



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Alaska Army National Guardsmen train in urban warfare**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — For Alaska Army National Guard Sgt. Christopher Radach, close-quarters combat in an urban environment is a deadly serious business.

The veteran of six combat tours with the Marine Corps in Iraq and Afghanistan knows the challenges of CQC from firsthand experience, most notably in Iraq during the 2005 Operation Steel Curtain campaign that seized towns on the Iraq-Syria border and aimed to destroy al Qaeda in Iraq operating in the area.

The insurgents weren't going to leave the towns quietly, requiring Marines and coalition partners to go block-by-block, house-by-house and room-by-room.

The coalition prevailed, and Radach learned tough lessons he was all too eager to share Aug. 6, 2017, with fellow Soldiers of A Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 297<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, at the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Shoot House.

The shoot house is little more than a barebones plywood building with rooms of different sizes and configurations. The rooms might be locked, requiring a breaching of the door, and each room has targets in unpredictable places.

While in the woods, infantry units enjoy maximum freedom of maneuver due to open terrain. In contrast, operating in a city restricts maneuver to narrow alleyways, streets and buildings.

"Our focus today is urban warfare, so we're working on room clearing and the fundamentals of room clearing while using live-fire ammunition," Radach said. "It's to get our guys more comfortable and competent in room clearing."

Soldiers of A/1-297<sup>th</sup> Infantry trained one fire team at a time. The team of four infantrymen is well suited for clearing smaller rooms and is led by a sergeant.

Because security is key, the teams didn't speak before breaching the rooms, and they were careful not to brush up against the wall or make any other compromising noises.

When the stack of four rolled up on a room, the fourth Soldier moved to the side of the door opposite the rest of his team. He quietly checked to see if the door was locked. If it was, he raised his M26 Modular Accessory Shotgun System to the deadbolt.

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A nod to his team leader signified the No. 4 man was ready to blow the door with a 12-gauge buckshot blast. The team leader nodded back signifying the rest of the team was postured to enter the room.

The No. 4 man blasted the door, turned opposite the door, and donkey kicked it open, allowing the team leader to throw in an M84 stun grenade through the door. The subsequent blast unleashed the team to enter the room with maximum violence of action, shooting any targets and visually clearing the room.

“Left side clear!”

“Right side clear!”

“Check overhead!” the team leader shouted.

“Overhead's clear!”

“Room's clear,” the team leader announced. “Four friendlies coming out.”

Radach said the training was the first time the unit used the newly fielded M26 MASS. The shotgun is lightweight – fully assembled it checks in at 5 pounds and can be reduced into a 2 pound, 11 ounce, under-barrel accessory for the M4 carbine.

Alaska Army National Guard Sgt. Anthony Hartman, a team leader with A/1-297<sup>th</sup> Infantry, said despite the feather lightness of the weapon, it has surprisingly light recoil. He pushed on the stock to demonstrate the action of the heavy anti-recoil spring that makes such a feat possible.

“I think the M26 is a great breach tool,” Hartman said. “It's super lightweight, very compact, and [the barrel and stock] extend and close.”

The company advanced to the live-fire stage at the shoot house after two days of dry- and blank-fire exercises to ensure they were ready for the culminating live-fire event.

“Safety is the No. 1 concern,” Radach said. “This is one of the more technical things the infantry does. If an infantryman can do this live fire safely, then he can do just about anything.”

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1. **Attached pdf** includes story and selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **DVIDS** link includes story and selected full-resolution, free downloadable images. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://dvidshub.net/r/yr8p7g>
3. **DIVDS** Video package link <https://dvidshub.net/r/j6dnnh>
4. **YouTube** Video package link (May not be accessible from all military computers.) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N\\_4aaYC4vyA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_4aaYC4vyA)

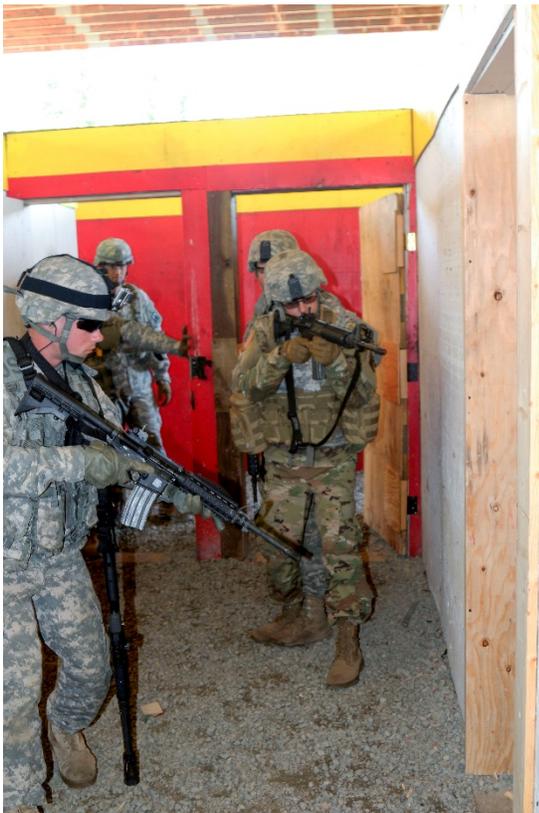
**Photos, next page**



Soldiers with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, practice ballistic breaching with the M26 Modular Accessory Shotgun System at the shoot house on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Aug. 5, 2017. This was the first drill weekend Soldiers from this unit were able to use the M26 MASS to breach doors as part of their train up for exercise Artic Eagle in 2018. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Heidi R. Kroll)



A Soldier with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, turns away after a flash bang grenade was thrown through the doorway during ballistic breach training on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Aug. 5, 2017. These Soldiers will use these skills during exercise Artic Eagle in 2018. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Heidi R. Kroll)



Soldiers with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, practice ballistic breaching with the M26 Modular Accessory Shotgun System at the shoot house on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Aug. 5, 2017. This was the first drill weekend Soldiers from this unit were able to use the M26 MASS to breach doors as part of their train up for exercise Artic Eagle in 2018. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Heidi R. Kroll)