



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Alaska Air National Guard commander settles into new position back home**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** – Col. Karen Mansfield took the reigns as the assistant adjutant general-Air and commander of the Alaska Air National Guard on April 19, bringing with her vast active duty and National Guard experience.

After joining and commissioning into the Air Force in 1989, Mansfield proved that the sky was her limit during a decade-long active duty career. Trained as a weapons controller — and after Fighter Weapons School, a tactics officer — she travelled globally. Deployments included trips to the Middle East in support of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

In the midst of her active-duty time, she was moved to Elmendorf Air Force Base and assigned to the 962nd Airborne Warning and Control System Squadron, where she gained first-hand experience in Pacific Theatre operations and an appreciation for all that Alaska has to offer.

It wasn't until 2000, after an assignment as an Air Force Weapons School instructor at Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada, that Mansfield decided to join the ranks within the Air National Guard family and transitioned into the 176th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard.

Mansfield's latest position begins a new chapter in both her military and family life.

After accepting the offer to fulfill this position, Mansfield, her husband, Scott, and 8-year old son, Lucas, moved from Washington State. They had been living there since 2011, where she held multiple staff and leadership positions with the Washington Air National Guard.

She was excited to accept the new position and bring her family back to the state that she refers to as home.

"The job thus far has been great. By far, my favorite part about this position has been the times I've been able to go out and see the units, visit with the Guardsmen, and witness how hard they're working," explained Mansfield. "Not only do we have our Guardsmen constantly deploying and returning home, but our state operations tempo is extraordinarily high as well."

Since Mansfield took command in April, the AKANG, one of the busiest Air Guard states in the nation, has had several deployments to Afghanistan and Africa. Rescue and flying units in the AKANG have accomplished 45 saves and flown 38 missions this year, according to data released by the Rescue Coordination Center in August.

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“I spent my first few months on the job really getting out and about and getting to know our units, our missions and our Guardsmen, both locally and up north,” Mansfield said. “I’m really starting to feel settled as I get into a battle rhythm within headquarters and also with working alongside our Army brethren.”

Mansfield looks forward to leading the AKANG further into the 21st century and excitedly speaks of change and adaptation as the organization looks to acclimate to the military’s and state’s needs.

“I think we have a great team, a great way forward and a very bright future,” explained Mansfield. “We are operationally engaged, and we have relevant missions across Alaska and globally; we are not letting ourselves get stagnant.”

As to how the Mansfield family is handling the transition back to the frozen north, Scott, a pilot, has kept himself busy with flying all summer while Lucas set out to involve himself with the local hockey community.

“I’ve stayed pretty busy since we made our move back to Alaska ... and with the summer coming to a close and the school year under way, as any parent of a child who’s involved with sports would know, hockey is soon to take over my life outside of work,” laughed Mansfield. “My son, Lucas, loves hockey ... and I love being a hockey mom.”

Mansfield and her family are looking forward to hiking, camping, skiing, exploring and getting their old Ford racing car out to the drag-racing tracks.

“We loved Washington, it’s truly a beautiful state,” Mansfield added. “However, coming back to Alaska felt like coming home — I had forgotten how it felt to be so close to everything that we love, particularly outdoor recreation, and how it felt to be in such a tight-knit and supportive military community ... it’s such an exciting time for me, our Alaska Guardsmen, and my family.”

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#### PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a low resolution photo for viewing on screen.
2. **Flickr link:** N/A
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is also generally accessible from .mil computers for individual users.)



