

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SD Guard unit wins national weapons qualification award

By 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson
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RAPID CITY, S.D. – The South Dakota Army National Guard’s 740th Transportation Company was named the winner of the 2011 National Guard Association Pershing Award for having the nation’s highest weapons qualification rate.

The South Dakota unit, headquartered out of Milbank with Detachment 1 in Aberdeen, edged out a unit from the Idaho Army National Guard, as well as units from across the country to win the national award for the second time in six years.

The 740th earned the highest figure of merit score during annual qualification firing with assigned individual weapons. The unit’s overall weapons qualification rate was 99.4 percent; qualifying 64 experts, 75 sharpshooters and 30 marksmen, giving them a figure of merit score of 95.4 percent.

“This award reflects deeply on the skills and devotion of the Soldiers of the 740th,” said Capt. Jeremy Schafer, company commander. “It reassures that the training is effective and sufficient.”

“Marksmanship is something our Soldiers have learned so well, that whether they are qualifying on the range or sighting in their deer rifles, they use the techniques that they have been taught,” said Staff Sgt. Matthew Tjaden, 740th training noncommissioned officer.

Tjaden said the unit’s application of soldiering techniques goes beyond the rifle range.

“Most of our unit takes the training they receive home with them, in all areas,” Tjaden said. “From rifle qualification to vehicle operations to treating a casualty, almost everything can be applied to everyday life and these guys know that.”

The award was established in the 1930s in honor of General John J. Pershing, the only Soldier who served as General of the Armies.

“The 740th takes pride in marksmanship and will continue to push the limits to continue to excel,” said Schafer. “What the 740th does sets the standards.”

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South Dakota Army National Guard Soldiers from the 740th Transportation Company, headquartered out of Milbank, S.D., with Detachment 1 in Aberdeen, qualify with their M-16 rifles in 2011. The South Dakota unit edged out a unit from the Idaho National Guard, as well as units from across the country to win the 2011 National Guard Association Pershing Award for having the nation's highest weapons qualification rate. This is the second time in six years the unit has won this award. (SDNG photo by Sgt. Kathleen Holscher) (RELEASED)

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