



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Six-year Old Harbor runway project completed**

**Old Harbor, Alaska** – A newly extended runway was opened here August 7, 2018, marking the completion of a six-year Innovative Readiness Training project.

Soldiers from the Alaska Army National Guard's 207th Engineer Utility Detachment joined service members from active and reserve components of the Air Force, Army, Coast Guard, Marine Corps and Navy, said Sgt. 1st Class Jack Carlson, readiness noncommissioned officer for the 20th EUD.

The IRT is a Department of Defense program connecting military units in need of training with underserved units in need of compatible services. "This is a great opportunity. Members of other components have come from all around the country, but for us it's a chance to help one of our own local communities," said Sgt. 1st Class Seth Gordon, brigade engineer operations sergeant for the Alaska Army National Guard's 297th Regional Support Group. "I've been out here for all four years that we've participated, and it's been awesome working with my counterparts from other services.

Training included heavy equipment operation, surveying, and vehicle maintenance and repair, said Gordon.

"Everyone in the Army knows how to do basic equipment maintenance when you have a shop and a ready supply of parts," he said. "It's a completely different game out here. We worked with Marine mechanics to diagnose and repair problems that we've never run across before with this equipment. They've gotten very good at diagnosing problems over the past six years of working out here."

Service members working on the project have become close friends with the local community, and pitched in their spare time to help with other community projects, such as repainting the church. Marine Gunnery Sgt. Brandon Watson, project coordinator for IRT Old Harbor, became the fire chief every summer for the six years of the project. "I'm a firefighter in my civilian career, and I love it, so I guess it was natural for me to play that role for the community here," Watson said.

The runway extension is just one component of a multi-stage development plan for Old Harbor, said Rick Berns, Mayor of Old Harbor. "We're trying to build more infrastructure. We realize that a lot of people are leaving our community because of a lack of opportunity, and it's our goal to provide opportunities so our young people can stay here and work."

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**Photos, next page**

## PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **Flickr link** includes an event album with the complete selection of full-resolution, free downloadable images. (May not be accessible from all military computers.)

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/sets/72157699897548564/with/44013032412/s>.

3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/290296/six-year-old-harbor-runway-project-completed>



A ribbon cutting ceremony for the completion of the Innovative Readiness Training Old Harbor, Alaska, runway extension project was held August 7, 2018. Alaska Army National Guardsmen participated in the project for four of its six years. The Marine Corps was the lead service of the project, which incorporated service members from across all branches of the military. The Innovative Readiness Training program builds mutually beneficial civil-military partnerships between U.S. communities and the Department of Defense. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Dayton G. Will)



Maj. Gen. Laurie Hummel, the adjutant general of Alaska, boards a Marine Corps C-130J aircraft at Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak, Alaska, to fly to the nearby village of Old Harbor for the opening ceremony of a newly extended runway Aug. 7, 2018. The Old Harbor runway extension project was part of the Department of Defense's Innovative Readiness Training initiative, which builds mutually beneficial civil-military partnerships between U.S. communities and the Department of Defense. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Dayton G. Will)



Sgt. 1st Class Seth Gordon, brigade engineer operations sergeant for 297th Regional Support Group, Alaska Army National Guard, shakes hands with Marines he worked alongside during the Innovative Readiness Training Old Harbor runway extension project Aug. 7, 2018. Gordon participated in the project for all four years that the Alaska National Guard was involved. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Dayton G. Will)