

South Dakota National Guard

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December 7, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SD Guard, Suriname leaders foster partnership during National Day celebration

By 2nd Lt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs Office

NICKERIE, Suriname – The South Dakota National Guard continues to foster a relationship with the Republic of Suriname that dates back to 2006 when they were partnered through National Guard Bureau's State Partnership Program.

The South American country recently celebrated their 37th year of independence from the Netherlands with festivities similar to Independence Day celebrations held in the U.S. and the SDNG sent representation to support Suriname.

Brig. Gen. Ted Johnson, director of Joint Staff, and Lt. Col. John Weber, SD-Suriname State Partnership Program director, represented the SDNG at National Day, held Nov. 25.

“Our relationship with our partner nation has become successful to the point that our presence there to support them is very important,” said Weber.

National Day festivities, normally celebrated in the nation's capital, Paramaribo, were held for the first time in Nickerie, on the border with Guyana, where approximately 500 Surinamese military and law enforcement personnel marched in a parade, followed by the presidential reception.

“Their president personally thanked me, as the senior representative of the South Dakota National Guard, for taking the time to come to event that he personally invited us to,” said Johnson. “We stood on the reviewing stand with him during the parade. It says a lot for a president of a country to personally thank you.”

Suriname's Defense Forces mobilized their armed forces, for the first time, and moved four hours west for the National Day parade.

“Their military mobilized all of their equipment and people,” Weber said. “It was something that they were very proud to show us.”

In addition to the festivities, SDNG leadership also met with newly appointed U.S. Ambassador Jay Anania.

“He was very gracious to host an event in our honor and there was excellent dialog with military leadership from Suriname’s armed forces and the Minister of Defense’s office,” Johnson said.

SDNG leadership also met with Suriname’s Minister of Defense and Chief of Defense to discuss future events and exchanges that would jointly support the efforts of both South Dakota and Suriname.

“It’s very humbling to have the Minister of Defense and the Chief of the Armed Forces sit down with us,” Johnson said. “We discussed, at length, how we can help each other through this partnership.”

The SDNG extended an invitation to senior leaders in Suriname’s armed forces to attend the annual Golden Coyote training exercise, held in the Black Hills in June.

Suriname is also planning on sending officer candidate trainers to Fort Meade, S.D., this summer to get a look at how the 196th Regiment (Regional Training Institute) runs their Officer Candidate School training.

Future exchanges to Suriname were also discussed including Joint Operations Center development and tactics training.

“In the past six years, I’ve seen the partnership continue to grow and continue to mature,” said Johnson. “It’s been embraced by both our state and their country. It’s important to continue the dialog, and I can tell you that you can’t measure the importance of trips like this.”

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121125-A-AB123-098: Distinguished military visitors watch a parade of armed forces and law enforcement personnel march in Suriname’s National Day parade, from the reviewing stand, in Nickerie, Suriname, Nov. 25, 2012. Representing the South Dakota Army National Guard at the event was Brig. Gen. Ted Johnson, director of Joint Staff, (third from right) and Lt. Col. John Weber, SD-Suriname State Partnership Program director (second from right). Suriname celebrated their 37th National Day, celebrating the South American countries independence from the Netherlands. (SDNG photo by Maj. Kathleen Dirk) (RELEASED)



121126-A-AB123-155: South Dakota Army National Guard Brig. Gen. Ted Johnson (right), director of Joint Staff, discusses the South Dakota National Guard’s partnership with Suriname with Maj. Ricardo Breinburg, staff battalion commander and Maj. Iwan Letterboom, commander of land forces (Army) in Paramaribo, Suriname, Nov. 26, 2012. Johnson represented the South Dakota National Guard at National Day ceremonies, as Suriname celebrated their 37th year of independence. (SDNG photo by Maj. Kathleen Dirk) (RELEASED)

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