



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

019-084

**September 6, 2019**

By 2nd Lt. Balinda O'Neal Dresel

## **Air Guard combat rescue officer promotes to colonel**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — Brig. Gen. Torrence Saxe, the Alaska National Guard adjutant general, presided over the promotion of Col. Matthew Komatsu, incoming director of plans and strategy on the Joint Staff, during a ceremony here Sept. 4.

The ceremony marked the first time an Alaska Air National Guard combat rescue officer donned the silver eagle insignia.

Saxe described the symbolism and importance of the rank of colonel by depicting the position as flying high at 10,000 feet and having talons ready to use, if needed. The insignia also parallels experience – as a colonel must have 22 years of service and a minimum of three years as a lieutenant colonel for the position.

Komatsu was commissioned upon graduation from the United States Air Force Academy in 1999 and assigned to the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, stationed at Altus Air Force Base, Okla., and then Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. He deployed in support of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, where he developed force protection intelligence networks outside the wire.

The Air Force established the CRO career field in 2000. Komatsu saw an opportunity for a career move as the rigors of the profession corresponded with his lifestyle, and the idea of saving lives appealed to him. He began the two-year long CRO training pipeline in 2005.

As a new CRO, Komatsu was assigned to Davis-Monthan AFB, Ariz., and began a career of training, equipping and developing necessary survival skills in rescue personnel. Komatsu transferred to the Alaska Air National Guard's 212th Rescue Squadron as the director of operations in 2011 and deployed twice as an expeditionary rescue commander. He was commander of the 212th RQS from 2015-2018 and has most recently served as the executive officer to the adjutant general.

Saxe shared that the rescue community's motto, "That Others May Live," is a code Komatsu lives by.

Saxe described Komatsu as a warrior poet, as he has a methodical philosophy and lives those values day in and day out. He also touched on the many schools Komatsu has completed, from Air Force Combat Dive and Army Airborne Parachutist Course to Underwater Egress and Survival Evasion Resistance and Escape training.

Despite the years of hard work he personally invested in his career, Komatsu said that his achievements are the results of those who surrounded him.

"I stand on the shoulders of those who have invested in me. It's a line that extends all the way back to 1995," said Komatsu. "I am grateful for my mentors – all of whom have done both the easy and the hard work of shaping me."

Komatsu left final appreciation to his wife, Jennifer Erickson, who he said has done more of the hard work than all the rest of his mentors combined.

“I hope every Airman in the room experiences the good fortune I have and that your lives and careers will be made stronger by mentors willing to make the long and short-term investments necessary for you to reach your potential,” said Komatsu. “And that you will have the courage to listen.”

###

## PHOTOS

1. **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/72157710725571393>

2. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/338761/air-guard-combat-rescue-officer-promotes-colonel>



Alaska Air National Guard Lt. Col. Matthew Komatsu, the incoming director of plans and strategy on the Alaska National Guard Joint Staff, promotes to colonel during a Sept. 4, 2019 promotion ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Presiding over the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Torrence Saxe, adjutant general of Alaska and commissioner of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. Saxe pinned on one of Komatsu's new ranks, while Jennifer Erikson, Komatsu's wife, pinned the other. Komatsu's son, Finnegan, pinned the new rank on his beret. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Grace Nechanicky/Released)



Alaska Air National Guard Col. Matthew Komatsu's wife, Jennifer Erickson, pins epaulets on her husband during a Sept. 4, 2019 promotion ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Komatsu is the incoming director of plans and strategy on the Alaska National Guard Joint Staff. Presiding over the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Torrence Saxe, adjutant general of Alaska and commissioner for the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Grace Nechanicky/Released)



Col. Matthew Komatsu, incoming director of plans and strategy on the Alaska National Guard Joint Staff, helps his son, Finnegan, pin his new rank on his beret during a Sept. 4, 2019 promotion ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Presiding over the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Torrence Saxe, adjutant general of Alaska and commissioner for the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Grace Nechanicky/Released)



Col. Matthew Komatsu, incoming director of plans and strategy on the Alaska National Guard Joint Staff, speaks to the crowd while holding his daughter, Margaret, during a Sept. 4, 2019 promotion ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Presiding over the ceremony was Brig. Gen. Torrence Saxe, adjutant general of Alaska and commissioner for the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Pfc. Grace Nechanicky/Released)