



PRESS RELEASE
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Alaska National Guard

Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk crews help fight Alaska Fires

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Two Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters and aircrews from the 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment are conducting water bucket drops over spot fires near Russian Lake by Cooper Landing today.

1-207th AVN accepted their first mission to support wildfire suppression efforts on June 14 around 5 p.m., and they were in the air within two hours, headed toward Willow's Sockeye Fire.

The helicopters and aircrew were transferred from the Sockeye effort this morning and asked to perform operations on the Kenai Peninsula after several spot fires began overnight.

Due to the location and terrain, the Black Hawks were able to reach the area before ground crews, and the goal was to begin suppressing the fire as quickly as possible to prevent it from spreading.

"We are 'initial attack' for the Russian Lake Fire. It will be up to our aircrews to determine where to drop water, and we are solely responsible out there at this point," said Lt. Col. Robert Kurtz, the Alaska Army National Guard state aviation officer.

Aviation personnel coordinate with the incident commander to develop a tactical plan on how to suppress the fire, said Kurtz.

"The incident command team is working to develop the plan, but we were asked to head in and get the basic idea of the need from the air," said Kurtz.

Two pilots and one crew chief operated each helicopter today. The 1-207th currently has 11 qualified crews who must be swapped out every three to four days.

The first duo of Black Hawks is expected to arrive back at JBER around 6 p.m., and return to the Russian Lake area tomorrow morning.

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Cutline for attached photo

(See below for links to additional full-res photos)

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The Alaska Army National Guard supported fire suppression efforts in June 2015 at Russian Lake near Cooper Landing, on the Kenai Peninsula in Alaska. Two UH-60 Black Hawks and crews from the 1st

Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment are flying multiple missions, dipping their orange water buckets into Kenai Lake and other nearby water, dropping thousands of gallons of water over spot fires near Russian Lake. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Balinda O'Neal)

For event Flickr album of full-resolution, free downloadable images, please visit:

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