

**South Dakota National Guard
Public Affairs Office
2823 West Main St.
Rapid City, S.D. 57702**

**Phone 605-737-6721
E-mail PAO@sd.ngb.army.mil**

**SDNG-PA-06-12-08
June 12, 2008**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Missouri Engineers practice sling-load bridging operation

By Sgt. Jon E. Dougherty, 70th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

PIERRE, S.D. — Though it isn't a widely-known fact, the Navy and Coast Guard aren't the only military branches that operate small boats. So does the Army National Guard.

In fact, these crafts are an integral part of a highly-specialized mission – fording rivers and other bodies of water so that infantry, armor, transportation, medical and logistics units can get across and move forward.

In Missouri, that mission falls on the 1438th Engineer Multi-Role Bridge Company.

In a combined action with the Republic of Singapore Air Force, the 1438th conducted sling-load and rafting operations on June 10 near the Oahe Dam as part of the South Dakota Army National Guard's annual Golden Coyote exercise.

The 1438th of Macon, Mo., doesn't get many opportunities to conduct such sophisticated, comprehensive rafting operations. Though it was obvious Soldiers were making the most of their chance, it was equally apparent they were proficient at their jobs.

“This takes a lot of teamwork, but we practice a lot, so that helps things go smoothly,” said Pfc. Michael Suedkamp, a bridge crew member with the 1438th who was also serving as a rescue boat team member during the exercise.

The operation involved dropping bridge sections – called bays – into the water, where they were recovered and opened by crews manning MK2 boats. From there, Soldiers assembled the sections before they were moved to the water, explained Staff Sgt. Nathan Wooten of Macon, Mo.

Wooten, who served as the safety boat operator for the mission, said the initial section is guided toward the middle of the body of water to be crossed by work boats called MK2s. As each subsequent 25,000-pound section is completed on shore, it is moved to the evolving bridge section in the water and linked together by bridge crew members.

In all, the current mission involved six bays, which were sling-loaded and dropped into the water by CH-47 Chinook helicopters operated by the Republic of Singapore Air Force. Once eased into position by MK2s, Soldiers used pumps to lift and connect the sections and then tightened them with T-bars.

The completed bridge segment was moved across the lake with four MK2s. The Soldiers drove three vehicles onto the segment for transport back across the lake and completing the mission.

“This is the first time this unit has conducted a sling-load operation of this type in 10-plus years, so it was a fantastic opportunity for our Soldiers,” said Capt. Anthony James, commander of the 1438th. “They really enjoyed the mission, they performed well, and we all appreciated the training we were afforded.”

-30-

High resolution photos will be available at the following Web site:

LINK: <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/sites/GC2008/default.aspx>

Photo Cut Lines:

0806010-A-4806Y-126.JPG: Spc Lathan Moore (left) and Pvt. Karol Whorton of the 1438th Engineer Multi-Role Bridge Company, Missouri Army National Guard, tighten two ramp bays together during a sling-load raft operation Tuesday, June 10, at the Oahe Dam, Pierre, S.D., as part of the 2008 Golden Coyote training exercise. (Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Daniel Yarnall)

0806010-A-4806Y-135.JPG: Soldiers of the 1438th Engineer Multi- Role Bridge Company, Missouri Army National Guard, tighten two ramp bays together during a sling-load raft operation Tuesday, June 10, at the Oahe Dam, Pierre, S.D., as part of the 2008 Golden Coyote training exercise. (Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Daniel Yarnall)

0806010-A-4806Y-139.JPG: Spc. Jeremy Philips of the 1438th Engineer Multi-Role Bridge Company, Missouri Army National Guard, helps tighten two ramp bays together during a sling-load raft operation Tuesday, June 10, at the Oahe Dam, Pierre, S.D., as part of the 2008 Golden Coyote training exercise. (Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Daniel Yarnall)

0806010-A-4806Y-193.JPG: The 1438th Engineer Multi-Role Bridge Company, Missouri Army National Guard, teams up with the Republic of Singapore Air Force to combine training during a sling-load raft operation Tuesday, June 10, at the Oahe Dam, Pierre, S.D., as part of the 2008 Golden Coyote training exercise. (Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Daniel Yarnall)

0806010-A-4806Y-211.JPG: The 1438th Engineer Multi-Role Bridge Company, Missouri Army National Guard, teams up with the Republic of Singapore Air Force to combine training during a sling-load raft operation Tuesday, June 10, at the Oahe Dam, Pierre, S.D., as part of the 2008 Golden Coyote training exercise. (Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Daniel Yarnall)

Location of South Dakota National Guard Public Affairs Office:

2823 West Main Street
Building 400
Rapid City, SD 57702-8186
(605) 737-6721

MEDIA WISHING TO EMBED are asked to RSVP with Maj. Orson Ward at (605) 737-6721, cell (605) 431-8753 or via E-mail at orson.ward@us.army.mil.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION about the South Dakota National Guard, please visit our Web site at <https://sdguard.ngb.army.mil/default.aspx>

NOTE: The South Dakota National Guard will host the annual Golden Coyote exercise from June 7 – 21 in the southern Black Hills. More than 4,000 service members from 92 units representing 27 states and four foreign nations are participating in the exercise. The Golden Coyote exercise has been conducted for the past 24 years. The exercise provides relevant training opportunities in support of the war on terror and homeland defense.

Residents should be aware of an increase in military traffic throughout the Black Hills and an increase in the level of noise due to military operations. Aviation activity will be operating out of Camp Rapid and the Army Aviation Support Facility next to the Rapid City Regional Airport.

Aircraft will be primarily training on equipment and personnel transport missions as well as medical evacuation. Aircraft will respond to real-world emergencies during the exercise and remain in an all-hours-ready status during the exercise.

Spectators to military training are welcome, however caution is warranted and spectators are asked to remain at a safe distance from all moving military vehicles and aircraft to prevent injury to personnel or damage to property.