

**Brig. Gen. Torrence Saxe**

*Commissioner & Adjutant General*

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**Alaska National Guard**

*Department of Military  
and Veterans Affairs*

Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

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*Joint Force Headquarters*

**National Guard units from six states join Alaska and local agencies in exercise  
ORCA 2019 practices response to chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear events**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — The Alaska National Guard's 103rd Civil Support Team participated in Exercise ORCA 2019 at various training locations in the Matanuska-Susitna Valley, in partnership with multiple local emergency responders and other Guard CST units from July 15-17.

"The overall goal of the ORCA exercise is to strengthen the relationships between the local first responders, Civil Support Teams from other states, and the 103rd CST in a training environment in order to better prepare us in the unfortunate event of a real-world natural or man-made disaster," said Lt. Col. Mortrud, commander of the 103rd CST.

This year's ORCA training events were conducted at the Alaska State Fairgrounds, Palmer Fire and Rescue Training Center, Fire Station 6-2 in Wasilla, and the Alaska Railroad rail crossing at Pittman Road.

"The scenarios simulated in the exercise are numerous CBRN laboratory set ups, along with processing of intelligence to determine intended uses and locations for possible attacks," said Mortrud. "They help ensure the response community not only trusts each other, but also understand the capabilities each entity will bring to a real-world event."

CSTs were established to deploy rapidly to assist a local incident commander in determining the nature and extent of a CBRN attack or incident; provide expert technical advice on CBRN response operations; and help identify and support the arrival of follow-on state and federal military response assets.

More than 200 military and civilian personnel were involved in ORCA 2019, including about 120 National Guardsmen from the seven states involved. National Guard CST units from Mississippi, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Hawaii and Washington joined Alaska's CST, and the Alaska National Guard aviation battalion and Joint Operations Center participated as well.

Participating local agencies included Mat-Su Emergency Management, Mat-Su Emergency Medical Services and Hazardous Materials, Anchorage Police Department, Wasilla Police Department, Alaska State Troopers, Houston Fire Department, Palmer Fire Department, Alaska Railroad, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, and the Alaska State Fairgrounds. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management also supported the exercise.

ORCA is a biannual exercise that began in 2013.

"I believe these exercises are not only beneficial, but crucial to the success of the Alaska response community," said Mortrud. "This exercise affords us the opportunity to train with the different levels of local responders and other state CSTs, building critical relationships that will enhance our response to local events."

## 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/albums/72157709713511856>
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/5588908/multiple-national-guards-units-participate-orca-2019-alaska>



Mississippi Army National Guard Maj. Richmond Lachney and Staff Sgt. Vernon Wasson, 47th Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team, unload equipment from an Alaska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter during ORCA 2019 in Alaska, July 16. ORCA is a chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear threats response exercise designed for participants to provide support in the aftermath of hazardous materials incidents. ORCA tests interoperability between agencies, increases opportunities for working relationships and practices requests for assistance methods. 120 National Guardsmen from CST units in Alaska, Mississippi, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Hawaii and Washington are in Alaska to participate in Exercise ORCA 2019. 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation aircrews from the Alaska unit transported CST members to several exercise locations in support of event scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pvt. Grace Nechanicky/Released)



Members of the Mississippi National Guard's 47th Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team load equipment onto an Alaska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter during ORCA 2019 in Alaska, July 16. ORCA is a chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear threats response exercise designed for participants to provide support in the aftermath of hazardous materials incidents. ORCA tests interoperability between agencies, increases opportunities for working relationships and practices requests for assistance methods. 120 National Guardsmen from CST units in Alaska, Mississippi, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Hawaii and Washington are in Alaska to participate in Exercise ORCA 2019. 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation aircrews from the Alaska unit transported CST members to several exercise locations in support of event scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pvt. Grace Nechanicky/Released)



Members of the Mississippi National Guard's 47th Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team fly from one exercise location to another in an Alaska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter during ORCA 2019 in Alaska, July 16. ORCA is a chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear threats response exercise designed for participants to provide support in the aftermath of hazardous materials incidents. ORCA tests interoperability between agencies, increases opportunities for working relationships and practices requests for assistance methods. 120 National Guardsmen from CST units in Alaska, Mississippi, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Hawaii and Washington are in Alaska to participate in Exercise ORCA 2019. 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation aircrews from the Alaska unit transported CST members to several exercise locations in support of event scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pvt. Grace Nechanicky/Released)



Mississippi Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Vernon Wasson and Sgt. Jesse Jenkins, 47th Weapons of Mass Destruction-Civil Support Team, unload equipment from an Alaska Army National Guard CH-47 Chinook helicopter during ORCA 2019 in Alaska, July 16. ORCA is a chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear threats response exercise designed for participants to provide support in the aftermath of hazardous materials incidents. ORCA tests interoperability between agencies, increases opportunities for working relationships and practices requests for assistance methods. 120 National Guardsmen from CST units in Alaska, Mississippi, Montana, Utah, Nevada, Hawaii and Washington are in Alaska to participate in Exercise ORCA 2019. 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation aircrews from the Alaska unit transported CST members to several exercise locations in support of event scenarios. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pvt. Grace Nechanicky/Released)