



MEDIA ADVISORY
FOR December 3, 2016

Alaska National Guard
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Invitation for media travel

Alaska National Guard will take Operation Santa Claus to Akiachak

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — The Alaska National Guard and local community volunteers with Operation Santa Claus will travel to Akiachak to spread Christmas cheer, Dec. 3.

Children living there will soon be celebrating the 60th annual Operation Santa Claus. This event is part of the Alaska National Guard's yearly community relations and support program that provides toys, clothing, books, school supplies, fresh fruit and sundaes to youngsters in communities across the state.

Santa, Mrs. Claus and a team of elves will travel to Akiachak on a C-130 Hercules aircraft from the 144th Airlift Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard.

Operation Santa Claus began in 1956 in response to a request from St. Mary's Mission for toys for their children. Spring floods and a drought had caused a severely negative impact on fishing and hunting that year and the Mission spent all of their money to pay for food to be shipped in. This left no money to buy gifts for the children for Christmas. However, upon the mission's request for assistance, gifts were donated and the Alaska Air National Guard transported the goods to St. Mary's, spreading joy and good tidings to the small, remote community.

Throughout the years, other villages, schools and groups have invited the Alaska National Guard to take Operation Santa Claus to their communities, which has provided Christmas cheer to tens of thousands of Alaska's children and adults.

The first Operation Santa Claus village visit this year was Nov. 15 to Togiak. A much smaller group of elves will shuttle via Black Hawk helicopter from Bethel to Akiak, Tuluksak and Grayling, Dec. 14 and 15.

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Invitation to travel and details for reporters:

What: Operation Santa Claus

When: Saturday, Dec. 3

Where: Akiachak—Day trip

Note: Media interested in going on the flight to Akiachak **must email mvapublicaffairs@alaska.gov** to RSVP **no later than Monday, Nov. 21 at 12pm**. Chosen media outlets will be allotted **one slot** on the flight. TV Broadcast outlets may provide two names in case additional seats become available. The first and last name of anyone who may be traveling **must be** provided with every RSVP. Each outlet may add up to three back up names. After Nov. 21, no additional names may be provided for consideration due to required approval timelines. A small, limited number of seats are available. Prompt RSVPs will be given priority.

Imagery from the Nov. 15 Togiak trip:

PHOTOS <https://www.flickr.com/photos/176wg/sets/72157676602522886/with/30907266022/>
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72157676635037916>

VIDEO A and B-roll <http://dvidshub.net/r/aj7a9l> and <http://dvidshub.net/r/4fxovl>

