



**PRESS RELEASE
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By Sgt. Marisa Lindsay

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Alaska National Guardsmen participate in international biathlon event

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Staff Sgt. Jamie Haines, an Airman with the 212th Rescue Squadron and Spc. Tadhg Nakada, a Soldier with the 207th Aviation Battalion, competed in South American Military Ski Championships and International Ski biathlon Competition at the Army of Chile Mountain School in Portillo, Chile, last week.

The biathlon event is considered one of the most challenging winter sports, combining cross-country skiing and rifle shooting. This particular competition, which was held within the Andes mountain range at an elevation of more than 9,000 ft., consisted of four separate races, at various distances, that tested the speed, endurance and precision of each biathlete, as individuals and as teams.

Thanks to a weather delay due to a winter storm and eight feet of new snow, the Guardsmen were granted time to acclimate to the elevation prior to the event.

“The high altitude conditions and deep snow make for a challenging and rewarding race venue,” Nakada said. “I’ve gained much confidence in my skiing and shooting ability, in addition to the many friends that I’ve met.”

The U.S. National Guard team consisted of Haines and Nakada, as well as Spc. Jordan McElroy with the Vermont Army National Guard and Chief Warrant Officer 4 Derek Lindberg with the Minnesota Army National Guard. They were led by Tech. Sgt. Travis Voyer with the Vermont National Guard and Lt. Col. Stephen Wilson with the Alaska Army National Guard. The countries that were represented in the competition were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the People’s Republic of China, and the United States.

“The opportunity to compete and build friendships in these international biathlon races is immeasurable; I’ve met athletes from more than a dozen countries,” stated Haines. “The demonstration of sportsmanship, skiing and shooting technique, along with host-nation hospitality, builds great camaraderie and athletic skills.”

The event marks the fourth international competition that both Guardsmen have competed in this season, which includes trips to Canada, Italy and Sweden.

After a grueling and challenging week, the U.S. National Guard team took 4th place overall.

“We have a young and developing team, and they are improving with each competition,” said Wilson. “It’s experiences like these, at competitive venues, that make our team better and stronger.”

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The National Guard biathlon team is actively seeking female competitors to strengthen their competitiveness and encourage female athletes to participate in the challenging sport.

“There is only one female competitor on the National Guard team, and we earn zero points for female events that we are not able to compete in, which are calculated into overall team scores” said Wilson.

The National Guard biathlon program provides an excellent opportunity for biathlon athletes to compete and hone their skills while they represent the National Guard nationally and internationally. The development of biathlon skills—marksmanship and skiing—has played an important role in winter warfare and military defense, and provides excellent training and fitness opportunities to participating Guard members.

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Members of the United States National Guard Biathlon Team gather after finishing third in the patrol race during the South American Military Ski Championships and International Ski Competition at the Army Mountain School in Portillo, Chile, Aug. 8. The biathlon, which was held in the Andes mountain range, consisted of four separate races, at various distances, that tested the speed, endurance and precision of each biathlete, as individuals and as teams. (Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Stephen Wilson)



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Members of the United States National Guard Biathlon Team, including their coach, gather for a photograph during the South American Military Ski Championships and International Ski Competition at the Army Mountain School in Portillo, Chile, Aug. 8. The biathlon, which was held in the Andes mountain range, consisted of four separate races, at various distances, that tested the speed, endurance and precision of each biathlete, as individuals and as teams. (Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Stephen Wilson)



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Alaska National Guardsmen Staff Sgt. Jamie Haines, an Airman with the 212th Rescue Squadron, and Spc. Tadhg Nakada, a Soldier with the 207th Aviation Battalion, and their fellow teammates are awarded third place medals in the 25 kilometer patrol race during the South American Military Ski Championships and International Ski Competition at the Army Mountain School in Portillo, Chile, Aug. 8. The biathlon competition, which was held in the Andes mountain range, consisted of four separate races, at various distances, that tested the speed, endurance and precision of each biathlete, as individuals and as teams. (Photo courtesy of Lt. Col. Stephen Wilson)