



## PRESS RELEASE

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### **New state command sergeant major is off to a running start**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — Command Sgt. Maj. Marc Petersen assumed the state command sergeant major position for the Alaska Army National Guard effective Aug. 1, bringing with him a career that has spanned three decades and multiple continents.

Petersen's story begins around 1973, not more than 10 miles from his new office within the National Guard armory. His father retired from active duty Air Force and moved their family to the last frontier when he was offered a job with the Health, Education and Welfare federal government agency in Anchorage.

"Even as an Air Force brat, to tell you the truth, it never crossed my mind to join the military," laughed Petersen. "All that I knew was that I was interested in aviation and maintenance."

It wasn't until he began talking to his best friend and his best friend's dad, who was a Vietnam veteran and Huey helicopter pilot, that the long journey within the Alaska National Guard took hold.

"The year was 1985 and my best friend and I were having a conversation about how the National Guard was getting Black Hawk helicopters later on that year," explained Petersen. "The wheels started turning and I thought to myself, 'I could stay in Alaska, gain experience, learn about helicopters and aviation, and get paid to do it.' It almost seemed too easy."

The first four Black Hawks arrived by C-5 Galaxy aircraft in the fall of 1985, and Petersen, along with two of his best friends, joined the Alaska Army National Guard in January of 1986.

"Like so many people, I hadn't initially started out thinking that I would make the Guard a career, but within a few years, and thanks to some wonderful mentors along the way, the Guard became so much more than a one-weekend-a-month job," described Petersen.

Ultimately, Petersen stayed the Army Guard course. He progressed quickly with the aviation career field and focused on helping advance junior Soldiers through training and mentoring. Petersen volunteered for disaster relief missions in Guatemala and Haiti, and he was a member of the first Alaska Army National Guard aviation company to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005.

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With his new position, Petersen's focus continues to be the advancing junior enlisted Soldiers, ensuring they know their career options, and that others in the organization care about them and want to see them succeed.

"One item that I particularly want to concentrate on is enlisted career management," Petersen said. "I would like to see tools and processes in place to make sure that periodic counseling sessions are conducted in a timely manner," he continued. "It's important that each Soldier's direct leadership understands the short- and long-term professional and personal goals of their subordinates."

With Petersen's new role keeping him busy, he continues to make time for what's most important to him. His wife, Heather, whom he's been married to for 18 years, and their two children.

"Heather, she's my rock," beamed Petersen. "With my hectic job and through two deployments to Iraq, she's raised our kids and run our home. She does everything — she does it all."

Outside of Petersen's home and work life, Petersen enjoys lacing up his running shoes and hitting the trails, as it allows for an outlet to think through work situations, reflect on the day's events, and to feed his competitive spirit.

"I entered my first half-marathon in 2003, and I was hooked," described Petersen. "Since then, I have completed a few 10-milers, more than 10 half-marathons, 17 marathons, and two Ultra marathons ... I hope to run as long as I can."

A 30-year career with the Guard could be compared to a marathon in itself, but Petersen takes it all one step at a time.

"I just want to make a difference," concluded Petersen. "For this organization, and most importantly, for the Soldiers who keep it running."

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## PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is also generally accessible from .mil computers for individual users.)

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/177100/new-state-command-sergeant-major-off-running-start#.VgRGf03luUk>



Command Sgt. Maj. Marc Petersen represents the Alaska Army National Guard in the 2015 Lincoln marathon held in Lincoln, Nebraska, in May. Petersen has completed more than 10 half-marathons, 17 marathons, and two Ultra marathons; he hopes to run as long as he can. (Courtesy photo by the Nebraska National Guard)