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Alaska National Guard TAG Match tests marksmanship mettle

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Dressed in an olive drab flight suit, Alaska Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Jennifer Fitzpatrick, a C-17 Globemaster III loadmaster with 144th Airlift Squadron, stood out like an eagle among lions.

Her garb starkly contrasted with the MultiCam and tiger-stripe camouflage patterns of the Army and Air Guardsmen who competed in adjacent lanes during 2019's The Adjutant General Match marksmanship competition at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

The TAG Match is an annual event hosted by the Alaska National Guard the last week of May stretching into the June drill weekend that tests the participants' marksmanship skills under timed conditions.

Normally charged with properly loading, securing and escorting cargo and passengers around the globe, Fitzpatrick said she relishes the opportunity to take time out from her flying schedule to compete at the range. During the pistol courses of fire, her usually wide world of ocean-jumping travel shrank to the distance between the front sight post of her M9 and the silhouette target yards away.

When range officials blew a bullhorn, Fitzpatrick had mere seconds to unholster her pistol, acquire the target, and engage with accurate fire before a second horn stopped the course of fire.

Another competitor, Alaska Army National Guard Sgt. Kurt Grabulis, 1st Battalion, 207 Aviation Regiment, said this is the second year he has participated in TAG Match.

"It's an opportunity to test my skills and see if I can run with the best of the shooters out here and show them what I got," he said.

Grabulis said his passion for marksmanship began when his father routinely took him to a Marine Corps range in his native Virginia, where the pair would engage targets at distances of up to 1,000 yards with a 30-06 rifle.

Upon joining the Army, Grabulis' experience at long-range marksmanship made shooting 300-meter targets at the standard rifle-qualification range a snap. He easily snatched up top basic rifle marksmanship honors for his company in his Basic Military Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

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TAG Match tested Grabulis' skills at JBER's Known-Distance Range where he engaged targets at ranges up to 500 meters under similarly timed circumstances as the pistol course of fire. Though the rifle event played to the Soldier's skills, the difficulty of the competition stems from the diversity of events ranging from close-range pistol firing to long-range and close-quarters rifle engagements.

A team representing 210th and 212th Rescue Squadrons managed to demonstrate mastery of TAG Match's differing demands, netting Overall team Match Champion honors. The team included Master Sgt. Corbett Ercolani, Tech. Sgt. Shawn Carter, Tech. Sgt. Arnold Perea and Senior Airman Romero.

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PHOTOS

1. Flickr link <https://www.flickr.com/photos/176wg/albums/72157708970118253>
2. DVIDS link <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/326073/alaska-national-guard-tag-match-tests-marks-manship-mettle>



Alaska Air National Guard Tech. Sgt. Jennifer Fitzpatrick, a loadmaster with 144th Airlift Squadron, reloads following a course of fire June 1, 2019, during the 2019 Alaska National Guard Adjutant General Match at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. TAG Match is a marksmanship competition comprising several timed pistol and rifle events. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)



Alaska Air National Guard Master Sgt. Neal Waltman, 168th Maintenance Operations Flight, delivers a range safety brief before a course of fire June 1, 2019, during the 2019 Alaska National Guard TAG Match at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. TAG Match is a marksmanship competition comprising several timed pistol and rifle events. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)



Alaska Army National Guard Sgt. Kurt Grabulis, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, reloads after a course of fire June 1, 2019, during the 2019 Alaska National Guard Adjutant General Match at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. TAG Match is a marksmanship competition comprising several timed pistol and rifle events. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Beard/Released)