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May 23, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Parole Absconder Apprehension Unit improving public safety

PIERRE, S.D.- The South Dakota Department of Corrections (DOC) created an Absconder Apprehension Unit (AAU) to lower the number of offenders on parole or suspended sentence supervision who abscond or violate the rules of supervision following their release from prison. This unit will mitigate an increase in the number of parolees violating their supervision agreements over the last several years by evading supervision by their assigned parole agent and committing new crimes.

Since December 2022, the AAU has empowered a team of experienced parole agents with the primary responsibility of tracking and apprehending absconders within South Dakota. This unit works directly with local law enforcement and various task forces to locate and apprehend absconders and get them off the streets.

“We established the AAU due to the criminal activities involving current parole absconders,” DOC Secretary Kellie Wasko said. “Our goal is to work with our law enforcement partners to improve and ensure public safety.”

Prior to the establishment of the AAU, the number of parole absconders topped more than 400. There are currently less than 300 active absconder cases. The AAU, other parole agents and law enforcement have apprehended a total of 233 absconders, including 20 priority absconders, since December 2022.

In addition to establishing the AAU, the DOC hired an intelligence analyst to work inside the South Dakota Fusion Center directly with law enforcement agencies. The position gathers, analyzes, and disseminates intelligence on fugitives, parole absconders, and criminal behavior of those offenders under DOC custody, while also developing, cultivating, and growing effective, collaborative relationships between the DOC and federal, state, county, local, and Tribal law enforcement.

DOC has also established a memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Marshal's Service to allow the Marshal's Service to work directly with the DOC to locate a separate cohort of wanted absconders and fugitives from DOC who are on Tribal lands.

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