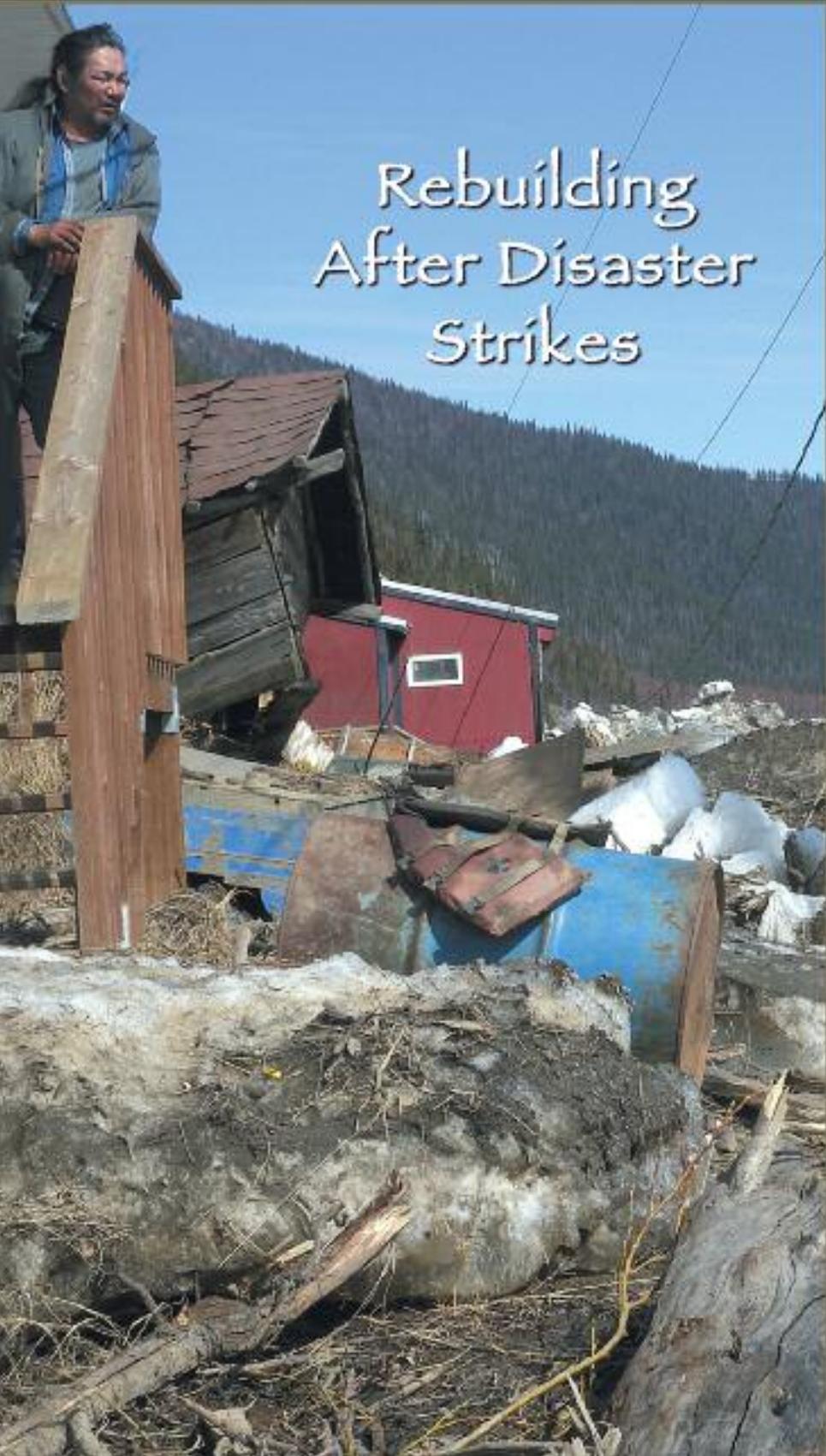


WARRIORS



Rebuilding
After Disaster
Strikes





Governor Sean Parnell
Commander in Chief



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Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard
& Commissioner of the DMVA

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Crooked Creek Spring Flood. Large ice chunks litter the village of Crooked Creek in May. The ice was propelled by fast moving flood waters on the Kuskokwim River and caused major damage to

village resources and infrastructure. Governor Sean Parnell visited Crooked Creek to survey the damage and meet with residents. He declared a state disaster for the area after his visit.

Photos: John Ramsey, John Madden and Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM



Sling-Load Training. An Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk from 1-207th Aviation prepares to lift cargo at Landing Zone Ranger, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, in March. The Black Hawk crew helped Soldiers from the 4th Quartermaster Detachment, U.S. Army Alaska, with exercising sling-load operations, which included hand and arm signals, as well as hookup and release procedures. Photo: Percy Jones, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Public Affairs

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veterans and families are invited and encouraged. Please send articles and photos with name, phone number, e-mail, complete mailing address and comments to:

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For the People

Governor Sean Parnell
Commander in Chief



Emergency Preparedness a Priority

This spring, weather conditions proved to be tumultuous around the United States. Tornadoes struck several communities in the Lower 48, and here at home, we contended with ice jam flooding along some of our most powerful rivers during breakup.

The community of Crooked Creek was hit particularly hard when the Kuskokwim River pushed large ice chunks onto land, flooding the town and destroying homes, vehicles and town resources. After seeing the devastation firsthand, I declared a state disaster in the area so that state resources could be allocated to help the village quickly recover and rebuild. In addition, the federal government approved a federal disaster

declaration, which allocated federal funding to the area.

Rebuilding after a natural disaster can be difficult; however, the worst of times can often bring out the best in people. My wife, Sandy, and I had the opportunity to visit Joplin, Mo., in June after a horrific tornado ripped through that community. Although we witnessed tremendous destruction, we were encouraged by the community's steadfast faith, can-do spirit, and the volunteer efforts of neighbors and those from other states to step up and help in the effort.

Here at home, it is important for individuals and families to have a plan and resources available to act in the event of

an emergency. For information on how to do this, go to www.ready.alaska.gov.

As a state, our priorities are to ensure we have emergency power generators located around the state, water purification capabilities in place, funding available to train emergency responders and a catastrophic disaster plan in hand.

By working together, we can be well prepared and build a more secure and bright future for Alaska. Enjoy our beautiful Alaskan summer and hopefully catch a few fish! ■



Recovery Options for Crooked Creek. After an inspection of the damaged areas in Crooked Creek, Governor Sean Parnell, third from left, discusses recovery options in May with Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management Director John Madden, right, Department of Military & Veterans Affairs Commissioner Major General Thomas H. Katkus, left, and State Representative Alan Dick. Parnell later declared the ice-jam flooding in Crooked Creek a state disaster, which also received federal disaster recognition and support.

Photo: Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM Public Affairs



The Adjutant General



Major General Thomas H. Katkus
Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard
& Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs

ALWAYS READY, ALWAYS THERE

The uniformed and non-uniformed men and women of the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs are highly trained professionals. They are constantly ready and able to respond to any state or national emergency crisis or federal requirements.

With the onslaught this spring of a multitude of exceptionally noteworthy disasters across our nation, our Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management received considerable attention. Some of its own activity included a quick response to support the residents of Crooked Creek after ice and water rushed over the banks of the nearby Kuskokwim River and devastated the small Alaska town during spring breakup.

As true professionals, they instituted a carefully crafted and rehearsed response plan, synchronizing with local, state and federal agencies. Our DMVA emergency management personnel led the effort to assist the citizens of Crooked Creek with

vital requirements through disaster assistance and recovery. Their crucial involvement and decisive actions were key to assisting the affected citizens. Their efforts continue as they assist in rebuilding and repairing essential community infrastructure and housing before our Alaska gripping and unforgiving arctic winter sets in. They are in an unrelenting race against time – just “another day at the office” for these great professionals.

Simultaneously, our Alaska National Guard members continue providing critical assistance in Iraq and Afghanistan. Their involvement and extraordinary efforts save lives and assure delivery of essential supplies and personnel.

More than 70 Alaska Army National Guardsman with B Company, 1-207th Aviation, returned home mid-summer after a yearlong deployment in Iraq. During their deployment they logged 4,000 hours flying our nation’s top leadership assigned

in Iraq around the theater of operations. They represented the Alaska National Guard tremendously, ready to support any tasking and without cancelling a single mission. A job well done!

The 176th Wing currently has 140 Alaska Air National Guardsmen in Afghanistan, flying and maintaining five C-130 Hercules aircraft. They airdrop food, fuel, water, ammunition and other critical supplies to Soldiers during night operations. These missions have reduced the requirement to drive dangerous convoys. They are at the tip of the spear in the “last tactical mile” of our warriors’ logistical chain.

Whether here at home in Alaska or overseas, DMVA is prepared to respond with the support required to defend this nation or assist our citizens in their time of need. We are “always ready, always there.” Thank you for all you do! ■



Ice Damage. Major General Thomas H. Katkus, right, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard and commissioner of the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, and State Representative Alan Dick tour the damage in Crooked Creek caused by spring ice jams on the Kuskokwim River in May. Photo: Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM Public Affairs



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Dispatches from the Front...

Air Guard Receives First of Four Additional C-130s

Story and photo by Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... As more than 20 Alaska National Guardsmen looked on, the first of four new iron birds coming to Alaska touched down on the blacktop at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in March.

As part of the 2005 Defense Base Realignment and Closure, the Alaska Air National Guard's 144th Airlift Squadron received the first of four C-130 Hercules aircraft from the Tennessee National Guard.

According to the 144th Airlift Squadron Commander Lieutenant Colonel Rich Adams, his unit must receive four C-130s by September due to BRAC law.

"We are going from an eight aircraft squadron to a 12 aircraft squadron, but from the Air National Guard perspective, the squadron formation isn't changing," said Adams. "We aren't changing our manning at all; what we are getting is an associate unit. This means the active-duty Air Force is going to bring in about 12 crews of personnel, plus some command staff as part of the total force initiative."

Adams said that on a day to day basis, the 144th Airlift Squadron will be able to fly about 50 percent more missions, which will give his Airmen more opportunities.

"More hours flown will give our Airmen opportunities to get on different flights and provide a little more flexibility to our traditional Guardsmen. We are about an 80-percent traditional force; we have postmen, teachers, airline pilots, etc., so it gives



C-130 Arrival in Alaska. The first of four new C-130 Hercules aircraft coming to Alaska this year taxis down the runway to its new hangar on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson after arriving from the Tennessee National Guard in March.

them more opportunities to fly during the week and be involved in missions too."

Adams explained that while the Alaska Air National Guard will own the aircraft, part of the total force initiative is to allow the active-duty to access some of the "iron."

"The active-duty will work with Pacific Air Force's air mobility division so they can task the tails, and we'll come up with an agreement on how many aircraft they can task at one time," Adams said. "What they use them for, whether it's the long range

radar sites here in Alaska or to fly in the desert in a deployed status or in the Pacific Command area of responsibility will be up to the active-duty."

The arrangement of having an associate active-duty unit will benefit both sides.

"I think it's a really exciting opportunity for the Guard," Adams said. "Flying together with the active-duty will provide the Guard the opportunity to fly on new missions and exercises and gives America a little more iron in the fight." ■



Deadliest Catch. Crew members of the F/V Time Bandit, a crab fishing boat from Homer featured on the hit show Deadliest Catch, spend the day with members of Detachment 1, B Troop, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance, Alaska Army National Guard, in April. Specialist Justin Sekarak, second from left, Specialist Jonathan Sholl, right, and Private Kyle Papineau, kneeling on right, briefed the crab fishermen on Soldier operations, while the Time Bandit crew later showed them around the boat.

Photo: Courtesy 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance



Crab Fishermen for a Day. Specialist Justin Sekarak, left, and Private Kyle Papineau, both of Detachment 1, B Troop, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance, Alaska Army National Guard, check out the F/V Time Bandit, a crab fishing boat featured on the Discovery Channel's hit show Deadliest Catch, during its stop in Kodiak in April. The Time Bandit spent the day with the Guardsmen learning battle drills, ammunition conservation, and the ins and outs of Humvees.

Photo: Courtesy 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance

Where in the World

Soldiers Deploy to Support Mongolians

By Staff Sergeant Karima Turner,
DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Two Alaska Army National Guardsmen deployed in late January as U.S. liaisons in support of the Mongolian Expeditionary Forces in Afghanistan.

Major Scott Monson, 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, and Sergeant Major Richard Hildreth, Recruiting and Retention Command, became the fourth team from the Alaska Army National Guard to deploy to Afghanistan in this capacity. The first rotation of this kind to support Operation Enduring Freedom started in 2009.

Monson and Hildreth first conducted training in Fort Benning, Ga., prior to beginning their long journey to Camp Eggers in Kabul, Afghanistan, where they deployed for six to eight months.

“As liaisons and tactical advisors to the Mongolian Expeditionary Forces, our guys provide support to the Mongolians as needed,” said Major Mark Binggeli, a former liaison officer to the MEF. “The Mongolian Expeditionary Forces don’t have airlift, they don’t have Forward Operating Bases, billets or anything like that. When the initial team was sent over in 2009, they established places for them to stay, uniform and equipment requirements and helped to facilitate other needs. Now the liaisons are assisting in ensuring support continues.”

Working through the National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership program, the Alaska National Guard formed a state partnership with Mongolia that has lasted nearly a decade.

“I think it’s a good international relationship we’ve developed, and that relationship continues to be strengthened by sending these teams to assist,” Binggeli said.

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“Guardian Angels” Return Home. Master Sergeant Matt Schrader, center, smiles after being greeted by his wife, Vicki, left, and daughter, Erika, after he returned home in May from a deployment to Afghanistan. Schrader had been deployed providing combat search and rescue capabilities in support of Operation Enduring Freedom with the Alaska Air National Guard’s 212th Rescue Squadron since December. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Humanitarian Aid in Japan. Tech Sgt. Chris Geisler, 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, removes a fuel nozzle from C-17 Globemaster III in March at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan. The C-17 crew flew into the air station to pick up Marines from Marine Wing Support Squadron 171 and drop them off at Sendai Airport. The Marines travelled to Sendai Airport to setup portable showers for Japanese citizens as part of the humanitarian assistance provided during Operation Tomodachi during tsunami relief efforts.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Jonathan Steffen, U.S. Air Force



Senator Tours Clear Air Force Station. Leroy Sutton, operations and maintenance supervisor, 213th Space Warning Squadron, left, briefs U.S. Senator Mark Begich on the operation of Clear Air Force Station’s power plant in April. Begich toured the facilities at Clear Air Force Station, about five miles south of Anderson, Alaska, and learned about issues facing Clear, upcoming military construction project requirements, and the radar’s current capabilities and funding targets for the upgrade.

Photo: Technical Sergeant Beth Norman, 213th Space Warning Squadron

Support Group at Camp Eggers and other sites in country, the Alaska Guardsmen act specifically as U.S. representative liaisons and advisors to ensure proper communication and understanding between the Mongolians and other U.S. or NATO elements during their deployment. ■

Airmen Deploy to Afghanistan

By DMVA Public Affairs Staff

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... One hundred and forty members of the Alaska

Air National Guard’s 176th Wing left on five C-130 Hercules aircraft from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in June on a three-month deployment to Afghanistan.

The 140 deployers were drawn primarily from three of the 176th Wing’s component units: 144th Airlift Squadron, 176th Maintenance Squadron and 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. A handful of individuals from other units also deployed in support of the mission.

The 144th Airlift Squadron operates the C-130s. In Afghanistan, they are performing intra-theater tactical airlift and airdrops of personnel, equipment and supplies.



Premiere Training. Alaska Army National Guardsmen from C Company, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance, and the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade train at the National Training Center, Calif., while assisting an active-duty unit preparing for a deployment. They worked on becoming proficient in their warrior tasks with scenarios such as targeting and disrupting anti-government networks.

Photo: Command Sergeant Major Clinton K. Brown II, 1-297th Cavalry



Afghanistan Bound. Members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing board a C-130 on their way to Afghanistan from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson for a three-month deployment in June. In all, 140 Air Guardsmen and five C-130 Hercules aircraft from the 176th Wing deployed in support of the mission to provide intra-theater tactical airlift and airdrops.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Aviators Meet Country Star. Toby Keith, sixth from left, in April meets with Alaska Army National Guardsmen from B Company, 1-207th Aviation, who are deployed to Iraq supporting airlift operations with their UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters. From left: Chief Warrant Officer Two Matt Heieren, First Lieutenant Garrett Hoelzel, Chief Warrant Officer Three Bryan Keese, Chief Warrant Officer Three Justin Lindell, Staff Sergeant Stephen Elliott, Toby Keith, Specialist Chris Frank, Sergeant Nike Mikos and Staff Sergeant Jake Nay.

Photo: Courtesy Bryan Keese, 1-207th Aviation



Deployment Duties. Sergeant Phillip Peter, of the Alaska Army National Guard's B Company, 1-207th Aviation, updates a UH-60 Black Hawk operator manual while deployed to Iraq in support of Operation New Dawn. Peter is on his first deployment and calls Bethel home.

Photo: Courtesy 1-207th Aviation

"I joined the Guard because I wanted to travel outside of my hometown, so I could serve and experience new things," Peter said. "I am proud to be in the Alaska National Guard; there's always something new going on, and I'm learning a lot every day here in Iraq."

Since August 2010, Peter, along with 75 other Alaska Army National Guardsmen in his unit, have been away from home in support of Operation New Dawn. As a crew chief and mechanic for the UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, Peter has enjoyed the opportunity to fly every day in Iraq and has been on a few unique missions, some high-profile ones too.

"We are involved in many important missions, and I was involved with flying the vice president around Iraq to meet Soldiers," Peter said. "It has been very rewarding."

The Alaska Army National Guard's B Company, 1-207th Aviation "Arctic Cowboys" is scheduled to return to Alaska this summer. ■

The two maintenance units work together to keep the 144th's planes in peak operating condition.

Most of the deployed Guard members call southcentral Alaska home. They are expected to return late this summer. ■

Western Alaskan Serves Proudly in Iraq

By Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ...

Thousands of miles from the tundra in western Alaska, an Alaska Army National

Guardsman proudly serves his state and country as an "Arctic Cowboy" on a year-long deployment in Iraq.

Sergeant Phillip Peter, a crew chief with B Company, 1-207th Aviation, has been a member of the Alaska Army National Guard since October 2007 and is on his first deployment to Iraq from Bethel.

An important city in Western Alaska, Bethel is only accessed by sea or air. Peter, like many in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, enjoys living in Bethel for its subsistence lifestyle and proud Yupik Eskimo history, but he also enjoys serving in the National Guard and the opportunities to see more of Alaska and the world.

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Weapons of Mass Destruction Unit: Hones Skills

By Kalei Rupp, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Members of the Alaska National Guard's 103rd Civil Support Team – Weapons of Mass Destruction put their skills to the test and helped train another unit during a recent exercise in West Virginia.

Five members of the team spent seven days at the Center for National Response, W. Va., in early April, responding to various scenarios involving chemical, biological and radiological incidents. The main purpose of the event was to conduct joint operations with the 13th CST from the Rhode Island National Guard.

"We have an ongoing training partnership with the 13th CST, and were helping train some of their new personnel," said Second Lieutenant Joseph Radke, survey section leader, 103rd CST. "Even though we're the largest state in the union and Rhode Island is the smallest, we face a lot of the same challenges as first responders; we both encounter maritime missions and have the need and opportunity for the same type of training."

The event was specifically designed to train the survey field operations in the "hot zones," areas that are believed to be potentially contaminated during an incident. These team members are the first responders who enter sites, make a presumptive identification of the danger and any associated hazards, as well as gather samples from the site.

"During the exercise, the survey sections responded to chemical, biological and radiological scenarios, while dealing with contamination and communication issues," said Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Wilson, commander, 103rd CST. "Joint training like this allows our team members to share differing procedures and techniques and better prepares the 103rd CST for integration into a large scale national disaster in the lower 48."

Two members of the 103rd CST, Staff Sergeant Nina Kolyvanova and Sergeant Robyn Munnlyn, were recognized for excellence during the event for their expertise in their fields. Kolyvanova is a member of the survey section and Munnlyn is part of the decontamination section, which is responsible for making sure members of the survey section who enter hot zones and possibly come



Suspicious Substances. Staff Sergeant Nina Kolyvanova, center, 103rd Civil Support Team, Alaska National Guard, instructs members of the 13th Civil Support Team, Rhode Island National Guard, on how to properly take samples of suspicious substances during an exercise at the Center for National Response, W.Va.

Photo: Second Lieutenant Joseph Radke, 103rd Civil Support Team

into contact with dangerous materials are cleaned of contaminants before leaving the area.

The 103rd Civil Support Team is in place to respond to chemical, biological,

radioactive and nuclear attacks. Members augment local and regional terrorism response capabilities in events known or suspected to involve these weapons of mass destruction. ■

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Airmen Serve in Rural Alabama Free Medical Clinic

By Captain John Callahan,
176th Wing Public Affairs

HAYNEVILLE, Ala. ... The 70 service members, including 35 members of the Alaska Air National Guard, who deployed to this tiny, rural town to host a free medical clinic wrapped up their mission in early May.

For this mission, officially titled “Town of Haynesville 2011,” the 70 deployers opened a temporary, free clinic for area

residents. Using Haynesville’s small town hall as a base of operations, clinic personnel offered a wide range of services from medical and dental care to optometry services.

Unofficial numbers indicate that, in just seven and a half days, more than 1,000 residents of this historically underserved area had signed up for the free services. Most days, military personnel who arrived in the morning were greeted by a line of people, many with no health insurance, waiting to enter the clinic.



Medical Check-Up. Master Sergeant Jessica Alvarez, top, a medical service technician from the 176th Medical Group, Alaska Air National Guard, and Airman First Class Megan McCarthy, a medical service technician from the 673d Medical Group, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, check a patient's blood pressure during an Innovative Readiness Training mission in Alabama. Photo: Master Sergeant Shannon Oleson, 176th Wing Public Affairs

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“I am amazed by the number of patients the staff members here were able to care for,” said Lieutenant Colonel Sharolyn Lange, chief nurse for the 176th Medical Group and the mission commander. “Once the word got out in the community, the response was overwhelming. Our success in seeing and treating so many is really a testament to the professionalism of our joint-force partners – the Army, Navy and Marines, whether active duty, Guard or Reserve. I can’t say enough about the quality of their work.”

◀ **Long Line of Patients.** Alaska Air National Guard members arriving in the morning to open a free medical clinic in Hayneville, Ala., are greeted by a long line of area residents eager to receive services.

Photo: Captain John Callahan, 176th Wing Public Affairs



Eye Exam. Colonel Ron Kichura, an optometrist and commander of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Medical Group, performs an inner ocular pressure test on Hayneville Mayor Helenore Bell in May. Thirty-five members of the Alaska Air National Guard deployed to Hayneville for training as part of the National Guard's Innovative Readiness Program.

Photo: Captain John Callahan, 176th Wing Public Affairs

Twenty-five of the deployers were from the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Medical Group, and 10 support personnel came from other Alaska Air National Guard units. The group deployed as part of a joint-services mission organized by the Department of Defense's Innovative Readiness Training program.

The IRT program is run by the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. It brings Guard and Reserve units together from around the country to sharpen their skills in real-world conditions.

Some of the services provided during the mission included the following:

- Three optometrists and their support staff conducted thorough eye exams and wrote prescriptions. A small team of Navy specialists then took the prescriptions and crafted eyeglasses, which were given out at no charge. More than 400 patients were seen.
- Three dentists and their staff members performed exams, cleanings, fillings and extractions, serving more than 272 people.
- A nutritionist offered nutrition and dietary consultations to at least 23 individuals.
- A doctor, two physician's assistants and a nurse practitioner offered general medical services, consultations and visited a local school to do free sports physicals for the children. Nearly 500 people were helped.



Sewer System Fix. Airman First Class Aaron Brehm, left, an optometry technician from the 176th Medical Group, guides Staff Sergeant Abigail Olivares, a utilities technician from the 176th Civil Engineer Squadron, as she operates a backhoe to fix a sewer system concern in May. Photo: Staff Sergeant N. Alicia Goldberger, 176th Wing Public Affairs

The deployers didn't stop there. Four members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Civil Engineer Squadron and six members of the Marines' 6th Engineering Support Battalion completed a variety of upgrade projects around town. They addressed several long-standing sewage problems, fixed up a dilapidated daycare and community center and built a new patio canopy for the town's mental health clinic. Bioenvironmental specialists checked the city's water supply and wastewater treatment

facilities, while public health technicians reviewed and advised on local food-handling processes.

"I cannot express how much this has meant to the people here," said Hayneville Mayor Helenore Bell. "It's meant so much, literally, to the quality of life here. People who had been unable to afford eyeglasses can now see! The civil engineers alone accomplished what would have taken our little shop three months. We are so, so thankful." ■



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Guard Supports ARCTIC CARE in Rural Alaska

By Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... The Alaska National Guard joined forces with active-duty and reserve units across the country to provide support for Operation Arctic Care in April.

Led this year by the Army Reserves 807th Medical Command (Deployment Support), Arctic Care is an annual two-week mission where more than 300 government and military medical professionals and specialists from across the country converge on different remote villages across Alaska.

This year's operation marked the 17th year medical teams have deployed to remote areas of Alaska to treat general health patients, in addition to providing dental care, eye exams and veterinary care.

With most villages only accessible by airplane or helicopter, the teams and supplies were airlifted by Alaska National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, C-23 Sherpas and C-130 Hercules aircraft.



Supply Drop. A crew chief from A Company, 1-207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard, unloads a UH-60 Black Hawk during a supply drop in the remote village of Nulato, Alaska. The supplies replenished the medical personnel station in the village during Arctic Care 2011. Photo: Sergeant Craig Anderson, 807th Medical Command (Deployment Support) Public Affairs



Pre-flight Inspection. Alaska Army National Guard Warrant Officer Michael Lewis makes his final pre-flight inspection before delivering supplies on a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter to the Arctic Care medical teams in remote villages of Alaska. Photo: Sergeant Craig Anderson, 807th Medical Command (Deployment Support) Public Affairs

Medical professionals provided care to native Alaskans, who do not have access to routine health care, in remote villages from Galena to Northway to Anaktuvuk Pass. The operation has become the largest recurring joint military medical and logistics training exercise of its kind.

"Arctic Care is a phenomenal operation that synchronizes support between multiple agencies while providing excellent support to rural Alaska," said Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard.

Austere weather conditions were a challenge in getting flights into villages, but that's part of the mission, which is intended to simulate military/civilian medical outreach operations in time of crisis, conflict or disaster.

"It's an excellent opportunity to train, while providing real-world support here at home." Katkus said. "This training is critical for our Guard and Reserve members so they are prepared for emergencies here in Alaska and deployments around the world." ■

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Mongolians Observe Medical Exercise

By Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Members of the Alaska National Guard escorted three Mongolian delegates throughout Alaska in April in conjunction with Operation Arctic Care.

An annual two-week mission where more than 300 government and military medical professionals and specialists from across the country converge on different remote villages across Alaska, Arctic Care provided the Mongolian delegates an opportunity to see the technologies used to treat patients in a unique setting.

Brought together in 2003 by the National Guard's State Partnership Program, Alaska and Mongolia were partnered because the two regions resemble each other in size, terrain, natural disasters and similar challenges with many citizens living in rural areas.

Every year, Alaska and Mongolia engage each other during joint exercises and send delegates to each country to learn more about programs and policies while continuing a long-term relationship with mutual support.

During Arctic Care, Mongolia sent representatives from the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Health and National Emergency Management Agency to observe the medical exercise in Northway. They also visited the Basset Army Hospital, Elmendorf Hospital, Tanana Chiefs Conference, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital and Northway K-12 school.

"The highlight of the trip was travelling to Northway to see medical services being provided in a remote community," said Major Wayne Don, Alaska-Mongolia State Partnership director. "The remoteness and challenges associated with providing care in a small village resonated with the Mongolians because they are faced with similar challenges for people in their country who live



Observing All Types of Patients. Colonel Davaadorj Rendoo, right, Mongolian Armed Forces general staff, observes U.S. military medical professionals perform veterinary services on a dog in Northway, Alaska. During Operation Arctic Care, medical teams deployed to remote areas of Alaska to treat general health patients, in addition to providing dental care, eye exams and veterinary care. Photo: Sergeant Sasha Matthew, Alaska Army National Guard

in the rural areas of Mongolia. They saw first-hand how similar our challenges are logistically and professionally in providing for an underserved population."

The Arctic Care exercise also highlighted the Guard, Reserve, active-duty and civilian organizations ability to work together to help the people of Alaska. Joint cooperation that, according to Don, is important for the Mongolians to see in action.

"It was also important for them to see the interagency cooperation required to pull off this event since their organizations tend to compartmentalize duties and not necessarily engage in interagency activities," Don said. ■

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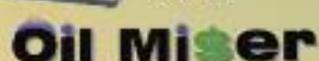
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Search and Rescue Elite. “Guardian Angel” team members from the 212th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, are in the foothills of Afghanistan during a recent deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The unit is credited with saving more than 100 lives while deployed for eight months.

Photo: Courtesy 212th Rescue Squadron

Guardian ANGELS

save 107 LIVES
in afghanistan

By Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ...

Guardsmen from the Alaska Air National Guard’s 212th Rescue Squadron “Guardian Angels” returned in May from a deployment to Afghanistan where they are credited with saving 107 lives during combat search and rescue missions.

The unit deployed for eight months, with individual Guardsmen supporting the deployment in two to four month intervals.

“Just about everybody in the unit had the chance to deploy, and they represented the Alaska Air National Guard very well,” said Major Joe Conroy, 212th Rescue Squadron director of operations, Alaska Air National Guard.

The Guardsmen were on alert 24/7, ready to respond and prepared in part due to the training they receive while providing medical support annually throughout Alaska.

“We have a lot of patient contact in Alaska, and that helps with dealing with people’s injuries,” said Technical Sergeant Chris Uriarte, pararescuemen, 212th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard. “The medical portion translates well.”

“Here in Alaska we are always on alert, and that’s definitely a benefit when you’re deployed because you need to be ready and prepared to provide support when the

call comes in,” said Staff Sergeant Bill Cenna, pararescuemen, 212th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard.

Throughout the course of the eight-month deployment, the men of the 212th Rescue Squadron spent their time transferring patients between medical facilities and engaged in the fight providing support on the heat of the battlefield.

“In addition to standing alert or pulling patient transfer, we were tasked to support specific Army operations,” Uriarte said. “It got a little sporty during those events.”

Cenna added, “It allowed us to be closer to the fight and have a launch time of two minutes instead of 35 minutes. It makes a big difference when you’re that close and are able to provide immediate support to the troops on the ground.”

One mission in particular occurred April 23 when Cenna, Uriarte and three other Guardian Angels – Major Jesse Peterson, Technical Sergeant Shane Hargis and Staff Sergeant Zachary Kline – were involved directly in a fight trying to save the lives of two downed Army aviators.

“We were the closest asset when an Army helicopter went down,” Uriarte said.

Uriarte was onboard one of two HH-60 Pavehawk helicopters flown by aircrew from the 33rd Rescue Squadron from Kadena Air Base, Japan. He was on the lead aircraft that went in to retrieve two downed aviators during a barrage of incoming fire.

“We went in, put a three-man team on the ground and found the two aviators were split-up,” Uriarte said. “We sent our second two-man team over to the wreckage, where the second aviator was located, to pick him up. It ended up being a pretty long stay on the ground for the guys at the crash site.”

Cenna was part of the two-man team on the second HH-60 Pavehawk sent in to provide support to the downed pilot at the crash site. He and Kline hoisted down 180 feet, much higher than their standard descents because of the mountainous terrain.

Peterson, Uriarte and Hargis were able to rescue the first aviator, hoisting back into the HH-60 to support Cenna and Kline as long as they could before returning to base to swap out for a fresh crew.

Meanwhile, Cenna and Kline, who had to traverse about 55 yards to get to the crash site, discovered the pilot had already died. They immediately prepared

to have the fallen hero hoisted up to the Pavehawk.

“The helo was taking rounds, and one of the flight engineers was hit in the leg. He was bleeding pretty badly, so they returned to base, and we stayed in the area because we didn’t have the means to exfil immediately,” Cenna said.

The pair spent five more hours in the middle of a fire fight while on the ground with the fallen hero, taking cover to avoid becoming casualties themselves and calling in close air support to strike the enemy, who continued to fire on their position.

“We were taking cover and trying to locate where rounds were coming from

“It is my duty as a pararescueman to save lives and to aid the injured. I will be prepared at all times to perform my assigned duties quickly and efficiently, placing these duties before personal desires and comforts. These things I do, that others may live.”

– Pararescuemen’s Creed



Over the Mountains of Afghanistan. Technical Sergeant Chris Uriarte, 212th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, practices hoist training in the mountains of Afghanistan in April.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Bill Cenna, 212th Rescue Squadron



Hoist Training. Major Jesse Peterson, left, and Technical Sergeant Shane Hargis, 212th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, practice hoist training in the mountains of Afghanistan in April, just one day prior to a mission they were called upon to recover the pilots of a downed Army helicopter. Photo: Staff Sergeant Bill Cenna, 212th Rescue Squadron

to direct air support onto it,” Cenna said. “Aircraft kept trying to retrieve us, but they kept getting shot at.”

Kline called in close air support, and it came in the form of Apaches, A-10s and other aircraft, which engaged targets right on top of their position.

After hours of continued fighting and dodging bullets, a Pavehawk was finally able to get back in and hoist the fallen hero, Cenna, and Kline off the wreckage and back to base for a mission debrief of the day’s activities.

It was a significant event they’d lived through, but 12 hours later, they were back on duty providing the same support in hopes they could save another life.

They were living the creed they all agreed to when they became pararescuemen. A creed that means putting others before oneself: “It is my duty as a pararescueman to save lives and to aid the injured. I will be prepared at all times to perform my assigned duties quickly and efficiently, placing these duties before personal desires and comforts. These things I do, that others may live.”

“Imagine telling a fellow service member that you can’t come get them out of harm’s way because you’re tired – or better yet, imagine explaining that to their kids,” Uriarte said. “Not a chance.” ■

Guardsmen Battle in “Best Warrior” Competition

By Specialist Michelle Brown,
134th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Seven Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers competed in the 2011 Alaska National Guard’s Best Warrior Competition held at various training areas within Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Camp Denali in May.

This year’s competition, run by the 207th Regional Training Institute, included 26 events designed to test the physical and mental toughness of each participant and name the Alaska Army National Guard Soldier and Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.

During the four-day competition, the Soldiers faced a series of warrior tasks and challenges including a written exam, an Army Physical Fitness Test, day and night land navigation, an obstacle course, a combatives



Obstacle Course, No Obstacle.

Staff Sergeant Gilbert Morales, 1-297th Cavalry, cavalry scout, Alaska Army National Guard, navigates his way through the obstacle course during the 2011 Best Warrior Competition held on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Photo: Sergeant Edward Eagerton, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Ready, Aim, Fire. Staff Sergeant James Tollefson, C Company, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance, infantryman, Alaska Army National Guard, sets the headspace and timing for an M2 .50 caliber machine gun during the 2011 Best Warrior Competition held on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Tollefson won his division and was named “Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year.” Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, DMVA Public Affairs

tournament and an eight-mile road march with an approximately 50-pound rucksack.

The Soldiers also engaged in several live fire exercises with the M9 pistol, M4 rifle, M249 squad automatic weapon, 12-gauge shotgun and were required to fire the M-203 grenade launcher and AT-4 rocket launcher.

On day two, the Soldiers were evaluated on personal appearance, poise and military knowledge in front of a sergeant’s major board, led by Alaska Army National Guard Command Sergeant Major Gordon Choate.

“This outstanding group of Soldiers excelled in a physically demanding competition with rapid transitions between

each event,” Choate said. “This was no small feat.”

At the end of the competition, only two could stand together in victory.

Specialist Ernesto Ventura, 2nd Platoon, A Company, 49th Missile Defense Battalion military police officer, was named “Soldier of the Year.” Staff Sergeant James Tollefson, C Company, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance team leader, was named “NCO of the Year.”

In November 2010, Ventura was also named the 49th Missile Defense Battalion Soldier of the Year after competing in the 49th Ground-based Midcourse Defense Best Warrior Competition.



Ruck March. Private First Class Austin Makowski, C Company, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance, infantryman, Alaska Army National Guard, hikes uphill while carrying a 50-pound rucksack during the eight-mile ruck-march portion of the 2011 Best Warrior Competition held on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Photo: Sergeant Edward Eagerton, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Flying Over Obstacles. Specialist Ernesto Ventura, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, military police officer, Alaska Army National Guard, traverses an obstacle during the 2011 Best Warrior Competition held on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Ventura went on to win his division in the competition and was named "Soldier of the Year."

Photo: Sergeant Edward Eagerton, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

"I was honored to represent my unit and to be given the opportunity to participate in the competition," Ventura said. "This competition was more difficult, but it was exciting, and it definitely helped develop my warrior skills even more.

"My strongest event was the eight-mile road march," Ventura added. "I advanced by making the correct decisions and taking advantage of my time."

Tollefson, who has spent more than 24 months in deployed environments said that when the competition tested his limits, he relied on more than seven years experience as a Soldier to put things into perspective.

"I would be letting myself down if I backed off," Tollefson said. "Although this competition was a challenge, I've done more difficult things in the past, so to quit on this would be admitting that I was less of a man now than when I trained for Iraq, went to Ranger School or survived Afghanistan."

Tollefson volunteered to participate in the competition, seeking a challenge and an opportunity to meet other high-speed Soldiers.

"Participating in competitions like this has long-term positive effects regardless if you win or lose," Tollefson said. "You take away experiences that can help you in other situations."

Throughout the competition, an emphasis was placed on the importance of Soldier skills. Leadership hopes that it will help lay the groundwork for other units to implement similar training exercises.

"This was a great training event, inspiring the necessary skills to better prepare our Soldiers and NCOs for combat," Choate said. ■

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Homeland Security & Emergency Management

Crooked Creek Flooding Response



By Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Every spring, as temperatures rise, the ice along Alaska's river systems begins to crack, break up and move downstream. All too often the ice stops moving, pinched by a curve in the river, grounded by a low spot along the river bed or stacked up on other ice, and an ice jam results.

In May, an ice jam developed above and below the community of Crooked Creek on the Kuskokwim River. Crooked Creek's 107 full-time residents, survivors of the 2009 spring floods, had taken usual proactive measures, such as moving vehicles to higher ground and storing water. However, the combined ice jams blocked water flow downstream and water levels in Crooked Creek began to rise.

Ice and water rushed over the banks, crushing vehicles, smashing homes and depositing a field of ice 10 feet thick in the

village. Water levels reached 30 feet above the normal levels, far exceeding flood water levels current Crooked Creek residents had ever experienced. The event happened so quickly that residents fled to higher ground with nothing more than the clothes they were wearing.

When Evelyn Thomas, Crooked Creek tribal president, determined an evacuation was necessary, she contacted Donlin Creek Mine. The mine flew 53 evacuees by helicopter and plane to its facility, with the youngest being a four-month-old infant.

"Many Crooked Creek residents work at the mine and it is their closest neighbor. Like any good neighbor, Donlin Creek Mine was there to help when called upon," said John Madden, director of DHS&EM. "During any disaster event, the state's top priority is the safety of the people affected by the event. It is heartening to see the mine has that same priority for its neighbors."

Before the ice jam occurred, a River

Watch team had flown over the area and reported that the most dangerous looking ice on the Kuskokwim was near Crooked Creek. The River Watch team, a partnership between DHS&EM and the National Weather Service River Forecast Center, provide advanced emergency notification.

"Time and time again, we have seen that having a hydrologist and an emergency manager in the area to evaluate river conditions and provide timely emergency response assistance is extremely valuable," said Claude Denver, DHS&EM incident commander. "The ability to land in a community as flood waters rise gives DHS&EM the opportunity to help an impacted community make key decisions early on in the event. That guidance and decisions have a major impact on the entire response effort."

Once flooding began, the Kuskokwim River Watch team started communicating with the State Emergency Coordination

Survey of Damage. After an inspection of the damaged areas in Crooked Creek, Governor Sean Parnell, third from left, discusses recovery options with DHS&EM Director John Madden during an assessment visit to the village.

Photo: Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM Public Affairs



Aerial Assessment. A River Watch team's aerial inspection shows significant damage along Crooked Creek's Kuskokwim River shoreline. River Watch teams provide communities advanced information regarding ice conditions, as well as offering emergency management support during a flood. Photo: Karl Edwards, DHS&EM

Center to begin the state's emergency response effort in Crooked Creek. In addition to the state's assets and resources, multiple volunteer and tribal entities began to organize.

Response to an emergency like the flooding in Crooked Creek requires a large number of organizations in order to meet all of the essential life safety and emergency response needs. No one organization has all of the resources, personnel, equipment and expertise.

"Helping a community respond to a disaster requires a deft touch. Community leaders and key decision makers are under a tremendous amount of stress. They may have little to no emergency management experience, and they are dealing with the emotional trauma that comes with witnessing friends and family members in shelters with their homes damaged or destroyed. Many times, their homes and property are also affected," Denver said. "It is important

to support their decision making rather than make the decisions. Once priorities are set, we coordinate resources to achieve community goals."

A few days after the initial flooding began, the ice jam below Crooked Creek released and water levels began to recede. DHS&EM launched a Disaster Initial Response Team, composed of an emergency management specialist, a disaster assessment and recovery specialist and a logistic/safety specialist. The team's mission was to provide guidance to the community and to evaluate and address immediate response and relief actions.

The day after the ice jam released, the community established a shelter at the Johnny John Sr. School with assistance from the DIRT and the Red Cross. Residents who had evacuated to the Donlin Creek Mine were able to return to the community.

The Red Cross, Association of Village Council Presidents, Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Consortium, The Kuskokwim Corporation, Alaska Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters, Department of Forestry, and DHS&EM coordinated the flow of essential goods and supported the shelter and community with key resources.

"Ensuring that our fellow Alaskans' life-safety needs are being met during a disaster is a primary mission of the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management," Madden said. "As an organization, we do not own all of the resources necessary to accomplish this mission.

However, we do have the knowledge, partnerships, experience and authority to coordinate the organizations that do. Our ability to coordinate the response on behalf of disaster-struck communities is ultimately our greatest strength. ■



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Northern Edge Flying. Lieutenant Colonel Nolan Elliott, left, and Major Scott Lanis, both pilots with the 168th Air Refueling Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, discuss essential mission plans during the Northern Edge Premiere Joint Training Exercise at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, in June. Photo: Lakisha Croley, U.S. Air Force

Northern Edge 2011: Alaska Offers Unique Training Environment

By Petty Officer First Class Kim McLendon, U.S. Coast Guard

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska ...

Exercise Northern Edge offers a unique training opportunity for members of all branches of the military – active duty, Reserve and Guard – on land, in the air and out to sea.

“There is no other place that provides what Alaska provides just through its sheer magnitude and size,” said Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. “But more importantly to synchronize the effort of three major components in such a manner that you can do real-world training.”

The general said Alaska’s wide open ranges provide vast maneuverability with minimal obstructions that allow tremendous flexibility to test equipment.

There are also few commercial aircraft to work around, many unpopulated areas to maneuver within and almost unlimited bandwidth capabilities.

Katkus, the senior military officer among the more than 4,000 Alaskan Guardsmen, said bringing together more than 6,000 active duty, Reserve and Guard members from all branches of the military to train in Northern Edge is a wise decision.

“Training together makes perfect sense,” said the former light reconnaissance team commander. “Once they are deployed, they are totally integrated. If I don’t know them personally, I can’t tell whether they are regular Army or National Guard.”



Mid-Air Refuel. An F-16C Falcon with the 18th Aggressor Squadron, Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, receives fuel in June from a KC-135 Stratotanker from the 168th Air Refueling Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, during the Northern Edge Premiere Joint Training.

Photo: Lakisha Croley, U.S. Air Force



Boom Operations. Master Sergeant John Dunhaim, an in-flight refueling technician with the 168th Air Refueling Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, controls the boom while an F-16C Falcon with the 18th Aggressor Squadron, Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska, receives fuel during the Northern Edge Premiere Joint Training in June.

Photo: Lakisha Croley, U.S. Air Force

An example of integration is the refueling effort for the 150 aircraft flying out of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and Eielson Air Force Base in support of Northern Edge. National Guard tanker units from several states augmented the Alaska Air National Guard’s 168th Air Refueling Wing at Eielson to form a tanker task force. The units are not mixing crews but “falling-in” to combine operations for the various missions of Northern Edge, according to Katkus.

The 168th ARW is the only Arctic region refueling unit for all of Pacific Air Forces and maintains a substantial number of personnel on active duty and civilian technician status to meet its daily operational requirements.

Katkus said exercise participants couldn’t ask for a better host. “The people really like the military up here; we see it as a major industry,” he said. “From the governor to the citizen in small communities, they are very supportive of the military. It is why we attract so many military retirees.” ■

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COMBATIVES TOURNAMENT

By Staff Sergeant Karima Turner,
DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Alaska Army National Guardsmen based out of Fort Greely competed in the 4th Annual National Guard Combatives Tournament in Fort Benning, Ga., in March.

The tournament brought the best of the best from across the United States and its territories. Nine Soldiers from the Alaska National Guard's 49th Missile Defense Battalion formed a team known as the Arctic Warriors to compete for the championship in each of seven weight classes and an overall team championship.

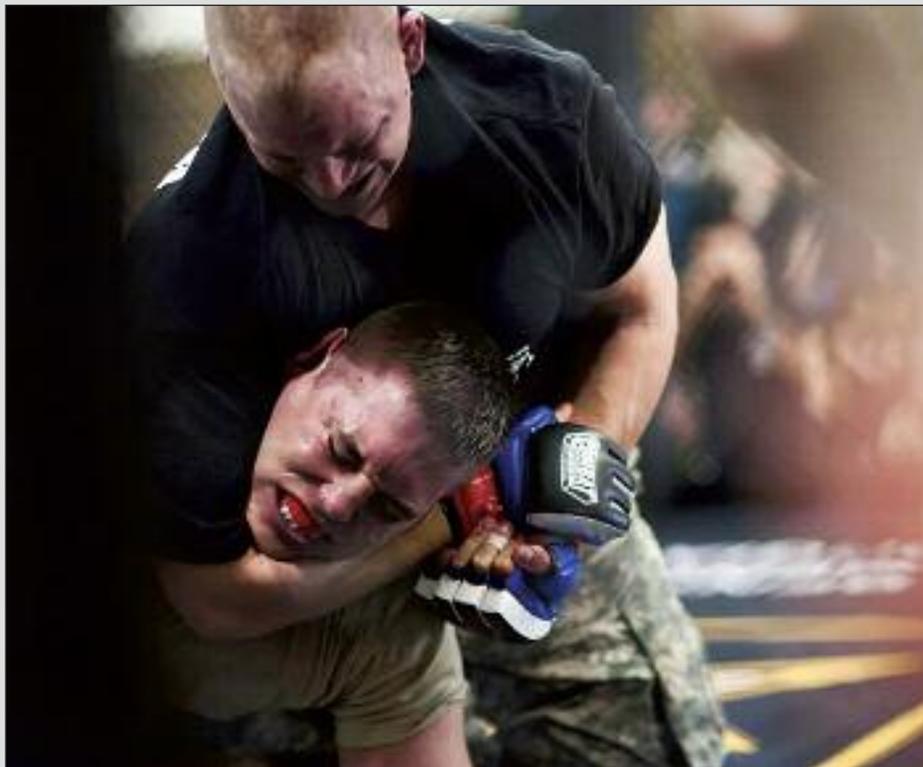
The tournament was open to all Army and Air National Guard warriors, regardless of prior combatives experience, to increase National Guardsmen's skills and promote the warrior ethos. The tournament, also designed to build esprit de corps within the National Guard, has helped the services become more cohesive and more capable components.

Staff Sergeant Vincent Cruz, Warrior Training Center, non-commissioned officer-in-charge, said that it's inspirational to have states such as Alaska return year after year to compete.

"It's awesome to see Alaska competing again," Cruz said. "Every year they send exceptional warriors and competitors, which is impressive because often Guard Soldiers are working full-time and train to compete on their own time. It's outstanding."

Alaska took nine contenders to the mat, but competition was fierce and only one Alaska Army National Guardsman, Staff Sergeant Jeremy Christiansen, placed, earning third place in the heavyweight category.

"As a team, we didn't place in the top three this year," said Captain Jeremy Shepherd, Arctic Warriors coach. "Because our team is made up of 49th Ground Missile Defense Soldiers, the challenge we face is being able to take everyone with us. Mission comes first, so with our operations tempo, it was unrealistic to bring everyone who wanted to go. What I noticed between Alaska's team and the other states is the demographics are different; while the Arctic Warriors is made up of all AGR



Arctic Warriors. Heavyweight fighter Staff Sergeant Jeremy Christiansen, top, Alaska Army National Guard, Arctic Warriors, puts his opponent in a rear naked choke during the 4th Annual National Guard Combatives Tournament that took place at Fort Benning, Ga., in March. Photo: Courtesy GX Magazine

Soldiers, most of the other state's teams are comprised of M-Day Soldiers who fight part or full-time."

Because the team portion of the competition is based on an overall team score, in order to come out on top, a full team of 14 with two in each weight-class is needed to make the Arctic Warriors a contender in next year's competition.

"We really want to field a full team next year, to include not only 49th GMD Soldiers, but also Guardsmen from other units within the Alaska Army and Air National Guard," Shepherd said. "Diversifying can help bring knowledge and experience to the team; that's really important if we want to place as a team next year. We're working on holding an Alaska National Guard tournament in November at Fort Greely to put together a statewide Army and Air Guard team to help showcase the talent and combatives capabilities of the Alaska National Guard as a whole." ■



Victory. A referee holds up Staff Sergeant Jeremy Christiansen's fist in victory during the 4th Annual National Guard Combatives Tournament that took place at Fort Benning, Ga., in March. Christiansen was the third-place heavyweight fighter during the tournament. Photo: Courtesy GX Magazine

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Education

National Archery Program a Positive ChalleNGe

Story and photo by Major Guy Hayes,
DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Research shows that children who are encouraged to pursue their interests in positive activities are more likely to stay out of trouble. Instead of spending time alone, or unsupervised with friends, they are learning and focused on an activity that builds self confidence in a safe environment.

The National Archery in the Schools Program is a perfect example of a positive activity for Alaska's youth and an activity that has benefited the cadets at the Alaska Military Youth Academy.

The NASP, which provides international-style target archery training in more than 7,300 schools nationwide, including seven pilot programs for the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe program, "promotes student education, physical education and participation in the lifelong sport of archery," according to its website.

As one of the pilot programs, the instructors at AMYA also see the benefits



Focus and Determination. Recent graduates from the Alaska Military Youth Academy shoot in the state archery tournament for the National Archery in the Schools Program in March. The program provides youth another positive activity in school, while promoting the sport of archery.

of NASP in assisting them achieve their mission "to motivate young men and women to become successful citizens, with the values, skills, education and self-discipline to succeed as adults."

"The National Archery in Schools Program allows cadets to participate in something bigger than them," said Nathan McCarthy, AMYA team leader and certified

NASP instructor. "It provides another outlet or opportunity that can lead to a lifelong interest, which requires self-discipline."

NASP, which according to AMYA Team Leader Dave Litteral, is also the second safest program in schools, has 10 certified instructors at the Alaska Military Youth Academy, and it hopes to have more members of its staff trained soon. ■

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Veterans

Honor Veterans, Never Forget

By Verdie Bowen, State Veterans Affairs Office

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Since the first Memorial Day on May 30, 1868, we as a nation have expressed our commitment that we will never forget those who serve our country.

We take to heart one of the great quotes of President Calvin Coolidge: "A nation which forgets its defenders will be itself forgotten."

I know that many believe this is just a holiday that officially marks the beginning of summer. In Alaska, we can get carried away because of the absence of snow and new warmth of the sun but remember to thank the veterans you see. Without their dedication and sacrifice, we would not have the opportunity to enjoy our summers as we choose.

Here are some thoughts to ponder to honor such men and women, both the dead and the living:

- Perhaps we should make certain their stories are told to the young and old.
- Perhaps we should imitate both their purposes and lives in both peace-time service and war.
- Perhaps we should sincerely thank them for making sure that our land of liberty will always continue to be free.
- Perhaps we should think about what President Abraham Lincoln said: "Gold is good in its place, but living, brave, patriotic men are better than gold."



Veterans Advocacy Award. Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, left, presents the 2010 Governor's Veterans Advocacy Award to Roy Burkhart of Willow at the Alaska Veterans Memorial at Byers Lake. Burkhart, a retired Korean War veteran, was nominated for the award by the Mat-Su legislative delegation as a result of his tireless work on behalf of veterans, veterans' issues and veterans' programs for several years in many arenas. Photo: Kalei Rupp, DMVA Public Affairs



Army Aviation. A UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from the Alaska Army National Guard lands near the Alaska Veterans Memorial at Byers Lake for the 2011 Memorial Day event. Photo: Kalei Rupp, DMVA Public Affairs

New Veteran Service Office Open in Matanuska-Susitna Valley

By Kalei Rupp, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... A new veteran service office opened its doors recently in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, providing veterans personal assistance and guidance in a variety of areas.

The new office can be found in the Alcantra Armory, located at 3401 E. Bogard Road in Wasilla. This office will help veterans with issues surrounding health care, home loans, education, and disability and compensation, as well as assist with any specific personal issues that need to be addressed to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

George Hausermann, one of the most senior service officers for Disabled American Veterans, is managing the office. He has dedicated the past 15 years to service to the community and continues to provide veterans in the Mat-Su Valley with the outstanding service they have come to know.

The new office is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and closed on state and federal holidays. To contact the office, call (907) 376-9301 or toll free at 1-888-376-9301. ■



Saluting Fallen Warriors. U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski, second from left, renders a salute along with members of the Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club during the Fallen Warrior ceremony held during the 2011 Memorial Day event at the Alaska Veterans Memorial at Byers Lake in Denali State Park. Photo: Kalei Rupp, DMVA Public Affairs



Memorial Day Music. Dan Henderson prepares to open the 2011 Memorial Day event at the Alaska Veterans Memorial with a traditional bag pipe melody. Photo: Kalei Rupp, DMVA Public Affairs



Show Service Members Support. Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, speaks about the sacrifices our men and women in uniform make to defend the freedoms of the United States during the 2011 Memorial Day event at the Alaska Veterans Memorial at Byers Lake.

Photo: Kalei Rupp, DMVA Public Affairs



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GCI Named Finalist for Freedom Award

By Beth Sherman, ESGR Public Affairs

ARLINGTON, Virginia ... Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a Department of Defense agency, announced GCI of Anchorage, Alaska, is a finalist for the 2011 Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award.

The Freedom Award is the DoD's highest recognition given to employers for exceptional support of their employees serving in the Guard and Reserve. GCI is one of only 30 finalists selected from 4,049 nominations received earlier this year from Guard and Reserve service members or their families.

GCI was nominated by an employee in the Alaska Army National Guard. A board selected the finalists from a group of 148 semifinalists announced last month. Employers named as finalists for the Freedom Award stand out for the formal and informal initiatives they put in place for Guard and Reserve employees and their families.

The nominator said GCI, an Alaska-based telecommunications company, actively supports Alaska's Guard and Reserve members by donating to Morale, Welfare and Recreation programs, participating in job fairs, providing free or reduced cable, Internet and

phone service for deployed employees, and donating "Freedom Calls" between deployed service members and their families at military appreciation events.

"Our nation's employers have provided a high level of ongoing support for their military employees and their families even in the tough economic climate of recent years. These 30 finalists have gone to extraordinary lengths to create a supportive culture within their workplaces, allowing our citizen-warriors to serve with the confidence that they are most appreciated and their families are being cared for at home," said ESGR National Chairman James G. Rebholz. "Being selected as a finalist is a tremendous achievement and honor that all of us should recognize and applaud."

A national selection board comprised of senior defense officials, business leaders and prior awardees will select 15 recipients for the 2011 Freedom Award. The DoD is expected to announce the award recipients in early summer. The 2011 recipients will be honored in Washington, D.C., at the 16th annual Secretary of Defense Employer Support Freedom Award Ceremony.

Since 1996, only 145 companies have been presented the Freedom Award. If selected as a recipient, GCI will be the first employer from Alaska to receive the award. ■



Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

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Family Programs

Family Assistance Centers – We Are Here for You

By Kaye Paraoan, Family Assistance Center

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Whether deployed to another country or training away from home, Alaska National Guard members have been trained to keep one important thing in mind: always place the mission first.

While service members are away fulfilling their missions, the Alaska National

Guard Family Assistance Center is doing its best to fulfill its own mission of providing information, referral, and outreach for service members and families.

Family Assistance Centers are geographically dispersed across the state in convenient commuting locations – Juneau, Bethel, Fairbanks, Wasilla, Fort Greely and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The

FACs operate 24 hours a day to provide services and support at any time. These services include crisis intervention and referral, legal resource and referral, financial resource and referral, TRICARE resource and referral, identification cards, and Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System assistance, as well as community information and outreach.

“By providing resources and support, our service members can serve their country with confidence and a sense of security that their families are being supported and cared for at home,” said Tiffany Holt, Family Assistance Center specialist in Juneau.

FAC members are carefully selected individuals who serve alongside the Alaska National Guard by working diligently to support the families of Guard members. Each staff member is either married to a Guardsman, a parent of a Guardsman, retired from the Guard or a member of the Guard. With those personal Guard connections, families can feel confident that they are not alone and can relate to one or all of the staff members.

“Before my husband deployed in 2008, I had never really been familiar with the National Guard,” said Becky Apel, Family Assistance Center specialist from the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson location. “I came to realize that I was going to have to build a support system for myself and that was when my husband suggested I speak with the FAC staff. It was comforting to know that I could call anytime and they would be there to help me get through tough times.”

Along with providing information, FAC members also make monthly phone calls to the families of deployed Guardsmen or those who are away for training for more than 90 days.

“We call to check in and make sure everything is going well and that service members have been in touch with their families,” said Kera Spaulding, Family Assistance Center specialist at the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson location. “It is a gentle reminder that we are here when you need us.”

Professionally, or as a friend, each FAC member is happy to help every family that seeks direction or support. Just like Alaska National Guardsmen, the FAC places its mission first. ■

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Who We Are...

Where is your favorite place to hike?

**Specialist
Keith Humphrey**
1-297th Cavalry Regiment



"My favorite place to hike is Hatcher Pass. It has the best mountains around Anchorage."

**Lieutenant Colonel
Renee Blake**
176th Logistics Squadron



"My favorite places to hike are the Gold Mint Trail, Hatcher Pass, and the Twin Peaks Trail, Eklutna Lake.

Shanova Sanders
DHS&EM



"I don't hike or really do any outdoors stuff. Probably the closest I get to hiking is walking around my neighborhood, which I enjoy."

**Staff Sergeant
Beau Bellamy**
176th Wing Communications Flight



"A favorite place of mine to hike is Wolverine Peak Trail."

**Captain
Karie Hawk**
Joint Forces Headquarters (Army)



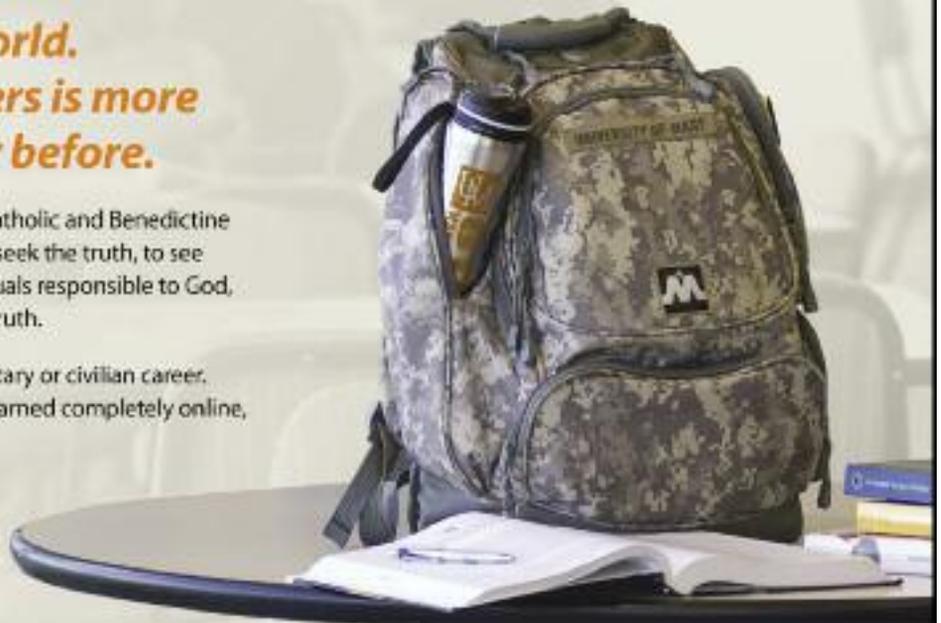
"I really like Mount Baldy; there's an old military airplane wreckage from the 1950s there, and the spirit is just really patriotic."

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Alaskan Wins NORAD Award

By First Lieutenant Christopher Perham, 176th ACS

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska ... Staff Sergeant Zachary Darnell, a cyber transport system craftsman with the 176th Air Control Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, was recently named the 2010 Noncommissioned Officer of the Year for the North American Aerospace Defense Command.

Darnell was the Alaskan NORAD region's representative, and he competed against individuals from the Continental U.S. NORAD region, the Canadian NORAD region and Headquarters NORAD.

Prior to winning the NORAD-level award, Darnell was the 176th ACS Supporter of the Quarter, Supporter of the Year and Squadron Member of the Year for 2010. He won the Alaskan NORAD NCO of the Year before competing for the prestigious NORAD Annual Award. Darnell was also awarded the Joint Service Commendation Medal for his achievement.

"To me, this is more of a unit award than personal," Darnell said. "Being able to represent ANR is a huge honor, and bringing it home is a testament to the outstanding support and team we have at the 176th ACS."

Darnell's many accomplishments, which include ensuring NORAD information assurance requirements were met for a Canadian radar feed, benchmarking a NORAD-wide technical solution and developing a Battle Control System-Fixed shutdown/restoral plan for a \$623,000 Universal Power Supply replacement, earned him the award.

However, his most notable accomplishment was providing the Alaskan NORAD Region Air Operations Center and 11th Air Force Rescue Coordination Center with a timely and precise crash data reduction product following the disappearance of a Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson F-22 in a remote wilderness area. His expertise and quick response greatly decreased the normal search and rescue search patterns and area, resulting in the expeditious discovery of the downed aircraft and pilot.

"I'm just glad I was able to bring this back to the unit," Darnell said. "I've been well supported by the unit and the great people who work here."

Originally from North Pole, Alaska, Darnell enlisted in the Alaska Air National Guard in 2003 and was a member of the 168th Communications Flight at Eielson Air Force Base in Fairbanks before making the 176th ACS at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson his home in 2006. ■



NORAD NCO of the Year. Staff Sergeant Zachary Darnell, center, a cyber transport system craftsman with the 176th Air Control Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, receives a clock representing the North American Aerospace Defense Command's Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year award. Admiral James Winnefeld, left, commander of NORAD and U.S. Northern Command, and Chief Master Sergeant Allen Usry, senior enlisted leader for NORAD-NORTHCOM, presented the award along with the Joint Service Commendation Medal to Darnell in April. Photo: Courtesy 176th Air Control Squadron

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 MSgt Vern Cordell176th AMXS
 MSgt Dennis Mobley176th AMXS
 TSgt Angela Kachinski176th AMXS
 SFC Christopher Simmons .1-297th R&S (LRS)
 SFC John Robinson49th GMD

CW4 John Cuzzocreo JFHQ-AK (Army)
 MAJ Don Mercer JFHQ-AK (Army)
 SSG Benjamin Miyasato297th MP
 LTC Jeffery Roach1-207th AVN
 SFC Frederick Williams207th RTI
 1SG Robert Schooler1-297th R&S
 CSM Bradford Quigley49th GMD
 SFC Gordon Reid1-297th R&S (LRS)
 SFC James Morris1-207th AVN
 SSG Mateo Villafranca1-207th AVN
 SFC Michael Lundvall1-207th AVN
 SSG David Edmond38th TC
 SFC Frank Phillips1-207th AVN
 Lt Col Bryan S. White168th ARS
 Lt Col Mark A. Burley168th OSF

Army Commendation Medal



SSG Joseph Thibault JFHQ-AK (Army)
 SGT Michael Dean JFHQ-AK (Army)

Air Force Commendation Medal



MSgt Dennis Mobley176th AMXS
 TSgt Kevin Mcelhoes176th AMXS
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Air Force Achievement Medal



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Army Good Conduct Medal



MSG Diane WatsonRRD

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 Dianna Post, Karen Nosich, Karen Saucier, Peggy Larkey, Erin Clark, Laritza
 Gonzales, Jeffrey Slaikou

PROMOTIONS

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 Todd Tumidanski176th MXG

Major

Daniel Keller207th CS

Captain

Adam Richter249th AS
 Eric Kraus49th MDB
 Ryan Skaw49th MDB

First Lieutenant

Pamela Masor176th ACS
 Justin Orenich176th MDG
 Anthony Montoya49th MDB

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 Wesley Ladd212th RQS
 Matthew Soukup144th AS
 Dean Burgess1-207th AVN
 Ralph Harris297th MP
 Troy Hicks297th MP
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 John SmyreMED DET
 Melkar Hawi49th MDB

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Sergeant First Class

Danny Counts1-143rd IN ABN

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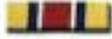
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 Stephen Gulyas176th LRS
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 Theodore Sierocinski212th RQS
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 Joshua Travis176th MXS
 Naomi A. Butler168th MXS
 Audrey A. Page168th ARS

SFC John Sztajer RRD
 SFC Roger Morrison RRD

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 Achievement Medal**



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Armed Forces Reserve Medal



MSG Diane Watson RRD

Alaska Legion of Merit



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Alaska Distinguished Service Medal



CW4 John Cuzzocreo JFHQ-AK (Army)
 SGT Gabriel Ayojiak 1-143rd IN ABN
 SSG Carlos Huff 297th MP
 SPC Nick Lupie 1-143rd IN ABN
 SFC James Morris 1-207th AVN
 LTC Christian Van Alstyne ... JFHQ-AK (Army)

Alaska Commendation Medal



2LT Melkart Hawi 38th TC
 MAJ John Binkley 196th INF
 SGT Edwin Smith 49th GMD
 SGT Sasha Matthew 297th BFSB
 LTC Todd Lowell 196th INF
 SSG James Tollefson 1-297th R&S (LRS)
 SPC Ernesto Ventura Figueroa 49th GMD

Alaska State Service Medal



MSG Diane Watson RRD



General Steps into Retirement. Brigadier General (retired) George Canellos, center, watches Alaska Army National Master Sergeant Maria Weaver, left, furl the one-star general flag during Brigadier General Sharon Dieffenderfer's retirement ceremony in March. The furling of the one-star flag symbolizes a general's transition to the retired ranks. Dieffenderfer retired from the Alaska Air National Guard after serving her state and country for 31 years. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Retirement Farewell. Brigadier General Deborah McManus, left, director of the joint staff of the Alaska National Guard, sends well wishes to Jan Myers, center, and State Command Chief Master Sergeant Dennis Hogan. Both Myers and Hogan retired in June after serving the Alaska National Guard for many years. Myers retired as the Alaska National Guard State Family Program director and her husband, Hogan, most recently served as the highest ranking enlisted leader in the Alaska Air National Guard. He spent 38 years with the Alaska Air National Guard. They plan to spend retirement at their farm in Hendricks County, Ind. Photo: Private First Class Karina Paraoan, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

RETIREMENTS

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| CMSgt Gary Lanham 144th AS | Col Kent S. Coker 168th ARW | SFC Kevin Rupp 207th CS |
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| MSgt Dennis Timmons 176th ACS | MSgt Benjamin M. Borrego 168th LRS | SFC Kristine Schuster 297th BFSB |
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| MSgt Curtis L. Gipson 168th ARS | SFC Themla Kelly 297th BFSB | COL Keith Kurber II JFHQ-AK (Army) |
| MSgt David W. Keys 168th MOF | SSG Jerod Cook 297th MP | CMSgt Dennis Hogan JFHQ-AK (Air) |



Start of the Trail

Welcome our newest members & employees

761st Military Police Battalion

Jacob Lunsford

207th Aviation

Desmond Hight
 Jeremy Treffers
 Samuel Smith
 Fontai Holland
 Eldukl Uehara
 Drew Vandendries
 Patrick Chase
 Robert Hannam
 Brianna McMillen
 Etsel Warner
 Anthony Landford
 Jasmine Kramer

297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance (Long-Range Surveillance)

Sergio Vasquez
 Joshua Dellapietro
 Joseph Moore
 Matthew Moore
 Donn Sofranes
 Christopher Rice
 Matthew Flisk
 Jeremiah Talai
 Addam Landers
 Matthew Myers

207th Brigade Support Company

Jason Winans
 Pamela Ryall
 Brooks Morgan
 Kathleen Chia
 David Hagood
 Cody Munn
 Bryer Roach
 Hanif Lila
 Manilyn Alcaide
 Don Sundgren

297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade

Nathasha Waringuez

297th Cavalry

Dominic Whitlock

297th Military Police Company

Sonny Ward
 Christopher Maclee



Mountain Top Morning Training. Soldiers from C Company, 1-297 Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron (Long Range Surveillance), are atop Mount Baldy in Eagle River for a morning physical training event after conducting airborne operations the previous day. The unit completed its annual training in May. Photo: Lieutenant Colonel Joel Gilbert, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron

Warriors Training Schedule

Here are the inactive training dates for most Alaska Army *and* Air National Guard units. All dates are subject to change.

| Alaska National Guard | Aug | Sept | Oct |
|---|-------|-------|-------|
| Joint Forces Headquarters – Alaska (Air) | 13-14 | 17-18 | 15-16 |
| Joint Forces Headquarters – Alaska (Army) | 13-14 | 23-25 | 16-17 |
| Alaska Army National Guard | | | |
| 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade | 12-14 | 24-25 | – |
| 38th Troop Command | 13-14 | 22-24 | 15-16 |
| Alaska Air National Guard | | | |
| 168th Air Refueling Wing | 6-9 | 17-18 | 15-16 |
| 176th Wing | 13-14 | 17-18 | 15-16 |
| Alaska State Defense Force | | | |
| Headquarters | 6-7 | 10-11 | 1-2 |

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- Your spouse may purchase separate group term life insurance coverage up to \$250,000.
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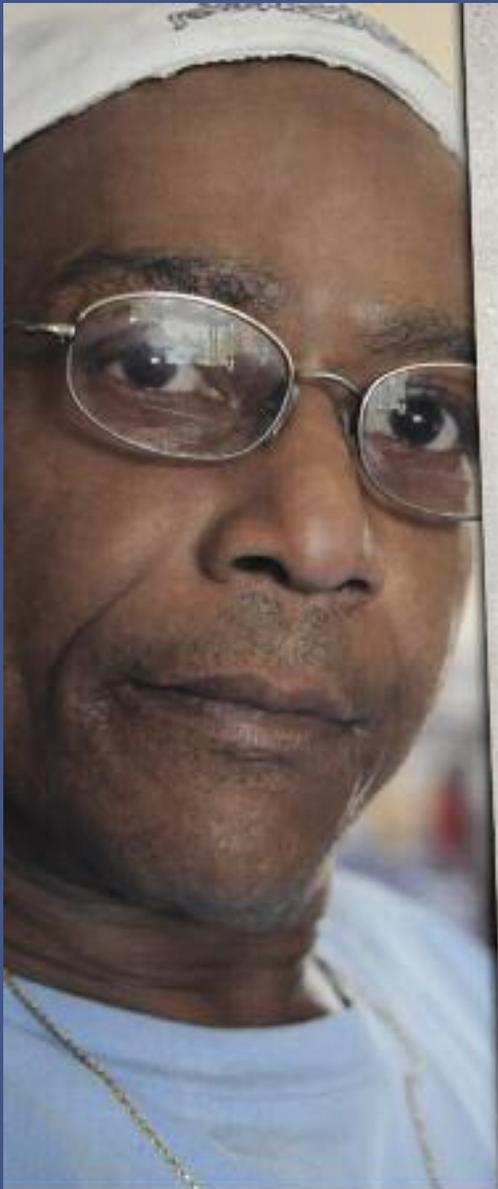
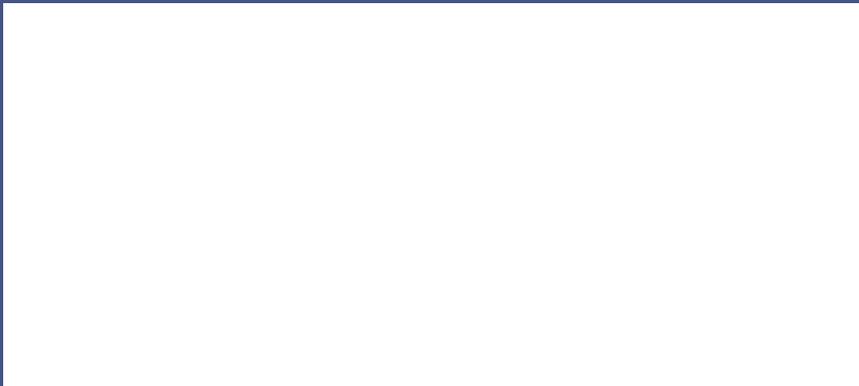
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