



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 1, 2014

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Alaska National Guard

Alaska Air Guardsmen deploy to Middle East

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Approximately 26 members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Civil Engineer Squadron departed from Ted Stevens International Airport Sunday morning for a six-month deployment to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Before deploying, they will conduct additional training for a month in Texas, said Chief Master Sgt. Keith Wilson, chief of plans and programs, 176th CES.

Their first stop will be at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, where they will participate in the Evasion and Conduct After Capture course, Wilson explained. Afterward, they travel to Fort Bliss, where they will train for three weeks on combat skills.

The primary mission of the 176th CES will be to support U.S. Central Command with minor construction projects in their area of operations, according to Lt. Col. Jack Evans, commander of the 176th CES.

"This is a unique mission," said Evans. "Typically, when we deploy, we go to a static location and do maintenance for established facilities. This time, we're going to be sending guys to eight different countries outside the wire. They will be doing construction projects, instead of maintaining established bases."

Once at Fort Bliss, the civil engineer personnel will join with members of other Guard, Reserve and active duty units to form an approximately 170-member expeditionary civil engineer group.

Evans, who will be the deployed commander of the group, noted that this deployment is particularly significant for his unit because they will be the lead in a combined group that will be predominantly made up of Guardsmen.

"Fifty-nine percent of us will be Guardsmen, 24 percent Reservists, and 13 percent Active duty," he said.

Senior Airman Amado Cordero, a heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration specialist, is one of the 176th CES members going on this deployment. Like many Guardsmen, Cordero works full-time in the civilian workforce and performs his part-time Air National Guard career one weekend per month and two weeks per year.

He said that his full-time job working in construction closely ties in with his job in the Guard.

“On the civilian side, I stick with construction,” he said. “That’s why HVAC works well for me, because I do a little bit of everything. I do plumbing, insulation, heavy-equipment operation, and structural and electrical work. This is all pretty familiar to me.”

Cordero said that he feels driven and enjoys deploying.

“For me, it’s being in uniform and doing this job that I enjoy most,” he said. “Doing this job on either the civilian side or in uniform are two totally different feelings. I feel more of a sense of accomplishment, because I feel like I’m contributing to something greater. I’m looking forward to this deployment.”

The members of the 176th CES spent the last year training for this deployment, explained Wilson.

“We knew what milestones we had to make to be ready to deploy, and so we planned our training to meet those requirements,” he said. “I’m very proud of these guys. They’ve really come together, got all of their training accomplished, and I’m proud of their attitudes and their eagerness to serve.”

“I want them to come back safely, first of all,” added Evans, “but I also want them to come back knowledgeable that they’ve done the job they trained to do in civil engineering. We’re also excited that we’re the lead unit. They only pick one Guard unit a year to be the lead, and this time, it’s us. It means a lot to our guys.”

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For photos of 176th Civil Engineer Squadron members training, please visit

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/176wg/sets/72157644092439448>