

**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**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

High-tech satellite gear links Guard units, emergency agencies

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

ELLSWORTH AIR FORCE BASE, S.D. – Missouri Guardsmen familiarized themselves with cutting-edge communications equipment Tuesday, June 10, at Ellsworth Air Force Base.

Members of the 1140th Engineer Battalion deployed and utilized the Joint Task Force Communications Equipment system – a satellite-linked voice and data system – as part of their annual training at this year’s Golden Coyote exercise. The JTFCE allows state emergency management officials to remain in touch with units deployed for emergency duty.

The system proved very worthy, allowing the tactical operations center to stay in constant contact with field-deployed units well out of normal radio range without any interruption, said Lt. Col. William Blaylock, commander of the 1140th.

“This system has enabled us to keep in touch real-time with our people,” Blaylock said. “It’s a valuable addition to our equipment list, and I’m confident it will prove its worth time and time again in the future.”

The communications capability of each JTFCE system is virtually unlimited. Besides allowing typical voice communications, each system also provides Internet access as well as video conferencing capability, said Capt. Kelly Messerli, the 1140th's assistant operations officer.

He said they are much more reliable than cell phones because signals can be disrupted by a lack of service or by terrain.

Messerli said although the JTFCEs purchased by the state of Missouri are configured for use only in the continental United States, with the right programming they could be deployed and utilized anywhere in the world.

When state officials were deciding how many JTFCEs to purchase and where to send them, geographic location and unit capability were two of the most important considerations, Blaylock said.

“We received one because of where we are and because of what we are capable of doing,” said Blaylock.

The battalion has a variety of operational capabilities including clearing and rebuilding roads, moving earth, and bridging bodies of water, he added.

The 1140th, located in Cape Girardeau, is in close proximity to the New Madrid Fault, which has been deemed a major earthquake flashpoint by geologists. The potential for a major quake along the New Madrid Fault Line is extremely great, experts have said, and when – not if – a major quake occurs, Missouri Guard units are likely to be overwhelmed, along with other military elements and civilian emergency response agencies.

One way to better coordinate the disaster response is to ensure reliable communications, and the JTFCE fits that bill. The addition of the JTFCE system means the 1140th Engineer Battalion has a much greater potential to save lives while minimizing long-term damage, Blaylock said.

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

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

Photo Cut Lines:

080610-A-4363M-001.JPG: Soldiers of the 1140th Engineer Battalion, Missouri Army National Guard, attend a briefing about an upcoming mission via video conferencing link powered by the Joint Task Force Communications Equipment system Tuesday, June 10, at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., as part of this year’s Golden Coyote training exercise. The JTFCE system provides reliable satellite-fed voice and data links between field units and headquarters elements during training operations and real-time disaster response missions. (Army National Guard photo by 1st Lt. Michelle Matthews)

Location of South Dakota National Guard Public Affairs Office:

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

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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.