PRIDE OF THE DAKOTAS

Artillerymen continue lineage of service

By Capt. Anthony Deiss
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They have a long and proud heritage, which lavishes in such titles as "King of Battle," "Dakota Steel Rain" and "Pride of the Dakotas." The history of the artillery in the South Dakota Army National Guard is one which spans more than 100 years of service to the state and nation.

The Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery prepare to continue this lineage of service as it deploys in April in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The unit's security force mission is one they are not typically designed for but are prepared to undertake.

The mission of the artillery in the South Dakota National Guard continues to evolve with a changing battlefield, however, this generation of 147th Soldiers will be echoing the "ready and willing" motto of its ancestry and defining their legacy into the new millennium.

MEAGER BEGINNINGS

Born from the remnants of late 1800 infantry regiments from the Dakota Territory, the journey of the Dakota militiaman begins during the Civil War with Companies A and B of the Dakota Cavalry. First organized in 1862, the companies were mustered into service as a territorial militia to defend against threats from Native Americans. The companies were discharged shortly after, having served their three-year term of service.

Over the next several decades, efforts were made by territorial Governors to reorganize the militia, but with little funding and no immediate threats, the companies struggled to remain active. However, the militia did reorganize, and by 1884 the 1st and 2nd Regiment of the Dakota Territory was formed.

It was here, the first Dakota Territory artillery unit was raised, a single battery from the 1st Regiment located near Lisbon, N.D.

By 1889, statehood was coming for both North and South Dakota, and so was the need to divide the existing National Guard units between the two states. North Dakota formed the first regiment and South Dakota the second. The artillery for the territory went with the North Dakota regiment, but it wouldn't be long before South Dakota would claim its own battery.

By 1893, the South Dakota regiment was renumbered and became the 1st South Dakota Infantry Regiment, consisting of Battery A stationed at Clark, S.D. By 1895, the battery consisted of two 3-inch rifles and fired the Hotchkiss projectile.

In April of 1898, the United States declared war on Spain and the Spanish-American War was set into motion. President McKinley asked for 125,000 volunteers, of these South Dakota's share was to be 1,000, which mainly came from the 1st Regiment. Many from the 1st Regiment volunteered in mass but the artillery battery at Clark, armed with obsolete cannons, was refused by the War Department as a battery.

The 1st S.D. Infantry Regiment (US Volunteers) returned from service during the Spanish-American War and subsequent Philippine Insurrection in 1899, but did not return to its former National Guard status. Refusal of appropriate funds to reorganize the Guard by the state legislature, kept the 1st Regiment from reforming. The only remaining National Guard units in the state remained Battery A and Troop A in Deadwood.

In 1903, the legislature came through with appropriations and by 1904 had two infantry regiments; the 2nd and 3rd with an additional cavalry squadron. Battery A was eventually replaced by an infantry company, was moved to Huron and assigned to the 1st Cavalry Squadron. With a cut in funding the following year, many South Dakota units were mustered out and reorganized again to form the 4th South Dakota Infantry Regiment. Battery A and the cavalry squadron survived for a short while, but were eventually mustered out due to out-dated artillery equipment and expenses of maintaining horses.

In June of 1916, the South Dakota Guard was called into federal service again to help patrol the border during the Mexican Border Conflict. With the 4th Regiment deployed, the state began the organization of a fifth regiment, and by 1917, the War Department reorganized the new unit into the 1st South Dakota Cavalry Regiment.

At this time, World War I was beginning and the new regiment would be activated for service. A part of the 34th National Guard Division, the 1st Cavalry Regiment was disestablished and dissolved into different units under the division. There was no need for horses on a battlefield of barbed wire, machine guns and artillery.

Members of Battery A, 147th Field Artillery Regiment, fire at attacking Japanese planes during one of the frequent raids during World War II near Darwin, Australia in early 1942.

WEAPONS OF THE SDNG ARTILLERY

3.2 INCH RIFLE

75MM GUN, M1897

105MM HOWITZER

WWI AND THE BIRTH OF THE 147TH

Shortly after the 1st Cavalry's entrance into WWI, it would be followed by the 4th Infantry in 1917, as its service on the Mexican border came to an end. The 4th Infantry, however, would suffer the same fate as the 1st Cavalry as the unit would be abolished to fill other units after it was federalized. It was here that the disillusionment of the 4th Infantry gave rise to South Dakota artillery as we know it today; the 147th Field Artillery.

While half of the companies from the 4th Infantry were to form the new 147th Field Artillery Regiment, the remainder went to support existing machine gun battalions and the organization of the 116th Supply Train.

Horses, guns and fire-control instruments were not available while the 147th was preparing for war at Camp Greene, N.C. It wasn't until the unit arrived in France in February of 1918, that it would be equipped with the French 75mm gun, the M1897.

The 147th Field Artillery Regiment served with distinction during WWI as it trained more than 22,000 artillery replacements coming into theater. The unit also supported the 32nd Division, which broke through the famous Kriemhilde-Hindenburg Line in October 1918, firing more than 56,500 artillery rounds during the month-long assault.

Following the Great War, the 147th Field Artillery Regiment was discharged and disappeared briefly, but by 1921, South Dakota was authorized to raise a regiment of artillery. To perpetuate the fame of the 'World War' regiment, the 147th would be reinstated and would be outfitted with the horse-drawn 75mm gun.

During the years following WWI, the artillery would begin to see a modernization of its equipment. By 1927, the horse-drawn capability of the unit would give way to motorized trucks, allowing guns to be carried rather than towed. However, the loading and instability of the 2,800 pound cannons proved to be too cumbersome and dangerous for transport. The use of a pneumatic-tire mount allowed the guns to be towed again at high speeds.

Plagued by shortages of equipment and money, and having fought in combat, the artillery, along with the rest of the South Dakota Guard, endured much in its short history. These experiences would surely prepare it for its biggest test yet...World War II.

WWII AND THE "BUSHMASTERS"

In September of 1939, German forces began their invasion on the European continent. The United States remained neutral as the Allied Forces battled the German Blitzkrieg. Almost a year later, the United States began to launch a major buildup of its own military forces.

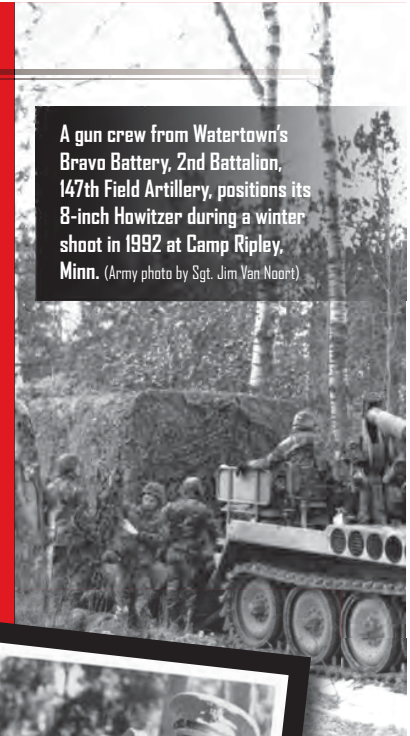
More than 1,000 men of the 147th Field Artillery Regiment were activated and departed for Fort Ord, Calif., for deployment in November of 1940. A year later, the 147th departed for the Philippine Islands after a quick stop at Pearl Harbor.

A week later the unit became the first Expeditionary Force into the Pacific theater, being some 1,500 miles southwest of Pearl Harbor when the Japanese attacked on December 7.

The 147th was rerouted to Australia. There the unit became the first Americans to visit Australia and remained there until July of 1943. The unit began island hopping throughout the Southwest Pacific, gaining prestige as they went. The "Bushmasters," as they became known, moved to New Guinea in December to take part in an offensive against the Japanese.

At this point the 147th was divided into two separate battalions, the 260th Field Artillery

Members of a gun crew from Battery A, 147th Field Artillery Battalion, maintain their firing position during World War II in January 1945 near Linguyan Gulf on Luzon in the Philippine Islands.



A gun crew from Watertown's Bravo Battery, 2nd Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, positions its 8-inch Howitzer during a winter shoot in 1992 at Camp Ripley, Minn. (Army photo by Sgt. Jim Van Noort)

From left: General Douglas MacArthur speaks with Lt. Col. Robert Gobell and Col. Les Jensen of the 147th Field Artillery Battalion, during WWII in Australia, along with Gen. Robert Eichelberger.

Battalion and the 147th Field Artillery Battalion. The 260th remained in New Guinea until it was deactivated in June 1945.

The 147th went on to participate in combat operations in the Philippines and served briefly on occupation duty in Japan immediately after WWII ended. It was deactivated in Japan in 1946.

REBUILDING YEARS AND THE COLD WAR

After World War II, South Dakota once again had to piece back together its state militia. The artillery found its way back to South Dakota, as Washington allowed for the establishment of the 196th Regimental Combat Team, under which the 147th Field Artillery Battalion was assigned.

Peace would not exist for long, as the U.S. faced threats from communist regimes such as North Korea, the Soviet Union and China.

The 147th Battalion, under the 196th RCT, was called into federal service in September of 1950 in response to the Korean War. Stationed at Fort Richardson, Alaska, the unit was assigned as a part of the Alaskan Defense Command and served there until August of 1952.

With a stalemate on the 38th Parallel and deteriorating relations with Russia, the U.S. military would re-evaluate its force structure. Artillery would surely be a necessity on any large scale battlefield and the National Guard would see a change in its organization to reflect it.

By 1956, the artillery assets for the state were the 147th Artillery Group, the 147th Artillery Battalion, the 642nd Artillery Battalion, the 643rd Artillery Battalion, the 260th Artillery Battalion and the 128th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Battalion. The artillery would continue to transform throughout the next several decades, changing locations, equipment and structure. Towed 155mm and 8-inch Howitzers became the weapons of the late 1950s. By the 1960s and 70s these weapons would become self-propelled.

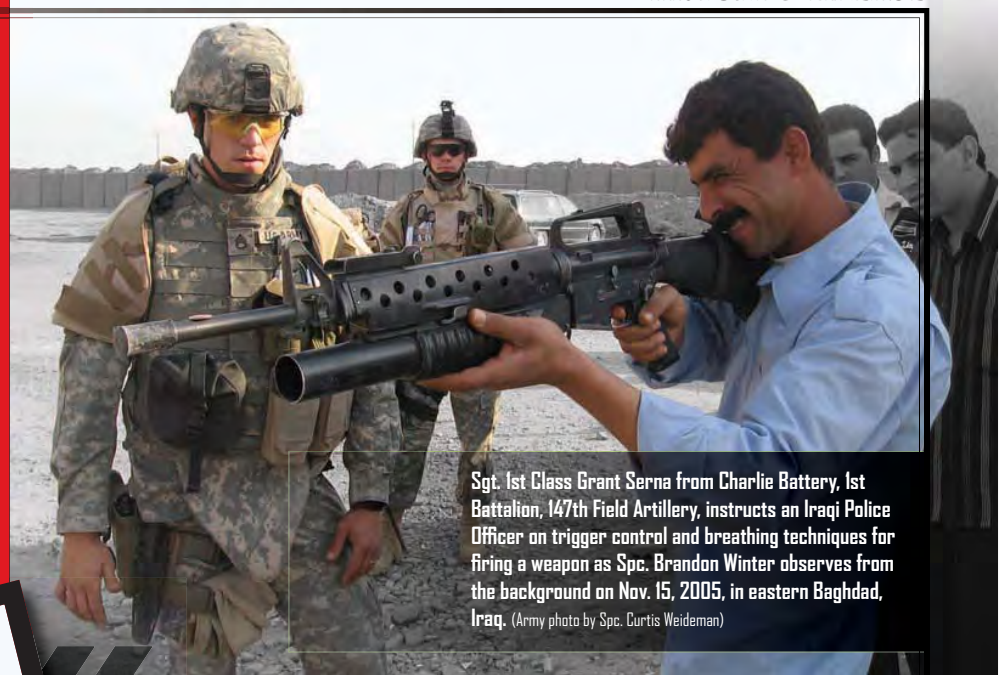
In 1963, the artillery group would be reorganized with four howitzer battalions. One of which, the 1st Howitzer Battalion, was called up to federal service during the Berlin Crisis and stationed at Fort Sill, Okla., from October 1961 to August 1962.

The crisis certainly tested the United States ability to respond and react to Soviet threats during the Cold War. The artillery would conduct training in hope of deterring Soviet aggression.

In the early 1970s, the 1st and 2nd Battalions became the first Army National Guard battalions to pass the Nuclear Capabilities Command evaluation, becoming proficient in the delivery of nuclear weapons. By 1978, the Group was re-designated as the 147th Field Artillery Brigade with two battalions.

By the late 1990s, the artillery units in the state saw more changes, turning in their 155mm and 8-inch Howitzers for the modern M270 Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS).

By 2003, the South Dakota National Guard would experience its biggest call up since WWII in response to Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom, mobilizing more than 3,100 Soldiers over the next five years. The artillery was ready and willing to answer the call and carry on the traditions of its forefathers.



Sgt. 1st Class Grant Serna from Charlie Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, instructs an Iraqi Police Officer on trigger control and breathing techniques for firing a weapon as Spc. Brandon Winter observes from the background on Nov. 15, 2005, in eastern Baghdad, Iraq. (Army photo by Spc. Curtis Weideman)

Spc. Wade Anderson from 2nd Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, provides convoy security during his deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in January 2005. (Army photo by Capt. Anthony Deiss)

GLOBAL WAR AND A CHANGE IN MISSION

September 11, 2001 reshaped America in a way never seen since the attack on Pearl Harbor. The United States was beginning to undertake military operations that would stress the limits of its forces. Much of it would be called upon from the National Guard.

The artillery of the South Dakota National Guard would be relied heavily upon to fill the need for forces to support a war that was beginning on two fronts. Not seeing active combat since WWII, the 147th was ready to take on a new mission.

In March 2003, the state began activating its first units in response to Operation Iraqi Freedom. Among the first to be mobilized were members of 1st Battalion, who reported to Fort Sill, Okla., and 2nd Battalion's Battery C, mobilizing to Fort Campbell, Ky. Believing the battle was over and artillery was not needed, both units returned by May.

After 2003, the artillery would begin to see a change in their mission in support of the war on terror.

With the end of the Cold War and wars fought with clearly defined forward areas, the need for artillery units in theater was diminishing with the threat of a rising insurgency.

With the Army needing more units to provide security rather than putting steel on target, National Guard units across the country began seeing a change in mission to fill the need for more security forces. This type of warfare would begin to define the mission for the rest of the South Dakota artillery units who would deploy thereafter.

The 2nd Battalion, 147th FA would be the first South Dakota artillery unit to experience this change in mission. Mobilized in December 2003, the 2nd Battalion deployed 375 Soldiers to Iraq as a security force. While there, the unit secured and transported 145,000 tons of munitions to be kept at storage depots while slated for destruction. These munitions were secured from 18 different sites throughout Iraq and were prevented from being used as IEDs by the enemy.

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WEAPONS OF THE SDNG ARTILLERY

8-INCH HOWITZER (TOWED)

8-INCH HOWITZER (SELF-PROPELLED)

155MM, M109 HOWITZER (SELF-PROPELLED)

MULTIPLE LAUNCH ROCKET SYSTEM - M270

Drug Demand Reduction Program receives national award

By Maj. Brendan Murphy
State Public Affairs Officer

WASHINGTON, D.C. – South Dakota National Guard's (SDNG) Drug Demand Reduction (DDR) program received national recognition, Feb. 12, at the Community Alcohol and Drug Coalitions of America's (CADCA) 19th Annual National Leadership Forum Award luncheon.

This national award is given annually to the DDR program that is nominated by a community-based organization involved with CADCA. Pam Teany Thomas from the Rapid City Schools Adolescent Substance Abuse Coalition, nominated the SDNG's DDR program for their support to numerous area schools and community activities.

The supported activities include: the Red Ribbon Campaign, Safe and Drug Free Schools Campaign, Parents Matter Campaign, Stay on Track, Adolescent Drug and Alcohol Prevention Training, and the Youth to Youth Conference held at Camp Rapid every year.

According to Teany Thomas, there are over 5,000 coalition members across the country, including parents, media and social services. The goal of these programs is "to create safe, healthy and drug-free communities," said Teany Thomas. "It is amazing to gather 500 kids from North Middle School in Rapid City, to spell out the words 'STAY ON TRACK' and have a SDNG helicopter fly over to capture the moment."

The DDR program in S.D. shows the local communities that this state is committed to excellence, and play a key role in the fight against drugs.

"I am very proud of the hard work every member of my team has put into the DDR program," stated Lt. Col. Jeffrey Klosterman, the Counterdrug coordinator for the SDNG. "We help facilitate youth involvement and it all comes down to the passionate and dedicated people in this program."

The Institute for Educational Leadership & Evaluation, a project of the Chiesman Foundation for Democracy, Inc. conducts annual surveys within the Rapid City area schools and the results are tabulated and reported to the district and community annually. Here are some of those statistics on the fight against drugs (2001-2007):

TOBACCO USE
- 53% decline for 7th graders
  - From 14% in 2001 to 6.6% in 2007
- 18% decline for high school students
  - From 36.7% in 2001 to 30.2% in 2007

ALCOHOL USE
- 58% decline for 7th graders
  - From 18.2% in 2001 to 7.6% in 2007
- 18% decline for high school students
  - From 47% in 2001 to 33.6% in 2007

MARIJUANA USE
- 26% decline for 7th graders
  - From 6.2% in 2001 to 4.6% in 2007
- 28% decline for high school students
  - From 27.7% in 2001 to 19.9% in 2007

HUFFING
- 29% decline for 11th graders
  - From 6.6% in 2001 to 4.7% in 2007

The fight against drugs is alive and well, and the SDNG DDR program is taking the necessary steps to partner with various organizations to provide a safe and drug-free environment throughout the state.

"The DDR program is an opportunity to provide education to kids in a fun way," said Kristi Palmer, the DDR noncommissioned officer in charge. "It is a way to reach many youth and hope they make the right choices throughout the rest of their lives."

From left: Col. William Carle, Chief National Guard Bureau, J3-Counter Drug, Lt. Col. Jeffrey Klosterman, Counterdrug coordinator, Sgt. 1st Class Kristi Palmer, DDR NCOIC and Capt. Don Johnson, DDR administrator, receive the national award for outstanding DDR program of the year at the 2009 Annual Community Alcohol and Drug Coalitions of America National Leadership Forum Award luncheon. (Photo by Pam Teany Thomas)

Nearly 500 children from North Middle School in Rapid City organized on their football field to form the words 'STAY ON TRACK,' signifying that they remained drug-free and support being in a safe, healthy and drug-free school. (Army photo by 1st Sgt. Donald Matthews)

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The unit also provided vehicle convoy security for U.S. military, coalition forces and government contractors. These daily convoys totaled more than two million combined miles. The battalion returned home in February 2005.

Charlie Battery of the 1st Battalion also conducted a non-typical artillery mission. Deployed in July 2005, 174 Soldiers performed police transition team missions with the Iraqi Police, conducting joint patrols, route security, reconnaissance missions, personnel and site security, and rescue and recovery missions within Baghdad and south into Kuwait.

The unit trained more than 1,000 Iraqi Police, creating stability in the southern and eastern strategic districts of Baghdad and enabled a district in the center of Baghdad to become the first to transition the responsibility of security to the Iraqi Police. Charlie Battery returned home in September 2006.

A new strategy from the Department of Defense would call for a surge in forces to help stabilize a fragile Iraqi government and military. To fulfill the need for more security forces, Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion would be called upon in October 2007.

While in Iraq, the Soldiers conducted a variety of security missions including the operation of a total of 1,900 hours of entry-traffic control points, 87 base-defense operations, 75 route-security missions and 17 recovery missions for American government contractors. The unit also provided security for logistical supply convoys, driving a total of 396,000 miles as convoy escorts. Battery B returned home in October 2008.

THE TRANSFORMATION

During the years of 2005-2008, the SDNG would again begin to transform its structure to meet the needs of an evolving federal and state mission. Threats of domestic terrorism and natural disasters would reshape the National Guard as a whole to better respond to national emergencies and homeland defense. Many Soldiers from the 147th Brigade volunteered to be part of a 200-personnel task force to support recovery operations following Hurricane Katrina in 2005. After Katrina, the artillery would see major changes to its organization.

The 147th FA Brigade along with its 2nd Battalion would be reorganized into other units. The brigade would become the 196th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade and the 2nd Battalion would be re-designated as the 1st Battalion and 139th Brigade Support Battalion.

For more than 100 years, the artillerymen of the South Dakota National Guard have defended their own nation's freedom and those of other nations struggling to preserve it. Perhaps the phrases, "King of Battle" and "Pride of the Dakotas" give new meaning to this new generation of South Dakota artillery, who are ready and willing to perform any mission, anytime, anywhere.