to the time when I joined in 1988,” said Jacobson. “Soldiers are specializing in career fields such as engineering, communications and aviation, which easily transfer into a civilian career. With all of these opportunities, there is no better time to join.”

As the SDARNG continues to recruit and provide new opportunities for South Dakotans, the Guard’s Recruitment Sustainment Program is helping citizens adjust to the military lifestyle successfully.

Guard recruiters have been able to focus on better qualified new recruits than previous years because of the success of the RSP.

“We have cut the number of Soldiers who drop out of basic training in half, and we have had more Soldiers graduate as an honor graduate or as a distinguished honor graduate because of RSP,” said Jacobson. “The program ensures the Soldiers we enlist will successfully graduate basic training.”

The RSP recruiters have trained more than 2,530 recruits since the program was implemented in the spring of 2005.

The program is available to all new recruits joining the SDARNG to ensure they are mentally and physically fit for the rigors of basic combat training.

“We are preparing them for basic training to make the transition from citizen to Soldier easier,” said Sgt. 1st Class Grant Serna, senior RSP noncommissioned officer in charge.

Former recruit, Pfc. Jessica Bales, went through RSP for six months before leaving for basic training.

“Basic training wasn’t as bad as I thought it was going to be because of RSP,” said Bales. “RSP gave me a lot of drive and confidence. I was inspired to prove myself and show the drill sergeants what I learned here.”

Bales graduated from basic training as a distinguished honor graduate, earning an Army Achievement Medal; she credits her success to the RSP.

Jacobson said it is because of Soldiers like Bale that he is optimistic about the future of the SDARNG.

“Our young Soldiers are not serving anymore just for the benefits; they are serving for the right reasons such as patriotism, selfless service and wanting to give back,” said Jacobson. “That says a lot about this young generation that is labeled as the “me generation,” which is not true of our RSP Soldiers.

“Even though the National Guard is reducing its force structure, we still need quality new recruits throughout the state. The future of the Guard will be this new generation of citizen-Soldiers.”

-30-

High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/southdakotanationalguard
Additional stories and information are online at www.facebook.com/southdakotanationalguard



120317-A-XX1234-001: Staff Sgt. Jason Besmer, a South Dakota Army National Guard Recruitment Sustainment Program drill sergeant, gives new recruits a taste of what basic combat training will be like by ordering them to do push-ups at Camp Rapid, March 17, 2012. The RSP is a program designed by the National Guard Bureau to increase the completion success rates at basic training for the Army National Guard. The program prepares recruits for the physical and mental rigors of basic training. (SDNG photo by Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen) (RELEASED)



120317-A-XX1234-002: Sgt. Jonathan Edwards, South Dakota Army National Guard Recruitment Sustainment Program instructor, explains how to disassemble, assemble and perform a functions check on the M-16 rifle to new recruits at Camp Rapid, March 17, 2012. The RSP is a program designed by the National Guard Bureau to increase the completion success rates at basic training for the Army National Guard. The program prepares recruits for the physical and mental rigors of basic training. (SDNG photo by Staff Sgt. Theanne Tangen) (RELEASED)



120217-A-CW157-001: Pvt. Alexander Schnell, of Vale, S.D., makes his bed according to the U.S. Army standard at the South Dakota Army National Guard's Recruitment Sustainment Program drill weekend at Camp Rapid, Feb. 17, 2012. The RSP is a program designed by the National Guard Bureau to increase the completion success rates at basic training for the Army National Guard. The program prepares recruits for the physical and mental rigors of basic training. (SDNG photo by Mike McMeekin) (RELEASED)



120217-A-CW157-001: The South Dakota Army National Guard Recruitment Sustainment Program's new recruits stand ready for further instruction from drill sergeants at Camp Rapid, Feb. 17, 2012. The RSP is a program designed by the National Guard Bureau to increase the completion success rates at basic training for the Army National Guard. The program prepares recruits for the physical and mental rigors of basic training. (SDNG photo by Mike McMeekin) (RELEASED)

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Maj. Anthony Deiss at (605) 737-6721 or cell (605) 431-8753, or e-mail pao@sd.ngb.army.mil.