

# South Dakota National Guard

## Public Affairs Office

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



June 14, 2012

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## SD National Guard participates in Lakota Nation's Flag Day

By Sgt. Jacqueline Fitzgerald  
129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

CANNONBALL, N.D. – The relationship between the South Dakota National Guard and the Lakota Nation continues to grow. Members of Company D, 1st Battalion, 112th Aviation Regiment traveled to the Standing Rock Reservation for their Flag Day celebration in a UH-72A Lakota helicopter June 10.

The Standing Rock Reservation stretches over the North Dakota and South Dakota border. Every year in Cannonball, the Lakota Nation takes time to remember and honor their deceased during their Flag Day celebration.

During the ceremony, 52 American flags were flown in honor of the fallen. When a service member dies the family receives an American flag from the military. Each flag flown here today was brought by the families of the deceased veterans.

“Seeing these flags flying makes me think of individuals of the past who served in the armed forces, and served with honor,” said Richard Fiddler, Post 173 commander, Fort Yates, N.D. “These people felt compelled to go out and join the military, and I like to think they are looking down on us today and are proud to see what we are doing to inspire the next generation.”

Elders and leaders of the Standing Rock Reservation not only honored their fallen heroes of the past but they performed a traditional blessing for the helicopter. The blessing is to help protect the aircraft and the pilots during their missions. A sacred Red-tailed Hawk feather was presented to the crew in honor of the partnership.

“Our Lakota helicopters are based right in the center of the Lakota Nation so we decided to form a connection between the Lakota Nation and the National Guard,” said Master Sgt. Kelley Moore, who has played a vital role in fostering relations between the Guard and Lakota Nation. “One of the important steps in establishing a relationship with the Lakota community is the ceremonial blessing of the aircraft.”

This is the third helicopter to be blessed by the tribe during a blessing ceremony. Its purpose is to provide medical and casualty evacuations, disaster relief and aid in homeland defense.

Robert Dunsmore, a retired U.S. Army veteran, says it costs \$10,000 - \$30,000 for a Life Flight helicopter to respond to emergencies in rural areas.

“We know the Lakota helicopter is a back up for us,” said Dunsmore. “We still only have one Life Flight helicopter covering four reservations. If that one helicopter is busy and if we are in need of one, it is good to know that the Guard will be there to help.”

Overall, the partnership and the Lakota helicopters provide a solid connection between the SDNG and the Lakota Nation and the two groups are hoping to inspire youth to get involved in their community.

“Having the Lakota community welcome us here and accept the partnership spurs us on and gives us inspiration,” said Moore. “I’ve driven up here a couple of times, on my own, just to be a part of it. This partnership is probably one of the more significant things I’ve done in my life.”

- 30 -

High resolution photos are available at [www.flickr.com/southdakotationalguard](http://www.flickr.com/southdakotationalguard)  
Additional stories and information are online at [www.facebook.com/southdakotationalguard](http://www.facebook.com/southdakotationalguard)



**120610-A-WA247-002:** Two members of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation dance in traditional attire around a South Dakota National Guard UH-72 Lakota helicopter after a blessing ceremony for the aircraft in Cannonball, N.D., June 10, 2012. The SDNG and the Lakota Nation have partnered together to support the people living on the reservations as well as to help inspire the youth to become active members of the community. (SDNG photo by Sgt. Jacqueline Fitzgerald) (RELEASED)



**120610-A-WA247-003:** South Dakota National Guard member Master Sgt. Kelly Moore, Company D, 1st Battalion, 112th Aviation Regiment celebrates with Richard Charging Eagle, retired U.S. Marine veteran (left) and Robert Dunsmore, retired U.S. Army veteran, after a blessing ceremony for the UH-72 Lakota helicopter, on the Standing Rock Reservation in Cannonball, N.D., June 10, 2012. (SDNG photo by Sgt. Jacqueline Fitzgerald) (RELEASED)



**120610-A-WA247-004:** South Dakota National Guard members from Company D, 1st Battalion, 112th Aviation Regiment celebrate with the Lakota Nation after a blessing ceremony for the UH-72 Lakota helicopter, on the Standing Rock Reservation in Cannonball, N.D., June 10, 2012. (SDNG photo by Sgt. Jacqueline Fitzgerald) (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](mailto:pao@sd.ngb.army.mil).