

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SD Guard, Suriname military discuss emergency operations

By 1st Lt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs Office

RAPID CITY, S.D. – Members of Suriname’s Defense Forces were in the Black Hills taking part in a subject matter expert exchange with the South Dakota National Guard focusing on disaster relief and emergency operations, July 27 to Aug. 1.

The most recent exchange gave the South American service members the opportunity to observe emergency operation centers from the SDNG’s Joint Operation Center to the South Dakota Emergency Operations Center.

“Over the last few years, we’ve been troubled by some bad weather and flooding,” said Suriname Defense Force Lt. Col. Johnny Antonius, head of Defense Strategic Planning and Education. “In just a three to four week period, we had severe wind gusts causing hundreds of houses to lose their roofs or be destroyed altogether. We believe storms like this will return and while we can’t avoid it, we can at least get a system in place that better helps us get assistance to the ones that need it.”

While Suriname’s National Coordination Center for Disaster Relief, their equivalent to FEMA, is mandated to coordinate with all the ministries in their government for disaster relief operations, Antonius said they too are ready to establish emergency operation centers.

“It’s already in the minds of the NCCR that we need to establish emergency operation centers,” Antonius said. “I’m hoping this helps speed up the process and I’ll do my utmost to make it clear that it’s necessary.”

In addition to the discussions on the emergency operations processes conducted at the National Guard and state level, the Surinamese toured the Pennington County EOC, the Sturgis EOC and observed a joint operations military exercise involving South Dakota Army and Air National Guard units underway at Camp Rapid.

“The idea was to come here and look at your systems and see what we might be able to develop,” said Antonius, who will present a report to Suriname’s Minister of Defense once the three-man team returns home. “I will say that we’ve succeeded. What we’ve seen here was impressive at all levels.”

The SDNG has two follow-on exchanges scheduled in Suriname at end of August that will continue to build on emergency operations. The first will focus on disaster management, followed by a Joint Operations Center exchange.

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“These additional events should solidify and reinforce what Col. Antonius will share with his leadership and colleagues on how to further develop these processes for Suriname,” said U.S. Army Maj. Kathleen Dirk, SDNG State Partnership Program coordinator.

The exchange also provided the various emergency operations centers the chance to get feedback from the Surinamese.

“As we visited the various operations centers, the gentlemen from Suriname articulated some of the things peculiar to them and that’s the whole idea of the exchange,” said U.S. Navy Cmdr. Luis Figueroa, a senior defense official/defense attaché from U.S. Southern Command who’s stationed in Suriname. “We learn from them and they learn from us. It’s a mutually beneficial relationship.”

A relationship fast approaching ten years.

“Among all the state partnerships, throughout the world, we are the most active,” said Antonius. “We’ve been coming to South Dakota and the South Dakota National Guard has been coming down to Suriname since 2006. We have benefited most from them, than they from us, but I think in the interaction we complement each other - and we hope to expand on that.”

Planning is underway on another exchange that will expand that relationship when South Dakota Soldiers travel to Suriname on a scout mission exchange.

“It will be incredibly beneficial for the South Dakota National Guard by providing a very unique area of operations that will better train them for future deployments,” Figueroa said. “At the same time, ideas will be exchanged and some of the South Dakota National Guard processes could find their way into Suriname’s force and vice versa. It’s an extremely beneficial engagement between the two forces.”

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High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard



150728-Z-ZZ999-015: U.S. Army Col. Thomas Croymans, left, South Dakota National Guard’s director of the joint staff, shows members of Suriname’s Defense Forces the SDNG’s Joint Operations Center at Camp Rapid in Rapid City, S.D., July 28, 2015. The Surinamese service members were in South Dakota on a subject matter expert exchange focusing on emergency operations through the National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership Program. (U.S. Army National Guard photo/Released)



150728-Z-ZZ999-025: Members of Suriname’s Defense discuss emergency operations with an official from the Pennington Country emergency management office in Rapid City, S.D., July 28, 2015. The Surinamese service members were in South Dakota on a subject matter expert exchange focusing on emergency operations through the National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership Program. (U.S. Army National Guard photo/Released) (U.S. Army National Guard photo/Released)

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