



**PRESS RELEASE  
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By Sgt. Marisa Lindsay

Alaska National Guard

**Alaska Army National Guard state command sergeant major retires**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — State Command Sgt. Maj. Pamela Harrington retired after nearly 28 years of National Guard service during a ceremony held at the Alaska National Guard Armory here, June 14.

A career National Guardsman who served in Missouri and Alaska, Harrington started her journey with the Army in hopes of finding discipline and escaping destructive behaviors that she had developed after she had left home for college.

“I initially joined because I wanted to find an external influence that I felt I needed to fix my issues,” Harrington said. “I was very perfectionistic and self-critical, which can be dangerous in a young woman, so I looked to the Army as an outlet for those potentially destructive behaviors.”

A few years after enlisting as a private first class in the Missouri Army National Guard on Jan. 20, 1987, as a chaplain’s assistant, Harrington, a newly-pinned non-commissioned officer, wanted to make a fresh start in a new state. An outdoorsman at heart, and although she’d have yet to set foot in Alaska, she set her sights on the Last Frontier.

“I definitely took a leap of faith in coming up here to Alaska,” explained Harrington, who transferred into the maintenance career field and into the Alaska Army National Guard in 1994. “But, I knew two things: that I wanted to live in this great state, and that I wanted to continue serving the community as an Army National Guardsman, so I did what I could in order to make both of those ideas a reality.”

Harrington maintains that throughout the beginning of her career, although she enjoyed her work, she never thought to look past her current enlistment obligation.

“I lived with the day-to-day expectation that I would fulfill my duties and responsibilities to the utmost of my abilities and ensure those around me were taken care of, whether they were my leadership or subordinates,” Harrington said. “As I began to make rank and be trusted with more responsibility, it finally dawned on me that I could make it, and my aspirations really began to grow.”

It was in 2012 that Harrington was appointed as AKARNG’s first female state command sergeant major, serving under retired Brig. Gen. Mike Bridges as his senior enlisted advisor.

“I remember seeing my picture in Warriors magazine next to the headline, first female state command sergeant major,” chuckled Harrington. “I thought to myself, wow, I can’t believe that’s me. I did it. I made it to the show!”

Harrington insists that although it’s her job to help facilitate the work of the National Guard, it’s the Soldiers who deserve the recognition.

“I absolutely believe that I was only able to do my job as well as I have because the Soldiers beneath me were doing what they were supposed to be doing,” explained Harrington. “I appreciate every single one, from the officers I worked alongside right down to the private.”

After 28 years of military service, she leaves her fellow Soldiers with some advice.

“As a matter of practice in life, at the end of the day, every day, take out your Army values card and look in the mirror,” Harrington said. “Always look for ways to improve – for yourself and for those around you.”

Post-retirement, Harrington looks forward to a simpler life with her husband of 14 years, Brent. She plans to return to her first love, working as a maintenance technician, away from the hustle and bustle of Anchorage, and dreams of a life of subsistence, off-the-grid living in a cabin near the ocean.

“Being a part of this special community has been awesome – it’s been an honor and a privilege to serve,” added Harrington. “I’ll always look back fondly on my time in the National Guard and the family that I gained within this organization.”

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#### **Cutlines:**

150614-Z-CA180-012

The Alaska National Guard’s senior enlisted advisor, Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Hildreth, shakes Alaska Army National Guard State Command Sgt. Maj. Pamela Harrington’s hand after pinning on the Meritorious Service Medal during her retirement ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson June 14. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Balinda O’Neal)

150614-Z-CA180-025

Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Hildreth, Alaska National Guard senior enlisted advisor, presents Alaska Army National Guard State Command Sgt. Maj. Pamela Harrington with her certificate of retirement during a ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson June 14. Harrington has more than 28 years of combined National Guard Service in Missouri and Alaska. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Balinda O’Neal)

150614-Z-CA180-068

Alaska Army National Guard State Command Sgt. Maj. Pamela Harrington watches as the U.S. flag is

folded during her retirement ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson June 14. Harrington has more than 28 years of combined National Guard Service in Missouri and Alaska. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Balinda O'Neal)

150614-Z-CA180-097

Alaska Army National Guard State Command Sgt. Maj. Pamela Harrington hugs her husband, Brent, after presenting him with a gift during her retirement ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson June 14. Harrington and her husband plan to kick off her retirement by relocating to Southeast Alaska. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Balinda O'Neal)

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