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### **SD Bridge to be Dedicated in Honor of U.S. Army Private First Class Gunnar D. Becker**

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs will be hosting a State Bridge Dedication Ceremony to honor U.S. Army Private First Class Gunnar D. Becker.

The ceremony will be Sunday, August 18, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. (CT) at the Sanborn County 4-H Building in Forestburg (23237 405<sup>th</sup> Avenue).

The SD34 westbound bridge over the James River, just southeast of Forestburg, will be dedicated as the PFC Gunnar D. Becker Bridge.

Gunnar was the first casualty of his unit during Operation Iraqi Freedom and the only one lost from Sanborn County since the Vietnam Conflict. He died January 13, 2005, in Mosul when a .50-caliber machine gun round was accidentally discharged, ricocheted, and struck him.

Naming bridges in honor of our combat veterans who died while serving their country is an initiative of Governor Kristi Noem and the South Dakota Departments of Military, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs.

“Our fallen heroes are no longer with us, but their memories live on in the hearts of their loved ones,” said Greg Whitlock, secretary of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. “Naming our South Dakota bridges in honor of our fallen gives us the opportunity for remembrance, reflection, and respect. It helps us to honor the men and women who gave their lives in service to this nation. They cherished liberty and loved freedom so much, they were willing to lay down their lives to preserve our way of life.”

“We can never over appreciate the costs they bore for us,” said Whitlock. “We must never forget that our fallen sacrificed their future and their dreams. Their memories will live on for generations.”