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Quarterly Magazine for the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs

WINTER 2009/2010



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WARRIORS

Quarterly Magazine for the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs



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Welcome Home. Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, left, and Governor Sean Parnell shake hands with Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers from the 1/207th Aviation, Alaska Air National Guard, upon their return to Alaska in November. The Guard members served a one-year deployment to Kosovo on a peacekeeping mission.



Photo: Courtesy of the Office of Governor Sean Parnell

Inset: Captain Becky Altenburg, a C-130 navigator with the 144th Airlift Squadron, smiles at her 13-month-old son, Torin, after returning home in December from a deployment to Afghanistan with 32 fellow Alaska Air National Guardsmen. The Airmen provided airlift, via C-130, ferrying people, equipment and supplies throughout the region in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Discovery Channel Highlights Guard. A production crew from New York films an Alaska Air National Guard HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter as it departs from Kulis Air National Guard Base in December. The footage will be used for "Life or Death in Alaska," a television show to be aired spring 2010 on the Discovery Channel that chronicles seven of Alaska's most heroic rescues, and the survivors and rescuers who lived them. The show will feature the rescue of a 22-year-old sheep hunter from the Wrangell Mountains by the Alaska Air National Guard in August 2006. Photo: Kalei Brooks, DMVA 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



Warm Welcome Home to Alaska. Governor Sean Parnell shakes hands with Alaska Army National Guard Specialist Christopher Wainwright, 1/207th Aviation, as the Soldiers returned to Alaska at Elmendorf Air Force Base in November. Parnell thanked the Guard members for their service during their one-year deployment to Kosovo.

Photo: Courtesy of the Office of Governor Sean Parnell

The holiday season is the perfect time to reflect on what we have to be thankful for and to bestow our gratitude on the many people we call upon to keep us safe at home and abroad. The Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs is essential to our safety and security.

It was an honor to welcome home members of the Alaska Army National Guard in November. I am proud of their accomplishments in maintaining a stable environment in Kosovo during their one-year deployment. This was the second deployment of Alaskans to Kosovo, where our National Guard members provided the security and training necessary for the region to achieve safety, freedom and stability. It was a great moment, shaking the hands of those fine Soldiers as they set foot back in Alaska, and one I will not forget.

We also welcomed home another group of aviators from the Alaska Army National Guard's 1/207th Aviation, just in time for them to ring in the new year with their friends and family. These Soldiers spent nine months in Iraq transporting high-priority equipment and personnel. Their training and professionalism led to a highly successful mission, and their efforts will help Iraqis in their efforts to create a year filled with renewed hope and peace.

As we endure winter weather in Alaska, I am grateful for our state emergency management personnel who constantly

monitor conditions across the state. Our EMS personnel are prepared to assist our fellow Alaskans in the event of a winter

storm disaster. With our new state-of-the-art mobile emergency operation center, we have interoperable communication capabilities during disasters, supplying a more streamlined response. These technological tools allow us to act quickly and effectively in critical situations, even in the most remote of Alaska communities.

I, like all Alaskans, am thankful for the commitment and sacrificial service of our Guard members and civilian employees, who keep our state and nation safe. As we gather with family and friends this new year, let us give our heartfelt appreciation to those serving our country and to their families. Through the very good work of the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, and because of the selflessness of our men and women in uniform, I know 2010 will be a positive, safer year for all Alaskans. Sandy and I extend warm wishes for the new year to each of you.

Sean Parnell
Governor

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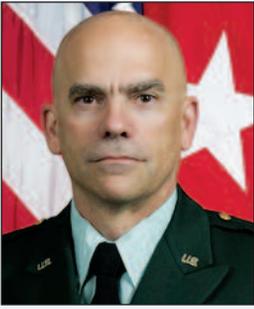
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Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus
Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard
& Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs

Exceptional Service to Alaska

The Department of Military & Veterans Affairs continues to provide Alaskans with exceptional service, and the start of the new year is an excellent opportunity to reflect on our significant accomplishments while cherishing time with our families.

Strong families are a key component to a successful organization, and for the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, we work hard to assist all of our families, especially when our Soldiers and Airmen are deployed in support of overseas contingency operations.

Efforts by the Alaska National Guard Family Programs office, working with the Alaska Friends of the Guard and Reserve, led to two donations totaling \$15,000. These significant contributions made by TriWest and Best Buy aid in supporting our Guard families here in Alaska that need it most. Family Programs also held several family activities at the National Guard Armory on Fort Richardson, adding to the holiday season of giving back to our Guard families.

The Alaska Army National Guard triumphantly returned home to Alaska from both Kosovo and Iraq in November and December after exceptional deployments.

The Soldiers of the 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment spent a year away from their families supporting a peacekeeping and peace enforcement mission to ensure stability in Kosovo. Our Guardsmen performed exceptionally well and were recognized for their efforts by U.S., NATO and coalition leaders. I was very happy to welcome them home, alongside Gov. Sean Parnell, when they returned to Alaska in time to spend Thanksgiving with their families. And how can we thank the Air Guard enough for their "just in time" delivery of F Company on New Year's Eve?

The Alaska Air National Guard operation tempo has been extremely busy here at home and in support to coalition forces in Afghanistan. From September through January, the 176th Wing deployed more than 200 Guardsmen in stages, rotating in and out of the theater of operations while providing C-130 airlift, ferrying

people, equipment and supplies throughout the region.

The Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management recognizes the challenges we face here in Alaska and works hard to provide a secure, safe Alaska every day. This fall, utilizing a one-time grant, emergency management personnel contracted a mobile emergency operation vehicle. This capability is vital to restoring communication with the State Emergency Coordination Center and first responders during disasters. With colder months ahead, this mobile operation center will be tested with community partners and could help save lives.

The Alaska Military Youth Academy began another class this fall, enrolling 192

cadets and continues to excel as number one in the nation in contacting and recruiting high school dropouts. Its success in teaching the youth of Alaska life-coping skills and service to their community, and by providing an opportunity for them to complete their high school education, has resulted in nearly 2,800 graduates throughout the last 15 years.

All of these accomplishments are due to the great service and sacrifice of our department members. As we start 2010, I want to thank all of our Alaska National Guardsmen, their families and civilian employees. Please do not forget the loved ones serving far from home and away from their families. I thank you for what you do and the great sacrifices you make. ■



Service and Smiles. Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, right, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, shakes hands with Roger Nassuk Sr., a resident of Koyuk, during Operation Santa Claus in November. Nassuk retired from the Alaska Army National as a sergeant first class after 32 years of service. For more on Operation Santa Claus, turn to page 10. Photo: Private First Class Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

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Dispatches from the Front...

Wounded Warrior Honored

By Captain Amy B. Slinker, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

FAIRBANKS, Alaska ... A former Alaska Army National Guardsman was honored and welcomed home in Fairbanks in November by family, friends and comrades at a luncheon held at Pike's Waterfront Lodge.

Specialist Jeremy Pierce, a recipient of the Bronze Star with valor and Purple Heart, was recognized along with past and present members of the Alaska National Guard at a brunch provided by Jay Ramras, owner of Pike's.

More than 250 people attended the program, including Fairbanks community members, Fairbanks-based Soldiers and Guardsmen who traveled from Anchorage, Barrow and the Kenai Peninsula. Many of the Soldiers were members of the 1/297th Cavalry who served with Pierce during his first deployment to Iraq with the Alaska Army National Guard.

"It's a great honor to be standing in front of these guys," Pierce said. "When you are clapping for me, know there are many people here who put their lives on the line."

The homecoming was Pierce's first trip back to Alaska after sustaining combat injuries while deployed to Iraq in August 2009 with the Oregon National Guard. He lost part of his left leg and part of a finger on his left hand. Pierce's hard work from physical therapy at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., was apparent, as he was able to proudly walk around the room greeting guests.

Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, presented Pierce with a solid silver coin for outstanding service to the United States and the state of Alaska. Imprinted on one side of the coin is the Alaska state seal, with the Alaska National Guard Joint Forces Headquarters seal on the other side.



Honoring Heroism. Sergeant Henry Monk, left, and Specialist Jeremy Pierce reunite during a November luncheon at Pike's Waterfront Lodge in Fairbanks. Monk and Pierce previously served together in the Alaska Army National Guard. Pierce was honored at the luncheon for his service and sacrifice as a National Guardsman. While deployed to Iraq with the Oregon National Guard, Pierce was wounded in combat and lost part of his left leg. Monk, a Fairbanks resident, is currently serving in the 1/297th Cavalry, Alaska Army National Guard. Photo: Specialist Jill King, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

"We not only honor Jeremy, but we honor all of the men and women who are serving every day," said Alaska State Representative Nancy Dahlstrom, co-chair of the Armed Services Committee and leader of the luncheon program. "This is just a small token of the appreciation that we have for you and what you do." ■



Military Appreciation at the Rink. Lieutenant General Dana Atkins, left, commander of Alaskan Command, presents Brigadier General J. Randy Banez, assistant adjutant general – Alaska Army National Guard and Space and Missile Defense, with an Alaska Aces jersey in December during intermission of an Alaska Aces Military Appreciation game at the Sullivan Arena in Anchorage. More than 5,400 fans filled the stands to cheer on their team and show their support for all branches of the military. Photo: Mary M. Rall, U.S. Army Alaska Public Affairs

Where in the World

Soldier Excels in Singing Competition

By Sergeant Karima Turner
DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ...

One Alaska Army National Guard Soldier from Eagle River got the opportunity of a lifetime while deployed this fall on a peace-keeping mission to Kosovo.

In hopes of keeping busy during the yearlong deployment, First Lieutenant Sarah Payeur, Headquarters Company Joint Operations Center liaison, 1/207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard, entered Operation Rising Star while deployed to Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo.

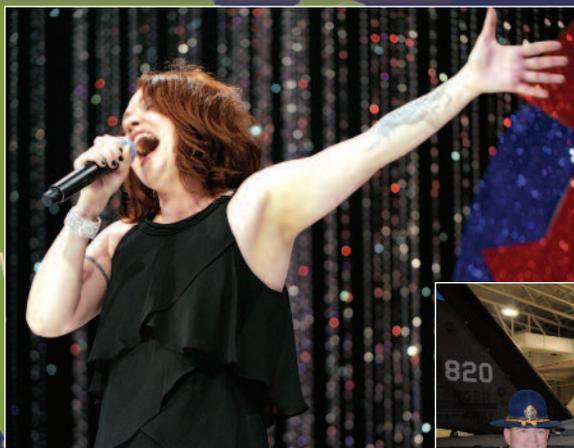
"Originally the Morale Welfare and Recreation director asked me to be a judge for Operation Rising Star, which is a singing competition similar to American Idol," Payeur said. "I told her I was really interested in competing though; I have a degree in theater, so for me, it was really just getting back in touch with my roots a little bit. It was something to take my mind off of being deployed and being away from my family."

"I was very happy to hear that First Lieutenant Payeur was selected to represent 1/207th Aviation in Camp Bondsteel during Operation Rising Star," said Lieutenant Colonel Jeffery Roach, 1/207th Aviation commander.

"She put in a tremendous amount of work in preparing for the competition, and her participation was a real morale booster for the aviation battalion."

After juggling five weeks of competition and her unit's mission of providing aviation support with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to U.S. and coalition forces, Payeur proved to be unstoppable. She beat out all five of her Camp Bondsteel competitors and won the opportunity to compete worldwide in Washington, D.C.

"I didn't think I would win; I really just wanted to reconnect with something that I loved," Payeur said.



Rising Star. First Lieutenant Sarah Payeur, Joint Operations Center liaison for the Alaska Army National Guard's 1/207th Aviation while deployed to Camp Bondsteel, Kosovo, sings "Life is a Cabaret" during Round 1 of the 2009 Operation Rising Star finals competition in November.

Photo: Tim Hipps, Family and Morale Welfare and Recreation Command Public Affairs



Black Hawk with Bells. After Operation Santa Claus festivities in Klukwan, Sergeant Don Chapman, 1/207th Aviation, escorts Mrs. Claus back to her "sleigh," an Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from Juneau. Photo: Jolene Troupe, Family Programs

"We are all very proud of First Lieutenant Payeur's accomplishment," said Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. "Through her perseverance, she has brought great credit to her unit and the Alaska Army National Guard, and she is someone that can be an inspiration to us all in pursuing our goals, whatever they may be."

Payeur had a solid fan base of family and friends back home, as well as of Soldiers from 1/207th Aviation.

"Every Saturday, for five weeks in a row, they came out to support me," Payeur said of her comrades. "The aviation unit was really encouraging; they support everyone



Black Hawk Pit Stop. At the Alaska Army National Guard hangar in Nome, Governor Sean Parnell takes a moment to meet with a crew from 1/207th Aviation while he was in town in November. From left to right: Alaska State Trooper Sergeant Andrew Merrell, Governor Sean Parnell, Chief Warrant Officer Dave Stettenbenz, Chief Warrant Officer Two Matt Felter and Sergeant Nick Mikos. Photo: Courtesy Office of Governor Sean Parnell

in what they want to do, whether it's a softball tournament or basketball game, there is usually a big turn out and show of support. Hopefully, it gave them a break from what they were doing and helped their morale."

After winning the Camp Bondsteel competition, Payeur was one of 12 selected to compete worldwide in the Washington, D.C., finals, where she competed against other military members and dependents.

"I didn't make it past the first round in the D.C. competition, but I got a lot of good feedback from the judges, and it was the chance of a lifetime that I'm happy to have experienced," Payeur said. "I'm really



Universal Medicine. Alaska Air National Guard Senior Airman Amanda Crowson, aerospace medical technician, 168th Refueling Wing, takes care of a patient while deployed to Southwest Asia. She is part of the 386th Expeditionary Medical Group and provides emergency medical services, sick call assessments and immunizations. "I love being able to get our personnel back on their feet and back to work to keep the mission going," said Crowson on her first deployment experience. Photo: Courtesy of U.S. Air Force



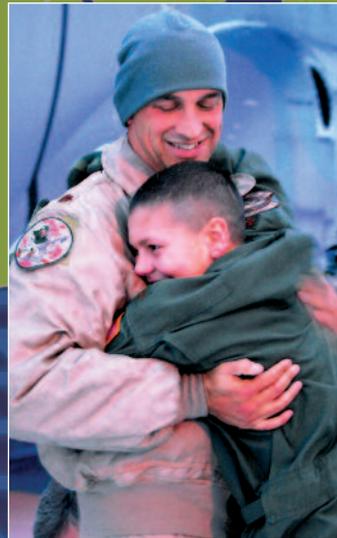
Bikes to Bagram. Left to right: Alaska Air Guardsmen Staff Sergeant Woody Miller, Senior Airman John Darnall, Senior Airman Ryan Pierce and Technical Sergeant Summer Rehak, all from the 176th Logistics Readiness Squadron, pull a top net over a pallet of refurbished bicycles in December. The bikes were airlifted by the Alaska Air National Guard's 144th Airlift Squadron to Afghanistan to be given to disadvantaged children. Photo: Technical Sergeant Shannon Oleson, 176th Wing Public Affairs

Kosovo
Afghanistan



Alaska Day. Members of the Alaska Army National Guard march through downtown Sitka during the Alaska Day celebration in October. More than 150 Soldiers took part in the four-day event, which commemorates Alaska's purchase from the Russians. The Soldiers were welcomed by the community and took part in many of the events offered during the celebration.

Photo: Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion



Homecoming Hugs. Major Mike Cummings hugs his son, Gavin, after returning home from a deployment to Afghanistan with the Alaska Air National Guard. Cummings, a C-130 pilot with the 144th Airlift Squadron, was one of 33 Guardsmen who returned in December from a tour in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

REI, Inc. They were then refurbished by Off the Chain, a nonprofit, all-volunteer bicycle collective in Anchorage. Their services are aimed at providing mobility to those whose only transportation options are bikes and who cannot afford maintenance elsewhere.

A group of Off the Chain volunteers came up with the idea of giving bicycles to underprivileged Afghan children. The big obstacle was getting them there. Organizers approached Lieutenant Colonel David Glick, a pilot with the Alaska Air National Guard's 144th Airlift Squadron because the squadron routinely flies personnel, equipment and supplies into the remote, war-torn country as part of a rotating deployment the unit fulfills.

Chris Himes, a long-term Off the Chain volunteer, said "I can't imagine any other way it could have happened. It's a perfect confluence of interests and abilities – the Air Guard being on the way anyway and being able to distribute the bikes, which we would never be able to do."

In December, a group of Air Guard members arrived at Off the Chain with a flatbed truck to pick up the bikes. Three days later,

Guard members at Kulis Air National Guard Base, deploying to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, loaded them onto a C-130 tactical airlift plane for the three-day flight. Once in Afghanistan, the bikes were handed over to a local U.S. military unit at Bagram Airfield for distribution to Afghan children.

"With our Guardsmen rotating in and out of Afghanistan throughout the holiday season, it was the perfect opportunity to support a worthy cause and provide a little cheer for Afghan youth," said Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. ■

appreciative to have had the entire aviation unit behind me. When you are deployed, your unit becomes like your second family; you depend on each other for everything."

Payeur's unit returned to Alaska from Kosovo in November after successfully supporting more than 1,100 missions while deployed. Although her run for the Operation Rising Star title ended early, she hasn't given up on her love of music.

"I would probably compete again if there was another opportunity, but the caveat to that is I wouldn't want it to create a hardship for my kids," Payeur said. "So for now, I'm just going to start writing music again." ■

Air Guard brings bikes to Afghanistan

By DMVA Public Affairs

KULIS AIR NATIONAL GUARD BASE, Alaska ... More than 20 disadvantaged children in Afghanistan have received new bikes this winter thanks to a group of Anchorage volunteers and an assist from the Alaska Air National Guard.

The bicycles, together with parts and tools, were donated by the Anchorage Community YMCA, The Bicycle Shop, Paramount Cycles, Chain Reactions and



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Chaplain's Ministry Includes the Fallen and Those Who Honor Them

By Ed Drohan, Air Force Mortuary Affairs Public Affairs

DOVER AIR FORCE BASE, Delaware ... For an Alaska Air National Guard chaplain, a deployment to the Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations Center hit close to home.

Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Lance Jennings' son served with the Air National Guard in Kirkuk, Iraq, in 2002. When your ministry revolves around serving those who have given their lives for their country, their families, and the men and women who provide the full measure of dignity, honor and respect for the fallen, you can't help but think about family members who have been in harm's way.

Jennings provided spiritual and moral support at the Dover Air Force Base, Del., center from September to January when he returned to his home unit – the 168th Air Refueling Wing. He had never been to Dover Air Force Base before, so he volunteered for the deployment.

The chaplain said he's done a tour of duty at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany, ministering to wounded warriors, and his work at the Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations Center gave him a chance to see and appreciate not only the fallen heroes, but the professionalism of those who provide dignity, honor and respect for them, as well as care, service and support for their families.

As part of his duties, the chaplain and the rest of his "padre cadre" worked with families of the fallen who came to Dover to observe the dignified transfer of their loved ones. In his civilian ministry, he's provided comfort to families of accident victims, and while similar, the work here was different.

"We see death, but here, because of the violence of war, it is more intense," said Chaplain (Major) Richard Bach, a Maine Air National Guard chaplain who worked with Jennings.

The support and comfort the chaplains provide isn't limited to the fallen and their families though. They also provide a "ministry of presence" for the men and women called upon to prepare those fallen for the trip to their final destination.

Many of the young men and women who deploy here from around the country are exposed to stresses most people will never see, the chaplains said. Whether it's assisting with autopsies, cleaning personal effects so they can be returned to families, or dressing the fallen in the proper uniform for a funeral, exposure to the horrors of war can take its toll on individuals.

"These people are doing things for our heroes that they can't necessarily talk to their families about," Jennings said. "They see and do things that people can't understand unless they've been here."

Chaplains work closely with mental health specialists to help ease those stresses. They try to be very visible and establish relationships with workers throughout the center, they said.

"You have to develop trust before they'll talk," Jennings agreed.

One thing that impressed Jennings is the level of professionalism and devotion he saw in people who work at the center.

"There's camaraderie, especially in the back (where the fallen are prepared for transport)," Jennings said. "They move around together and there's a lot of humor in the morning, but when the preparation starts, things get quiet, and they focus on the task at hand."

The chaplains also helped with the center's Resiliency Program, which is designed to help people deal with the stresses they encounter in the workplace. They set up trips to off-base sites, including a trip to Arlington National Cemetery and a kayaking trip – trips that not only tied together the work they did here but also provided relief from stress.

Jennings said he took part of the center home with him – he left Dover with memories, both painful and positive.

"We all have scars on our body, like when I fell on a bike and got gravel under my skin. Every once in a while you'll touch that scar and remember that life experience," Jennings said. "The analogy with those scars is that I remember the pain, the sadness, the grieving parents and spouses. But I also remember the pleasantries as well ... the personalities who have touched me in positive ways. They helped heal those scars." ■

Saluting the Fallen.

Chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) Lance Jennings, far right, salutes as an Army carry team moves a fallen Soldier during a dignified transfer event at Dover Air Force Base, Del. The chaplain was called upon to pray for the fallen warrior before the case was carried from the aircraft to an awaiting vehicle. Jennings deployed to the Air Force Mortuary Affairs Operations Center at Dover for about five months.

Photo: Jason Minto, U.S. Air Force



Joint Forces

Ready to Serve



Santa and Mrs. Claus Land in Koyuk



Holiday Happiness. Santa and Mrs. Claus pass a present to an excited Koyuk girl during Operation Santa Claus. Operation Santa Claus also visited St. George, Nondalton, Gambell, Klukwan, Pedro Bay and Kasigluk.

Photo: Private First Class Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

By Private First Class Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Dashing through the sky, in an Alaska Air National Guard C-130 Hercules aircraft, Santa, Mrs. Claus and a team of elves landed in Koyuk in early November.

This year marks the 53rd annual Operation Santa Claus, an Alaska National Guard program that brings the holiday spirit to remote Alaska villages with toys, books, fresh fruit, entertainment, ice cream

sundaes and a chance to get a picture with Santa and Mrs. Claus.

"This has put everyone in a good spirit for Christmas," said Grace Morris, a resident of Koyuk. "This is great for the kids, the adults and the whole community."

Approximately 300 residents of Koyuk gathered in the Koyuk Malemute School gym to commence the 2009 holiday season and to participate in the festivities.

"This was a great event that brought the whole community together," said Kim Hanisch, principal of the Koyuk Malemute School. "We have community events, but I've never seen such a great turnout for such a positive reason."

Operation Santa Claus not only brings a community together, but it also provides a unique and unforgettable experience.

"We assume that everyone has access to something as simple as ice cream," said Rich Owens, owner of Tastee Freez, who donated ice cream sundaes and provided one for every resident in the village. "But for some people this is the first time they've ever tasted ice cream or had the presentation of building an ice cream sundae."

Besides Koyuk, Operation Santa Claus visited St. George, Nondalton, Gambell, Klukwan, Pedro Bay and Kasigluk. ■



Ice Cream Crowds. Rich Owens, center in blue, owner of Tastee Freez, and a team of elves serve ice cream sundaes to the residents of Koyuk during Operation Santa Claus. Residents chose between chocolate or vanilla ice cream and toppings of caramel or chocolate syrup, whipped cream, sprinkles, strawberries, nuts and a cherry.

Photo: Private First Class Michelle Nash, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Ready for Santa and Company. Gambell resident Gerry Koonooka Sr. waits with the rest of the Operation Santa Claus reception committee for the offloading of an Alaska Air National Guard HC-130 aircraft in December. The Alaska Air and Army National Guard were in Gambell with a group of civilian volunteers as part of Operation Santa Claus 2009.

Photo: First Lieutenant John Callahan, 176th Wing Public Affairs

Christmas Cheer in St. George



Santa's Sleigh. Santa and Mrs. Claus disembark at the St. George airstrip on their way to greet the kids of the remote Bering Sea village. A close partnership between the Alaska Air National Guard's 249th Airlift Squadron and the U.S. Air Force's 517th Airlift Squadron made possible the first use of a C-17 Globemaster III in the 53-year history of Operation Santa Claus. Photo: First Lieutenant John Callahan, 176th Wing Public Affairs

By Senior Airman Nancy Goldberger, 176th Wing Public Affairs

ST. GEORGE, Alaska ... Instead of the sounds of jingle bells and hooves, the children of this remote Bering Sea island heard for the first time the powerful engines of an Air Force C-17 cargo jet ushering in their beloved Santa Claus in November.

Santa and Mrs. Claus were in St. George as part of Operation Santa Claus 2009. Now in its 53rd year, Operation Santa Claus is an outreach program for the Alaska National Guard and its community supporters.

The St. George visit marked the first time a C-17 had been used in conjunction with Operation Santa Claus. The new capability was made possible by the close working relationship the Alaska Air National Guard's 249th Airlift Squadron has developed with the Air Force's 517th Airlift Squadron. The 249th formed about two years ago and was formally activated

in September. It is in a "classic association" with the 517th; that is, it supplies flight crews and maintenance personnel who work side-by-side with their active-duty counterparts.

Nearly the entire village of St. George turned out to meet the Alaska Guard members and local Anchorage volunteers who brought with them a holiday meal, lively music and a planeload of gifts.

"This is great," said Carol Randall, the school principal. "Because we're not on the road system, they don't get to see stuff like this. The whole town was excited about this – they couldn't wait for this to happen."

"This trip was very special. Using the C-17 with both an active duty Air Force and Alaska Air National Guard crew demonstrated a great relationship between our two organizations, and I think it's a



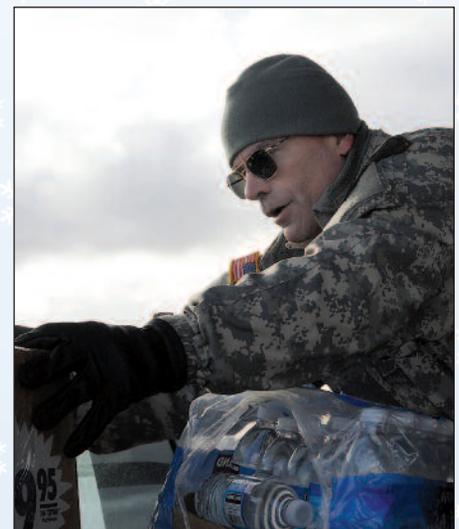
Holiday Music Maker. Staff Sergeant Jeff Dahlseng, a trombonist with the Northern Light Brass section of the U.S. Air Force Band of the Pacific, performs for St. George residents as part of Operation Santa Claus 2009. Photo: First Lieutenant John Callahan, 176th Wing Public Affairs

mark of the future of the association between the Air Force and the Air National Guard," remarked Lieutenant Governor Craig Campbell, who traveled to St. George with Operation Santa Claus.

Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, described the mission as a great training opportunity.

The mission allows Alaska's joint military forces to "take our tremendous military assets and apply them in such a positive manner to our communities, especially during the holiday season," he said.

"We get to bring a little bit of happiness with us," added Mrs. Claus. ■



Unloading Santa's Supplies. Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, stacks presents and water in a pickup truck for transport to the St. George School during the Operation Santa Claus visit there in November. Photo: First Lieutenant John Callahan, 176th Wing Public Affairs

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Deployed Guardsman Honored as 'Top Forty Under 40'

By Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... An Alaska Army National Guard member currently deployed to Afghanistan has been named a national and state top 40 under 40 honoree.

Major Wayne Don, originally from Mekoryuk on Nunivak Island, was recognized by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development in its inaugural "Native American 40 Under 40," which honors 40 young native professionals across the country who have made significant contributions to their tribes and communities.

Don was also named as one of "Alaska's Top Forty Under 40," a selection by the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce and the Alaska Journal of Commerce that recognizes the state's leading young professionals who demonstrated professional excellence and a commitment to their community. Don is a member of the Alaska Army National Guard and serves as the chairman of his village corporation, NIMA Corporation.

"There are some very accomplished people on the list, so it's very humbling and exciting to be included with such a distinguished group of people," said Don, who is currently serving a six-month deployment providing base security in Afghanistan.

Don is part of a two-member team from the Alaska Army National Guard embedded with the Mongolian Expeditionary Force in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. The two Alaska Army National Guardsmen are working as tactical advisers, consultants on base security operations and mentors – serving to offer insight into the U.S. command structure and operational tempo.



Deployed. Major Wayne Don, Alaska Army National Guard, is currently deployed to Camp Eggers, Afghanistan, embedded with the Mongolian Expeditionary Force.

Photo: Master Sergeant Scott Hardesty, Task Force Avenger



Training with Mongolians. Alaska Army National Guard Major Wayne Don, left, and Mongolian Armed Forces Major Javkhlanbayar Dondogdorj discuss a traffic control point training scenario as the Mongolian Expeditionary Force executes it during Khaan Quest at Five Hills Training Area, Mongolia. Don deployed with Dondogdorj and the Mongolian Expeditionary Force as an embedded U.S. liaison in September 2009. Photo: Captain Amy B. Slinker, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

"Major Don is a testament to the strength of character and professionalism that is the Alaska National Guard," said Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. "We are proud of his accomplishments and contributions not only to the Alaska National Guard and his community but to the nation as well."

Don, who joined the Alaska Army National Guard in 2005, said the best childhood lesson he learned was in kindergarten.

"My kindergarten teacher would have us march whenever we got too rowdy to re-establish order in the classroom," Don said. "I found out after she passed away that she was a former Marine drill sergeant. While in college I enrolled in ROTC and served 11 years on active duty and continue to serve in the Alaska Army National Guard. I think the lesson of good order and discipline started with learning to march and had an impact on my initial career choice."

The state "Top Forty Under 40" award was handed out at a luncheon in Anchorage in January. His children accepted the award on his behalf. ■

Back in Alaska, Back to Snow.

Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, returns a salute to Sergeant Vinny Salzburn, 1/207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard, after the last flight of Guardsmen returned home from Kosovo in November. The Guard members returned from a yearlong deployment where they supported a peacekeeping and peace enforcement mission.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



1/207th Aviation Returns from Kosovo



Supportive Sons. Russell Seymoure, 13, and younger brother, Randall, 8, show their patriotic spirit at the Alaska National Guard Armory while waiting for their father, Alaska Army National Guard Sergeant Shane Seymoure, to return from a yearlong deployment to Kosovo.

Photo: Sergeant Karima Turner, DMVA Public Affairs

By Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... After flying nearly 2,900 hours in Kosovo while supporting more than 1,100 missions, the Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, returned home to Alaska in November.

The Soldiers deployed for one year, spending time furthering their training at Camp Atterbury, Ind., and Hohenfels, Germany, before landing in Kosovo in February 2009 where they supported a peacekeeping and peace enforcement mission. While in Kosovo, the Guardsmen provided aviation support to U.S. and coalition forces with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

“The 1/207th Aviation Regiment was highly praised by U.S., NATO and coalition partner leaders for their professionalism in providing air movement, reconnaissance, surveillance, aero-medical evacuation and helicopter fire-fighting capabilities throughout Kosovo,” said Lieutenant

Colonel Jeff Roach, 1/207th Aviation commander. “Having the 1/207th Aviation Regiment present in Kosovo allowed NATO and coalition partners to provide a safe and secure environment for the people of Kosovo and ensured freedom of movement for all.”

According to Roach, the most significant event during the deployment was providing air transportation throughout Kosovo to Vice President of the United States Joe Biden and then-Governor Sarah Palin on separate occasions. The unit also maintained day and night quick-reaction forces and was the first in the U.S. Army to transport the French-made VBL armored vehicle with a Black Hawk helicopter.

“Our Alaska Army National Guard members transported more than 8,000 passengers and successfully completed an important security mission to help maintain a peaceful environment in a region that has seen conflicts with its new, emerging government and social structure,” said Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. “We are proud of our Soldiers for providing critical aviation support to the NATO commander of Kosovo Forces to ensure stability in the region.”

The unit, headquartered at Bryant Army Guard Airfield on Fort Richardson, brought eight Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters on the deployment. Guard members on the mission hailed from Anchorage, Eagle River, Wasilla, Palmer, Soldotna, Fairbanks, Nome, Bethel and Juneau.

1st Battalion, 207th Aviation, is the most deployed unit in the Alaska National Guard having previously deployed elements to Kosovo in 2004, as well as fulfilling missions in Iraq, Guatemala, Haiti and Honduras. ■



Reunited. Staff Sergeant Jeremy Hanson is reunited with his children, Makenna, 18 months, and Talyn, 3, along with his wife, Kathleen, during a welcome home event for 1/207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard, at the Alaska National Guard Armory in November.

Photo: Sergeant Karima Turner, DMVA Public Affairs

F Company Returns from Iraq

From Sand to Snow. Soldiers from F Company, 1/207th Aviation, Alaska Army National Guard, arrive in Alaska on a C-17 flown by the Alaska Air National Guard's 249th Airlift Squadron. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



By Kalei Brooks, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENLI, Alaska ... After a nine-month deployment to Iraq providing aviation support, 30 Soldiers from the Alaska Army National Guard returned home to Alaska in late December, just in time to ring in the new year with family and friends.

Guard members from F Company, 1/207th Aviation, had been deployed since April 2009, transporting cargo, equipment and personnel across Iraq and Kuwait using the C-23 fixed-wing aircraft, which the company also flies here in Alaska. The Sherpa aircraft are able to take small loads and go to some locations where the larger aircraft of Air Force transports don't go.

"This was the third deployment to Iraq for this aviation company, and once again, the Guard members excelled in their mission," said Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard. "We are proud to welcome home these accomplished Soldiers and grateful for their continued service to our nation and great state."

The Alaska Army National Guardsmen arrived in Alaska on a C-17 flown by the Alaska Air National Guard's 249th Airlift Squadron. This was a true testament to the joint effort and collaboration of the Alaska Air and Army National Guard. This also marked the first time an Alaska Air



Sweet Meeting. Sergeant Levi Roy and his wife, Amber, smile at their daughter, who Roy met in person for the first time after returning from a nine-month deployment to Iraq with the Alaska Army National Guard.

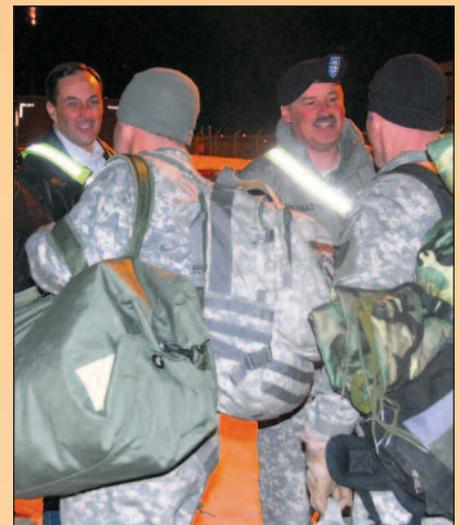
Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

National Guard C-17 crew and aircraft picked up deployed Alaska Army National Guardsmen from Iraq to bring them home.

The deployed Soldiers call Anchorage, Eagle River, the Mat-Su Valley, Juneau and Fairbanks home. ■



Back on the Home Front. After a nine-month deployment to Iraq, 30 Soldiers from F Company, 1/207th Aviation, stand at attention during the unit's uncasing ceremony at the Alaska National Guard Armory in January. During deployments, unit guidons are cased, which represents the unit's absence on the home front; the guidons are then uncased when the unit returns home, signifying their return from the battlefield. Photo: Sergeant Karima Turner, DMVA Public Affairs



Mission Complete. Lieutenant Governor Craig E. Campbell, left, and Colonel Tim DeHaas, chief of staff of the Alaska Army National Guard, shake hands with Alaska Army National Guardsmen returning in December from a nine-month deployment to Iraq.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

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New Sergeant Major a Trailblazer



Leading the Way. Sergeant Major Lillian Aukongak's daughters, Sasha and Holly, change her shoulder boards to the rank of sergeant major during her promotion ceremony held at the Alaska National Guard Armory in October. Aukongak, an Inupiaq Alaska Native, is the first female Alaska Native to be federally recognized as a sergeant major in the Alaska Army National Guard. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

By Sergeant Karima Turner, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Military life is difficult; it's challenging and sometimes, it's just downright hard. Soldiers make sacrifices every day to serve in the military and have the privilege of wearing the uniform.

For one Soldier of the Alaska Army National Guard, those sacrifices and challenges have paid off. Lillian Aukongak, an Inupiaq Alaska Native, is the first female Alaska Native to be federally recognized as a sergeant major in the Alaska Army National Guard. She was pinned during a promotion ceremony held at the Alaska National Guard Armory in October.

"Right now I'm still kind of in disbelief," Aukongak said. "It's kind of hard for me to grasp that I'd be the first female Alaska Native in the Alaska Army National Guard to be federally recognized as a sergeant major. To me it's a privilege and a very humbling experience."

Challenges, however, are nothing new to Aukongak. She faced challenges at a young age. At six years old, she was orphaned and entered into the foster care system, where she and her seven sisters and two brothers were split up and sent to separate homes.

"Everyone has challenges and not everyone goes through what I went through," said Aukongak, who calls Golovin and White Mountain home, but was born in Nome. "But that didn't stop me from pursuing my goals and following my dreams. I've always had very positive sisters who kind of mothered me; because I lost my parents at such a young age, I really looked up to them and admired them from a distance."

When Aukongak was 18 years old, she decided that she needed to make a change in her life. She made a decision that would begin her journey to success and enlisted in the Alaska Army National Guard in Nome on Oct. 14, 1986.

Starting out as a radio operator for 1/297th Infantry (Scout) Battalion, Aukongak held several different jobs and moved up the

ranks quickly. She joined the Active Guard Reserve program in 1991, but the idea of earning a college degree was at the front of her mind. Aukongak began taking college courses while working full time and received her bachelor's degree in human services in 2007.

Aukongak believes education played a key role in her success and encourages Soldiers to take advantage of all the educational opportunities the Alaska Army National Guard has to offer.

"Attend your military education schools to progress in your career field," Aukongak said. "I encourage Soldiers to take advantage of what's offered to them and to do their best."

Twenty-three years into her career, the new sergeant major challenges Soldiers to take control of their careers and see how far they can make it. Aukongak is aware that because of her ethnicity and accomplishments, she is a role model for more than one reason, but insists that everyone can be a mentor and inspirational example.

"I believe that when you wear the uniform, regardless of your rank or background, you are a role model," Aukongak said. "You have Soldiers who admire you from a distance, whether you acknowledge it or not. The higher grade you make, the more you put yourself in a position to be a mentor and role model; I call it being admired from a distance."

"I personally have a lot of people whom I've admired from a distance," Aukongak added. "Command Sergeant Major Pamela Harrington and Sergeants Major Jane Dennis and Kerry Averett are just a few people I've admired from a distance."

"I think Sergeant Major Aukongak's accomplishment is a great triumph and success story," said State Command Sergeant Major Gordon Choate, Alaska Army National Guard. "She is a leader who our Soldiers can look up to, and she epitomizes the truth that Soldiers who live the Army values can achieve the highest ranks through leadership and hard work." ■



Veterans

Women Veterans Recognized for Military Service



Longest Service. Lieutenant Colonel Judy Mathewson, right, Alaska Air National Guard, gives a token of appreciation in November to Chief Master Sergeant Cindy Gollwitzer, 168th Communications Flight, recognizing her as the female veteran with the longest service in the 168th Air Refueling Wing.

Photo: Master Sergeant Brian Schlumbohm, 168th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs

By Lieutenant Colonel Judy Mathewson, Alaska Air National Guard

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... During Veterans Week, Nov. 7-11, 2009, as we celebrated 233 years of independence and freedom in America, the Alaska National Guard and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs combined forces to remember those who fought and have fallen to protect our freedoms – our women in the military.

Since Congress enacted the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act in 1948, the number of women joining the ranks of the military has been on the rise. In 1950, women constituted just 2 percent of the military. Today, women make up about 15 percent of the military’s active duty population and 15.5 percent in reserve capacities, according to the U.S. Department of Defense.

Women are the fastest growing population of veterans, with some 200,000 women who have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan.

In recognition of all the women in Alaska who have served in the military, six Celebrating Alaska Women Veterans ceremonies were held in November, sponsored by the Alaska National Guard and the State Women Veterans Committee. These presentations were held throughout the state to educate women about their benefits and women-in-combat issues.

“It’s important we pay special tribute to the more than 8,200 of the almost 1.83 million U.S. women veterans who call Alaska home today,” said Brigadier General Deborah McManus, Alaska Women Veterans coordinator for the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs and assistant adjutant general – Alaska Air National Guard. “Today, the women of Alaska continue to serve in every branch of the armed forces, including more than 750 in the Alaska National Guard, with unwavering pride, exemplary dignity and many outstanding accomplishments. It’s important we recognize the unique mental and physical health care needs of women, particularly those who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan.”

With continuing conflicts in both of those countries and 68 other locations, more stories need to be told from a woman’s perspective. Each presentation in Alaska featured the documentary, “Lioness,” which tells the story of four female Soldiers attached to all-male combat units in the Army and the Marines.

Shannon Morgan, the featured female Soldier, is now medically retired. Along with McManus, she spoke to Alaskans about available services and encouraged women veterans to apply for the benefits they have rightfully earned.

The Women Veterans Health Program – Veterans Clinic in Anchorage, Bassett Memorial Hospital in Fort Wainwright and the Vet Centers throughout the state – offer women veterans information, support and other health-related services. ■



Encouraging Women Veterans. Shannon Morgan speaks to a crowd at the Women’s Veterans event held in November at the Alaska Air National Guard’s 168th Air Refueling Wing operations group theater at Eielson Air Force Base. Morgan is a combat veteran who was attached to all-male combat units in the Army and Marines as part of the Lioness program.

She came to Alaska to share her story and encourage women veterans to apply for the many benefits that are available to them. Photo: Staff Sergeant Daniel Heselton, 168th Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs



Saluting The Fallen. Members of the Viet Nam Vets Motorcycle Club family salute during the fallen warriors ceremony held during the Veterans and Remembrance Day ceremony at the Alaska National Guard armory on Fort Richardson. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

Advocate for Veterans. Governor Sean Parnell congratulates Lieutenant Colonel Marc Hoffmeister, U.S. Army Alaska, during the state's Veterans and Remembrance Day ceremony in November, for earning the 2009 Governors Veteran Advocacy Award. Hoffmeister, who was injured by a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2007, also gave the keynote address stressing the importance of veteran support networks. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

Season of Accomplishments

By Verdie Bowen, State Veterans Office

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... This is a wonderful time to be a veteran in Alaska. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs is providing more health care to Alaskan veterans; the Alaska National Guard co-hosted six Celebrating Alaska Women Veterans events; the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs drew a large crowd for the Veterans and Remembrance Day event; and the state won a huge victory for Alaska Territorial Guard veterans.

To better serve veterans living in the southern Kenai Peninsula, the VA has established the Homer outreach clinic. This clinic will be open on Mondays, and appointments can be made through the Kenai VA Outpatient Clinic.

The Celebrating Alaska Women Veterans events were a great success. Events were held statewide, spreading awareness of benefits and entitlements that women veterans have earned and are eligible for. The goal was to spread awareness of the unique circumstances female veterans face and to encourage female veterans to apply for their benefits.

Many of Alaska's elected officials attended the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs Veterans and Remembrance Day event this year. The keynote speaker, Lieutenant Colonel Marc Hoffmeister, U.S. Army Alaska, spoke about the importance of veteran support networks in Alaska and throughout the Department of Defense.

Governor Sean Parnell presented Hoffmeister with the Governors Advocacy Award for his efforts to provide service dogs to house-bound veterans and for his work organizing fishing trips in Alaska for wounded warriors returning home.

The 2010 National Defense Bill finally closed the last legal loophole regarding benefits for the Alaska Territorial Guard. This bill clarified the definition of time served in the ATG and will allow for additional retirement payments for qualified ATG members. The Department of Military & Veterans Affairs is processing four new National Guard retirements and 19 new survivors' benefits packages under the bill. ■



COMMUNICATIONS VEHICLE for Disasters in the Last Frontier

By Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... When disaster strikes in Alaska, the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management is tasked with coordination of critical services to protect the lives and property of Alaskans. In a state with a wide range of natural disasters and the ever present possibility of man-made emergencies, providing critical services can be a significant challenge.

Utilizing a special one-time grant, DHS&EM contracted for a mobile emergency operation vehicle capable of being dispatched to a disaster-impacted area for the purpose of establishing or restoring community communication with the State Emergency Operation Center. In September 2009, DHS&EM took delivery of the state's Mobile Emergency Operation Center.

MEOC is a 45-foot, state-of-the-art communication platform equipped with a radio dispatch center, disaster response work stations and a suite of information management technologies. MEOC's radio

dispatch center will allow incompatible radio systems to communicate with one another.

"Alaska has a diverse range of radio systems used by our emergency responders, which is a big problem because those systems can't talk to one another," said Karl Edwards, DHS&EM emergency management specialist. "MEOC is capable of bridging the radio connectivity gap and will allow emergency responders seamless communication."

A satellite-enabled Internet connection gives MEOC Voice over Internet Protocol phone service, Internet connectivity, video conferencing and video streaming abilities. A wireless router and hard-line capabilities expand MEOC's Internet connectivity beyond the walls of the vehicle to any nearby facility being used by responders. Interior and exterior video monitors, a 24-inch plotter, and a printing station make sharing information gathered through MEOC's communication system fast and easy.

"MEOC is not sitting and gathering dust while we wait for the next disaster to strike," said Bryan Fisher, DHS&EM chief of operations. "We will train our community partners to use the vehicle, make it available to other state agencies needing on-scene and self-contained communication capabilities, and MEOC will play a role in emergency response exercises. DHS&EM worked with the Alaska State Troopers to deploy MEOC to Hatcher Pass in December for a mountain rescue group's search and rescue exercise."

Communications on the Go. The self-sufficient Mobile Emergency Operation Center is loaded with communications equipment and can be rapidly deployed to any disaster-stricken community along Alaska's road system. Photo: Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM





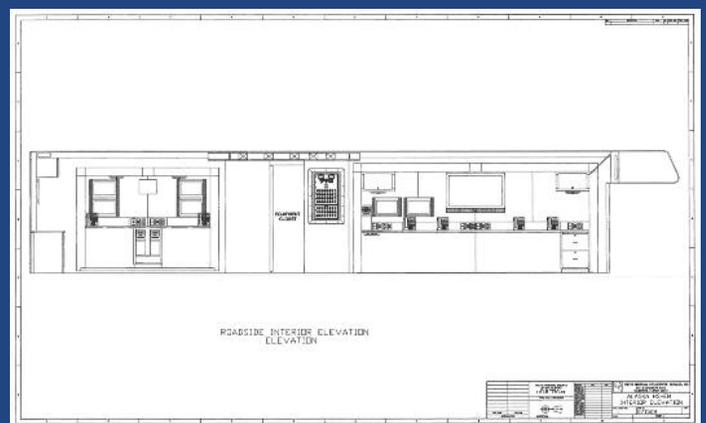
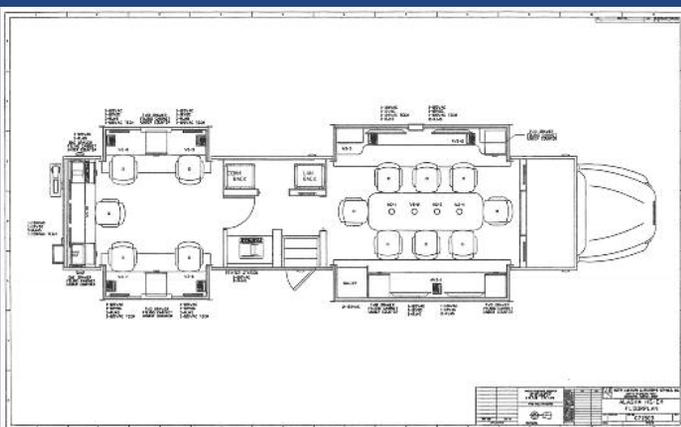
Radio Dispatch. DHS&EM personnel Sarah Puerner, left, and Karl Edwards test the Mobile Emergency Operation Center's ability to receive and transmit signals from 11 different types of radios. The MEOC dispatch center allows any of those radio frequencies to easily communicate with one another. Photo: Courtesy of DHS&EM

"The ability to have multiple response organizations on location with full communication capabilities is a great asset to the entire state," said Alaska State Trooper Captain Barry Wilson. "The Troopers look forward to including MEOC in exercises and events as part of our mission."

MEOC can travel anywhere on the Alaska road system that a large motor home can go, and once on scene, the vehicle can be fully operational in 20 minutes. MEOC allows DHS&EM staff to work longer periods on location without drawing on community resources. Critical goods and services will be swifter and better coordinated thanks to MEOC's communication capabilities.

MEOC can be a Disaster Assistance Center by coordinating evacuations or assisting in locating temporary housing for Alaskans who are displaced by a disaster. DHS&EM's mission is to assist community leaders in dealing with the unexpected effects of a disaster, and MEOC will be a tremendous asset in providing an immediate communication capability.

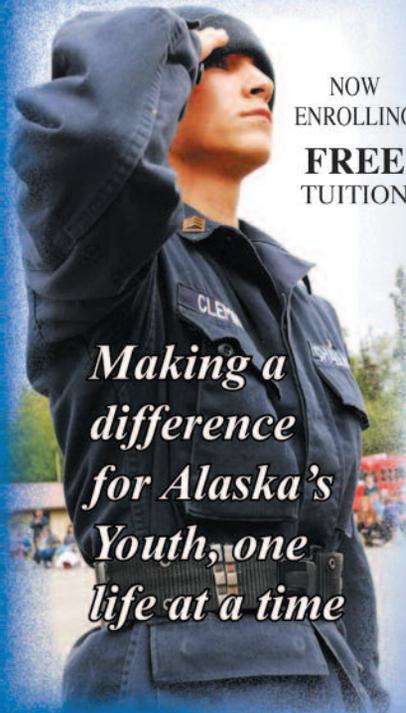
If a future disaster strikes one of Alaska's road accessible communities, MEOC will be there augmenting local emergency response resources, providing reliable interoperable communication capabilities and supplying a host of information management technologies. ■



Fully Equipped. Among the equipment packed into the Mobile Emergency Operation Center are five radio dispatch consoles, five portable radio handsets, two 12.5-kilowatt generators, 16 Voice over Internet Protocol phones, 10 disaster response work stations with computers, a 34-foot pneumatic mast with a remote controlled video camera and one coffee pot.

Photo: North American Catastrophe Services

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Missile Defense



Force Protection. A military police officer with Alpha Company, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, establishes a hasty traffic control point on the Missile Defense Complex as part of the November force protection exercise on Fort Greely. The Soldiers participating in the exercise are able to train on this operational missile defense site and concurrently sustain real world mission operations.
Photo: Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion



Giving Thanks to Soldiers. Command Sergeant Major Bradford Quigley, 49th Missile Defense sergeant major, carves one of the hams being served to the Soldiers of the battalion on Thanksgiving. More than 200 Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers man and secure the missile defense system on Fort Greely 365 days a year. Ensuring that Soldiers are well taken care of is one of the top priorities of command sergeants major.

Photo: Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion



Security Search. Specialist Julio Velez, military police officer, provides cover for the search of a simulated "hostile person" on the Missile Defense Complex at Fort Greely during a November force protection exercise. Members of the 49th Missile Defense Battalion, Alaska Army National Guard, participated in the four-day exercise developing teamwork, unit cohesion and mission readiness. Photo: Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion



Thanksgiving Turkey. First Sergeant Richard DeBilzan, right, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, helps serve a traditional Thanksgiving meal to the on-duty Soldiers of the 49th Missile Defense Battalion during the holiday. The tradition at the remote missile defense complex located on Fort Greely is that command elements will serve meals to their Soldiers during the holidays to give thanks to them for their sacrifices and hard work throughout the year.

Photo: Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion

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Education



Tower. Cadets from the Alaska Military Youth Academy rappel from the 44-foot tower on Camp Carroll, Fort Richardson, in October. Cadets learned how to tie their own Swiss seat, rappel the wall and belay for fellow cadets.

Photo: Specialist Jill King, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Rappel. Cadet Jayce Hageman, from the Alaska Military Youth Academy, rappels down the practice tower during a confidence training exercise held at Camp Carroll, Fort Richardson, in October. The goal of the training was to instill cadets with confidence and team building skills to succeed in future events. Photo: Specialist Jill King, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Thanks for Educating Our Youth. Officer D. Scott Lofthouse, center, criminal intelligence officer with the Anchorage Police Department, receives an Alaska Military Youth Academy print in September from Director Craig Christensen, left, and Deputy Director Dr. James Jones for supporting the Alaska Military Youth Academy. Lofthouse educated staff members on gangs in Anchorage and also made presentations to cadets. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Interceptor Storage Facility. During the ESGR visit to the Missile Defense Complex on Fort Greely, Jamie Abordonado, left, ESGR; Elizabeth Stamm, center, Denali Alaskan Federal Credit Union; and J. J. Harrier, Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, listen as Colonel George Bond, right, Missile Defense Agency – Alaska Region, briefs them on the role of the Interceptor Storage Facility. Photo: Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion

Supportive Employers Tour Fort Greely

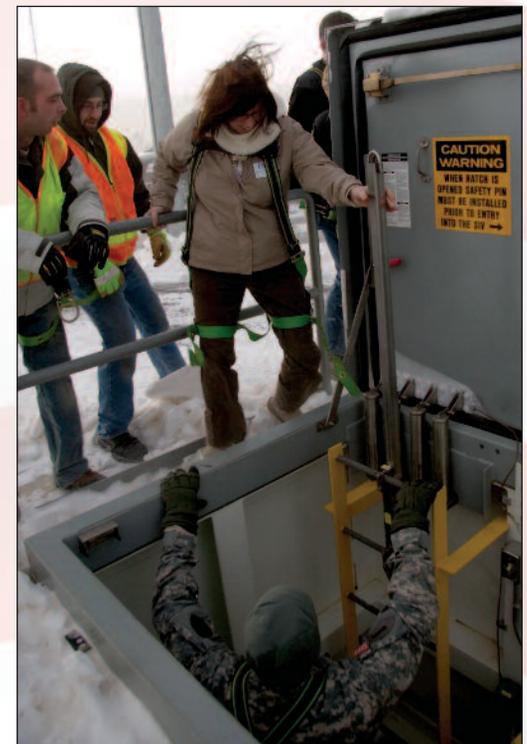
By Jamie Abordonado, ESGR

FORT GREELY, Alaska ... Cold weather conditions didn't stop two supportive employers of National Guard and Reserve members from touring the Missile Defense complex at Fort Greely in late November.

J. J. Harrier, communications director for the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, and Elizabeth Stamm, marketing director for Denali Alaskan Federal Credit Union, received a personal tour of the operations on Fort Greely to better understand one of the missions of the Alaska Army National Guard. These employers represent supportive businesses in the community, and providing them with an opportunity to experience what the Army National Guard mission is in an "active" capacity is why these tours are important.



Welcome to Fort Greely. Members from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve tour pause with their hosts for a photo during the group's recent visit to the Missile Defense Complex on Fort Greely. The base houses the Ground-based Midcourse Defense system and is home to more than 200 Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers. From left: Captain Jesse Schexnayder, protocol officer, 49th Missile Defense Battalion; Colonel George Bond, assistant to the director, Missile Defense Agency – Alaska Region; Elizabeth Stamm, marketing director, Denali Alaskan Federal Credit Union; Jamie Abordonado, executive director, ESGR; J. J. Harrier, communications director, Anchorage Chamber of Commerce; and Lieutenant Colonel Eric Maxon, public affairs officer, Alaska Army National Guard. Photo: Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion



Windy Weather. Jamie Abordonado, ESGR executive director, holds on to the safety handle leading down into the silo interface vault on the Missile Defense Complex at Fort Greely. The ESGR group visited Fort Greely on an uncommonly windy day, with gusts reaching 70 mph.

Photo: Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion



Supportive Employers. Sixteen branch managers of Denali Alaskan Federal Credit Union in December signed a Statement of Support signifying their commitment to supporting their Guard and Reserve employees. They joined the 775 Alaskan employers who have already signed a Statement of Support with their local Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve committee. By signing with the Alaska ESGR committee, Denali Alaskan Federal Credit Union will publicly display their support of Alaska's National Guard and Reserve components. Photo: Jamie Abordonado, ESGR

"My trip to Fort Greely gave me more reasons to be proud as an Alaskan and to have a father in the Guard," said Stamm of her experience on the tour. "It's truly amazing what the men and women of Fort Greely do for our country. I was blown away by the capabilities of this small military base. Colonel George Bond

[assistant to the director of the Missile Defense Agency – Alaska Region] and his staff were welcoming and very knowledgeable."

All who attended described the wealth of information gained about the mission, the supportive elements, and the amount of protection provided at Fort Greely as extremely impressive. ■

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Family Support



Helping Guard Families in Need

By Sergeant Karima Turner, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... The Alaska National Guard Family Programs shared in the spirit of giving this season to help Guard families receive toy donations from various organizations, businesses and individuals who wanted to give back to Citizen-Soldiers and Airmen and their families during the holidays.

In 2009, more than 400 toys were donated to the Alaska National Guard Family Programs intended for Guard families. The toys went toward making the holiday season a little brighter for Alaska National Guard families who might not have otherwise had the resources.

Gianna Varrati-Simmons, Alaska Army National Guard, 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade and Family Readiness Support assistant, worked tirelessly to get the word out to Guard commanders that families didn't have to go without presents during the holidays.

"Commanders see our Soldiers and Airmen on drill weekends, and word of mouth lets them know if there's a family in need," Varrati-Simmons said. "I really pushed the commanders to let me know if there was a family that needed a little extra help during Christmas, and through those efforts we identified nearly 25 families to assist."

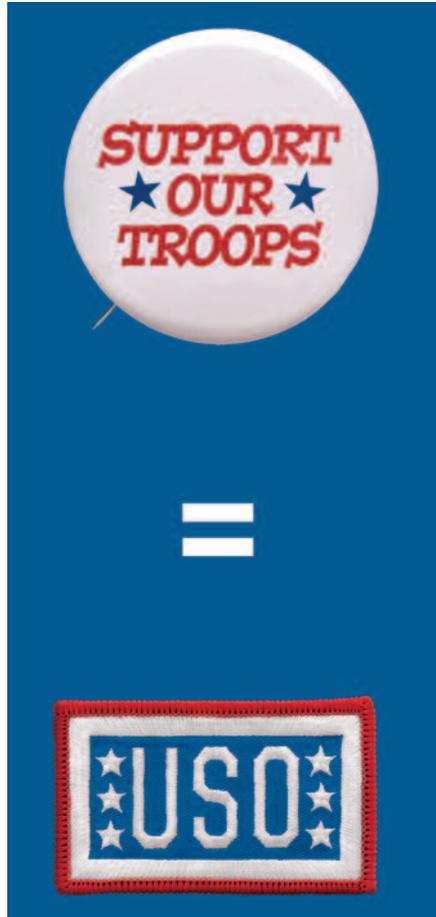
Varrati-Simmons said many of the Guard families were modest and didn't want anyone to know they needed assistance, so Family Programs really worked to reach out to them.

"At some point in our lives we have all needed a little help," said Kera Spaulding, Alaska Army National Guard, 38th Troop Command and Family Readiness Support assistant. "We have resources and donations to help service members and their families. These programs are in place because for a long time, people needed help, and we didn't have the resources; but now we do."

Varrati-Simmons said the main focus was to make sure families in need were able to provide a nice holiday for their children, but the effort to help families runs year round.

Often times, people don't realize it's OK to ask for help. It can be an issue of pride, but as the Guard stresses, it's one big Guard family and everyone is in it together.

"There are a lot of people who want to help out," Varrati-Simmons said. "We've all been there; we've all struggled at one point, and we want to make sure families know that we are here to help them because they are part of our Alaska National Guard family." ■



Donation Dollars. Colonel Cathy Jorgensen, left, commander of the Alaska Army National Guard's 38th Troop Command; Jan Myers, center, director of the Alaska National Guard's Family Programs; and Chief Master Sergeant Dennis Hogan, state command chief of the Alaska Air National Guard, proudly accept a \$5,000 donation from Best Buy to the Alaska Friends of the Guard and Reserve. Best Buy presented the check during the store's grand opening of its newest location in Anchorage in June 2009. Photo: Courtesy Jan Myers, Family Programs



Who We Are...

What is your favorite winter activity?

**Staff Sergeant
Christopher Williams**
213th Space Warning Squadron



"Snowmobiling – because it is fun and a great workout."

Mary Sorensen
Family Programs



"I like playing in the snow with my son."

**Second Lieutenant
Raymond Lowdermilk**
Joint Forces Headquarters



"I really enjoy riding snowmachines. I haven't had much of a chance since I've been out of state for seminary school, so I plan on making up for lost time."

**Staff Sergeant
Jennifer Barto**
213th Space Warning Squadron



"My favorite winter activity is snowmobiling. It's another great way to enjoy Alaska!"

**Staff Sergeant
Edwin Brunner**
Family Programs



"My favorite winter activity is hiking and just being outside."



Giving to the Guard. Left to right: Jamie Abordonado, executive director of the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve; Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard; Larry Sutterer, TriWest; Jan Myers, director of the Alaska National Guard's Family Programs; and Chief Master Sergeant Dennis Hogan, state command chief of the Alaska Air National Guard, smile during a November check presentation by TriWest. TriWest's \$10,000 contribution, its fourth annual contribution, is part of the company's holiday "Giving to the Guard" campaign that provides support to National Guard units throughout its 21-state west region. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Awards • Decorations • Promotions

Meritorious Service Medal



Lt Col Jessica L. Stealey-Kelsch . . .168th ARW
 MSgt Ronald W. Lovell168th ARW
 MSgt Timothy J. Bogowith213th SWS
 Capt Shad Schoppert176th CES
 TSgt George Foley176th MXS
 MSgt Paula Parrish176th MSG
 MSgt George Tolly212th RQS

Air Force Commendation Medal



SSgt Brandilyn D. Hubbartt168th MOF
 TSgt Gloria Rucker212th RQS

Air Force Achievement Medal



SSgt Donna Judkins176th FSF

Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal



MSgt Paula Parrish176th MSG

176th Wing 3rd Quarter Awards

Senior NCO

MSgt Heather Pineiro176th ACS

NCO

SSgt Zachary Darnell176th ACS

Airman

A1C Robert Williams176th ACS

PROMOTIONS

Lieutenant Colonel

Rebecca YoungMed Det
 Brent B. Buss176th OG
 Gregg A. Origer144th AS
 Jean M. Liebig176th CF
 James E. Harris Jr249th AS
 Robert H. Price III144th AS
 Richard D. Watson176th OG

Major

Carrie J. Howard176th ACS
 Russel L. Edwards210th RSQ

Captain

David Cunningham49th MDB
 Brian Bussell297th BFSB
 David Kang297th BFSB

Joshua P. Roberts210th RSQ
 Jeremiah L. Brewer144th AS
 Jeremy L. Stephens144th AS
 Rebecca L. Altenburg144th AS

First Lieutenant

Andreas Bohman297th BFSB
 Georg Brendel Jr297th BFSB
 Benjamin L. Gray176th STF
 Jefferson H. Wood144th AS
 Donald G. Coffman176th STF
 Aaron H. Larsen176th STF
 Elizabeth A. Williams176th MDG
 Clarence M. Stevens III176th ACS
 Brian C. Nosich176th OSF
 Gary M. Weir144th AS

Second Lieutenant

Daniel P. Kozak144th AS
 Michelle Sabala176th SFS

Chief Warrant Officer Three

Brian Stephenson207th AVN

Chief Warrant Officer Two

Nicholas Wise207th AVN
 Matthew Felter207th AVN

Chief Master Sergeant

Gerald J. McAleavey176th LRS
 Kristine M. Joyce176th FSF
 John C. Youngblood Jr176th MXS

Senior Master Sergeant

Shannon L. Amos176th FSF
 Jonathan R. Davis212th RSQ
 Geraldine C. Kile176th MDG
 Joseph J. Dibenedetto176th ACS
 Lance R. Jordan176th OSF



Warrior Leader Course Graduation. Alaska Army National Guard Major James Palembas, 207th Brigade Support Company, congratulates his son and fellow Guardsman, Specialist Daryl R. Palembas, 297th Long Range Surveillance Company, after his graduation from the Warrior Leader Course in December. Specialist Palembas was the Distinguished Honor Graduate and Leadership Award winner from the class of 32 soldiers.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

PROMOTIONS (continued)

Adam C. Blaum176th FSF
James G. Williams176th MXS
David B. Rodkey176th MXS

Master Sergeant (Air)

Travis W. Oaks168th MXS
Michelle N. BalagtasJFHQ-AK (Air)
Roger D. Sparks212th RSQ
Sean P. Mitchell210th RSQ
Michael D. Pulanco176th SFS
T.L. Stanbro249th AS
Earl J. SingletonJFHQ-AK (Air)
William H. Taylor Jr176th WG
George H. Lockwood144th AS

Technical Sergeant

Joy L. Dolton168th MOF
Terry J. Ahslen168th MXS
Generoso M. Manahan168th AMXS
Justin W. Young176th MXS
Joseph G. Cooper Sr176th ACS
Denise D. Cooney176th ACS
Jennifer A. Meier176th MOF
Shynowah L. Lee176th MDG
Robert J. Baldwin176th CES
George J. Smith176th AMXS
Ronald A. Ratzlaff176th CF
Brandy M.L. Boatwright176th ACS
Tyronne N. Chisholm176th SFS
Daniel J. Thornburg176th MXS
Benjamin J. Ahrens176th MXS

George K. Lewis III144th AS
Heidi M. Gould211th RSQ
Anjanette G.S. McCain211th RSQ

Staff Sergeant (Air)

Walker J. Haken168th AMXS
Gregory M. Wood168th MXS
Aaron I.B. Coman168th AMXS
Audrey Lei B. Palacios168th LRS
Alex R. Rivera Paz168th LRS
Alisa M. Rivera168th LRS
Cristal L. Webb168th LRS
Peter C. Bernheim168th MXG
Joshua A. Stevenson249th AS
Travis A. Smith176th MXS
Aaron J. Hug176th MXS
Cassandra L. Aglietti176th ACS
Jherenmichel B. Svoboda210th RQS
Troy A.L. Simpson176th FSF
Matthew A. Teigen212th RSQ
Derek V. Frazier176th MXS
Michael P. Zwiselsberger176th MXS
Scott A. Toms176th AMXS
Amanda G. Jordan176th MSG
Brittany D. Shea249th AS
Linda J. Kubacki176th MXS
Dominic P. Sampson176th ACS
Cody J. Grella176th CES
Adam M. Woolley176th LRS
Stanley J. Montgomery176th MXS
Brian T. Garverick176th ACS

RETIREMENTS

Lt Col Jessica L. Stealy-Kelsch168th ARW
Lt Col Benjamin K. Baker168th ARW
MSGt Karen M. Malone168th MSG
MSGt Warren A. Daniels168th MXS
SMSgt Andy S. Jefferson168th MSG
MSGt Jan F. Dover168th MXS
SSgt Blain S. Abbott168th AMXS
TSgt Jennifer L. Hartwig168th MXG
TSgt Charles M. Mathis168th MDG
TSgt Robert L. Summers Jr213th SWS
SFC Frank Phillips207th AVN
SGM Jane DennisJFHQ-AK (Army)
COL Richard WilliamsJFHQ-AK (Army)
CPT Richard Doering297th CAV
SSG Thomas Cholok297th INF
SFC Thomas Henry297th INF
CPT Steven CraddickMed Det
SFC David PowellR&R
SSG Michael WallinJFHQ-AK (Army)
Lt Col Bruce Dougherty176th MDG
MSGt George Tolley212th RQS
CMSgt Karen Johnson176th MFS
LtCol William Willinbrink144th AS
SMSgt Jeffrey Jones176th SFS
CMSgt Robert Price176th LRS
MSGt Thomas Armstrong176th MXS
SMSgt David Smith176th MXS
SSgt Anthony April176th SFS
MSGt Paul BobbyJFHQ-AK (Air)
MSGt Nance Pitts176th ACS

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Start of the Trail

176th Wing

Heather Jones
 John Buso
 Cody Inman
 Heather Paxson
 Jason Buck
 Shana Harris
 Christopher Morhain
 Asdrubal Peguero
 Roy Eason
 Christopher Geisler
 Matthew Crossman
 Brandon Pollock
 John McNutt
 Joshua McKinley
 Richard Alexander
 Charles Bowser
 Marc Pacudan
 Theodore Sierocinski
 Benjamin Schnell
 Jacob Keenhold
 Tia Boglin
 Stephanie Sampson
 Darrel Swan
 Miles Wong
 Tyson Bowen
 Mark Lockwood
 Kassi Stavenjord
 Robert Bowler
 David Akin
 Donald Haretuku
 Tyler Wehrli
 Jennifer Johnston
 Joshua Frye
 Roy Bouchet
 Kristy Dawbarn

168th Air Refueling Wing

Karla Workman
 Lacie Marsden
 Benjamin Hager
 Maria Perkins
 Byron Rager
 Joshua Poe
 John Phoenix
 Christopher Kobernuss
 Duane Middleton
 Tiffany Seale
 Monica Eusebio
 Victor Weber
 Hannah Moore
 Shawn McCarthy
 Scott Kvittem

207th Brigade Support Company

Sophie Tommy

490th Military Police Company

Douglas George
 Nicholas Ray
 Michael Shipton

297th Military Police Company

William Collier
 Ashley Douglas

HHD 761st Military Police

Miranda James-McGraw

297th Reconnaissance & Surveillance

Caleb Lovelace
 Kyle Papineau
 John Cleveland
 Corey Dahlman
 Patrick Howell

297th Signal Company

Polofeu Sappa
 Dillon Baker



Joining the Guard Family.

Brigadier General Thomas H. Katkus, left, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, administers the Oath of Enlistment to Coleman Wenke in December. Wenke enlisted in the Alaska Army National Guard as a private and follows a family tradition of service; Wenke is the son of Alaska Air National Guard members Colonel Scott Wenke, 168th Air Refueling Wing commander, and Colonel Wendy Wenke, vice chief of joint staff. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

207th Aviation

Julie Ellis
 James Delozzo
 Cassandra Pillans

297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade

Esther Maka
 Laura Hildreth
 Garrett Mentzer
 James Howell

Crystal Cederquist
 Bo Boycsout

297th Cavalry

Zachary Parker
 Ryan Adams
 Gilbert Morales
 John Golden Jr
 Dylan Baggett
 Travis Selner
 Joshua Adams

Warriors Training Schedule

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

	Feb	March	April
Alaska National Guard			
Joint Forces Headquarters – Alaska (Air)	20-21	20-21	10-11
Joint Forces Headquarters – Alaska (Army)	19-21	27-28	23-25
Alaska Army National Guard			
297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade	19-21	26-28	April 17-May 1 (AT)
38th Troop Command	19-21	19-21	23-25
Alaska Air National Guard			
168th Air Refueling Wing	20-21	20-21	10-11
176th Wing	20-21	20-21	10-11
Alaska State Defense Force			
Headquarters	13-14	13-14	10-11



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