



**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Alaska National Guard**  
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## **Alaska Guardsmen assist with hurricane relief efforts in Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** – Alaska Air and Army National Guard members are assisting Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria.

A C-17 Globemaster III and crew from the 176th Wing's 249th Airlift Squadron returned here Oct. 2 after providing support to ongoing National Guard relief operations.

The transport aircraft departed here Sept. 27 and flew to Ft. Smith, Ark., where personnel and supplies – including a mobile kitchen and shelter materials – were loaded onto the aircraft and delivered to St. Croix in the U.S. Virgin Islands. The team repeated the Ft. Smith-St. Croix run over the next couple of days before flying helicopters from St. Croix to Louisville, Ky., and then returning home.

A Joint Incident Site Communications Capability system and a 10-member communications team are preparing and expected to depart here for Puerto Rico on Wednesday.

The Guardsmen from the Alaska Air Guard's 168th and 176th Wings and Alaska Army National Guard will be operating and maintaining the JISCC system that will increase overall communication connectivity between the territory and mainland.

Five National Guard JISCCs were deployed for Hurricane Harvey response and 12 deployed for Hurricane Irma. Puerto Rico's National Guard had two on the island, which they took down to protect them before Maria struck land. The National Guard requested 14 JISCCs to deploy from other states to Puerto Rico, and some have arrived while others are awaiting airlift support, secondary to food, water and other priority resources.

A joint ministry team comprised of a chaplain and chaplain's assistant have volunteered and are on standby here ready to deploy to Puerto Rico to assist relief operations by providing faith-based spiritual support to military personnel in impacted areas.

Additional Alaska Guardsmen are on duty in the AKNG's Joint Operation Center at the Alaska National Guard Armory here. The JOC maintains continuous communications with the National Guard Bureau in order to anticipate future relief operations requirements.

The National Guard continues to synchronize efforts with the Puerto Rico National Guard and FEMA.

Last month, the Alaska National Guard sent troops and equipment to support Texas during the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey and to Florida after Hurricane Irma.

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