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By Lt. Col. Candis Olmstead

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Alaska National Guard participates in military peacekeeping exercise in Mongolia

1,400 people from 38 nations join together for Exercise Khaan Quest 2019

FIVE HILLS TRAINING AREA, Mongolia — The Alaska National Guard participated in a multinational peace support operations exercise June 14-28, along with nearly 1,400 service members and civilians from 38 countries.

Khaan Quest is an annual exercise co-sponsored by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and hosted by the Mongolian Armed Forces. KQ19 is the latest in a continuing series of exercises designed to promote regional peace and security. This year's exercise marked the 17th anniversary of this training event and the 16th year of participation for the Alaska National Guard.

"The Alaska National Guard plays a key role in Khaan Quest due to our commitment to Mongolia and our partnership and relationship with them through the State Partnership Program," said Alaska Army National Guard Maj. Nathan Pooler, International Partnership Specialist and SPP coordinator for the AKNG.

According to National Guard Bureau's website, the State Partnership Program links a state's National Guard with the armed forces of a partner country in a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship. They conduct military-to-military engagements in support of defense security goals, and also leverage relationships and capabilities to facilitate engagements that span military, government, economic and social spheres.

"The State Partnership Program is an innovative and effective way for the U.S. to engage with our partner countries, and it helps us to strengthen alliances and partnerships world-wide," said Pooler. "It helps us to build a common understanding with the other countries, allows us to experience some humility when we see how capable, professional and experienced they are, and we are able to better realize our role and perhaps have a broader understanding of the world," he said.

Conducted at Five Hills Training Area, about 25 miles west of Ulaanbaatar, KQ19 consisted of a United Nations peacekeeping operations command post exercise; staff, company and field training events, and a critical enabler capability enhancement event, all of which focused on U.N. and international peacekeeping and stability operations. Mongolian, U.S., and multinational forces trained to enhance interoperability and mission effectiveness in common tactics, techniques, and procedures in accordance with U.N. doctrine for peacekeeping operations.

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U.S. participation in U.N. peacekeeping generally focuses on providing U.S. troops as trainers and advisers for countries who deploy to perform peacekeeping operations.

About 60 Army Guard personnel and a few Air Guard members—all from Alaska—took part in most of the KQ19 activities, including a field training event, command post exercise, critical enabler capability, and riverine training. Sixteen Alaskans were instructors at six of the 12 FTE lanes, including two medical lanes.

Lanes were conducted in separate areas, each set up to teach and practice a specific scenario-driven objective. For example, one of the medical lanes—casualty evacuation—was designed for participants to group into teams of four to learn and run-through the proper way to carry a patient on an improvised litter. After identifying wounds and applying a tourniquet, Soldiers had to low-crawl drag a 90-pound litter and transition to a high carry during one of the scenarios.

In the other medical lane, Alaskans taught the top three preventable causes of death in a battlefield scenario through the MARCH algorithm of care, said Staff Sgt. Stephen Behrens, Alaska Army National Guard Medical Detachment.

“Massive hemorrhage, airway, respiration, circulation, head and hypothermia,” said Behrens. “We taught them how to quickly identify major injuries and treat them in the correct order.”

About half of the AKNG Soldiers at the FTE site were in a combined platoon with Republic of Fiji Military Forces. They completed all lanes as a team, had excellent camaraderie, worked well together, and accomplished challenging scenarios despite a language barrier, said Alaska Army National Guard Sgt. Maj. Rodger Morrison, 38th Troop Command.

“Lane training includes instructors, observers and participants, allowing assessment for tactical and technical tasks; to test, standardize, and train tactics, techniques, and procedures while efficiently controlling training objectives,” said Morrison.

“Our folks here are teaching, learning, integrating with personnel from other countries and having a great time doing it,” said Morrison.

Another instructor, Alaska Army National Guard Sgt. Maj. Maureen Meehan, instructed the Women, Peace and Security lane with an instructor from the Mongolian Armed Forces, a subject matter expert instructor from the U.S. Department of State’s Global Peace Operations Initiative, and two team members from the AKNG. The six classes and full day of instruction taught about protection of civilians, rules of engagement, children affected in armed conflict, conflict-related sexual violence, and sexual exploitation and abuse.

“The material is received very well,” said Meehan. “What we are teaching isn’t a women’s rights issue, it’s a combat multiplier—if you think of it tactically, understanding the reality on the ground so you can better accomplish your mission, peacekeepers need to be mentally prepared and know how to respond to these issues when they are deployed.

“Ultimately, they are peacekeeping to provide safety and security to citizens in the area, and that includes women and children who are vulnerable to exploitation,” she continued.

Other areas of instruction taught by Alaskan Soldiers include distribution and supply points, cordon search and land navigation.

“Working with the Fijians in our platoon has really been a great experience,” said Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sgt. James Lindsey, from 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry. “It’s neat to be combined with Soldiers from another country and the embrace the challenges together.”

About 20 of the Alaskan Soldiers and three Airmen took part in a command post exercise during their stay at Five Hills Training Area. They had several days of academic classes on the military decision making process and were then assigned to brigade-, battalion- and company-level positions to play out a challenging scenario and respond to exercise injects. They were notionally deployed to a nation in conflict, after 30 years of civil war, with hundreds of thousands of displaced individuals living in camps under the care of U.N agencies and the protection of U.N Peacekeepers.

“This is the largest military exercise for our partner and there are so many good reasons for us to continue to be a part of it and deepen our relationship with Mongolia,” said Pooler. “We enable Mongolia to export peace and security, as they provide nearly a thousand peacekeepers every year to South Sudan and other unstable countries,” he said.

According to Pooler, who was the chief, Office of Defense Cooperation for two years prior to his current SPP role, Khaan Quest provides military participants the opportunity to engage, learn, partner and collaborate with each other during the exercise.

“Our ongoing participation in Khaan Quest not only strengthens our relationship with Mongolia, but it also enables us to strengthen our partnerships with other countries, and gives us all the opportunity to practice working together and continuing to learn from each other,” said Pooler.

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PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **Link to KQ19 photos:** <https://www.dvidshub.net/search/?q=khaan+quest+2019&view=grid>
3. **A link to additional photos will be available on DVIDS under “Alaska National Guard” next week.** <https://www.dvidshub.net/search?q=alaska+national+guard&view=grid>

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U.S. Army Sgt. 1st Class Daniel Brown, right, and Fiji Army Pvt. Vilimoni Drotini cut a cake to celebrate the 244th birthday of the U.S. Army during Khaan Quest 2019 at Five Hills Training Area, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, June 14, 2019. Khaan Quest is a multinational exercise co-sponsored by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and hosted annually by the Mongolian Armed Forces. Brown, a native of Kokiak, Alaska, is a platoon sergeant with the 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment. Drotini, a native of Namosi, Republic of Fiji, is a rifleman with 3rd Fighting Infantry Regiment. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Kindo Go)



Members of the Alaska Air National Guard receive instruction from Republic of India Armed Forces Lt. Col. Moneet Singh Shenhorn during a command post exercise at Five Hills Training Area near Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, June 24, 2019. Khaan Quest is a multinational exercise co-sponsored by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and hosted annually by the Mongolian Armed Forces. Khaan Quest is the latest in a continuing series of exercises designed to promote regional peace and security. The Alaska National Guard has participated in Khaan Quest exercises for 16 years. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Candis Olmstead)



Republic of Fiji Military Forces Pvt. Savenaca Waqatavu and Pvt. Akeai Vakaliwaliwa pick up an improvised litter during a medical lane activity during Exercise Khaan Quest 2019 at Five Hills Training Area near Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, June 20, 2019. Khaan Quest is a multinational exercise co-sponsored by U.S. Indo-Pacific Command and hosted annually by the Mongolian Armed Forces. Khaan Quest is the latest in a continuing series of exercises designed to promote regional peace and security. Members of the Alaska Army National Guard instructed two medical lanes at KQ19, and their platoon was partnered with the Fijians for the duration of the exercise. The Alaska National Guard has participated in KQ for 16 years. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Lt. Col. Candis Olmstead)