

Maj. 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

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

020-020

March 10, 2020

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Joint Force Headquarters

Alaska National Guard's exercise Arctic Eagle 2020 wraps up

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska —Exercise Arctic Eagle 2020, a two-week biennial exercise organized by the Alaska National Guard, came to an end Mar. 7. The exercise included about 1,250 participants from multiple local and federal civilian agencies as well as foreign and domestic military components, including approximately 900 Air and Army Guardsmen from 15 states, and it took place at multiple venues at locations around the state of Alaska starting Feb. 20.

The locations included Fort Wainwright, Fairbanks, Deadhorse, Bethel, Wasilla and Camp Seadragon.

"Alaska is one fifth the size of the U.S., it's the only arctic state, and most of the state is off of the road system," said Maj. Gen. Torrence Saxe, the adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, "So it's important to ensure our training opportunities take place at a wide variety of locations that offer unique weather and terrain-related challenges."

The overall mission of Arctic Eagle is to train and test equipment in arctic environments while demonstrating interoperability with other agencies in a hypothetical emergency response scenario. National Guard states, in partnership with other nations, active duty forces, local, state and federal agencies, are prepared to support the global challenges of Arctic operations and security.

Fort Wainwright hosted two of the venues. Here, a chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear enterprise search and extraction took place progressing through four phases: search and extraction, dry decontamination, medical triage and casualty transportation to local hospitals. Civilian and military participants from Alaska, Colorado, Indiana, Maryland, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin were involved in the training, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency and their K9 unit, and the United States Marine Corps Chemical Biological Incident Response Force.

At the Yukon Training Area on Fort Wainwright, a separate cold-weather exercise took place involving the Alaska National Guard's 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment in which various survival, arctic light infantry and weapons training was conducted to test and validate field skills and gear in extreme cold weather conditions. This portion was supported by New Hampshire National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters.

In Fairbanks, multiple civil support teams from Alaska, Arizona, Connecticut, New Hampshire and Washington participated in a CBRN response enterprise civil support team exercise at the North Star Fire Department, the Tanana Valley State Fair Grounds and the University of Alaska Fairbanks campus. The Federal Bureau of Investigation and other federal and local agencies participated in the exercise as well.

At Harrison Bay and Deadhorse, cargo and equipment were transported by CC-138 Twin Otter planes. The New York National Guard also conducted day and night landings in LC-130 Skibirds, which is a ski-equipped variant of the C-130 Hercules.

In Bethel, multiple National Guard units conducted a domestic operations mission to support the people of Bethel by running radiological tests and critical site surveys, practicing cold weather survival skills, and testing long-range communications with the Alaska State Defense Force Headquarters at Alcantra Armory in Wasilla.

“We have ASDF personnel out in most of the villages that we went to,” said Amy Schwalber, AE20 lead exercise planner, “So we have members who actually live and work in that area, and they were able to engage the leadership within the community to turn it into a positive outreach.”

The ASDF at Alcantra also conducted domain awareness and critical site security with the 5th Battalion, 19th Special Operations Group (Airborne) and U.S. Border Patrol, tactical personnel who were working out of the Bethel armory.

At Camp Seadragon near Deadhorse, personnel and aircraft of the Alaska National Guard established a landing zone for the Naval Arctic Research Laboratory to conduct research off the north coast of Alaska. The Guardsmen conducted arctic sustainment package airdrops from an HC-130 Combat King II and a C-17 Globemaster III which also provided an addition of rescue resupply airdrops.

AE20 provides training opportunities for National Guard forces, in collaboration with state and federal partners, to exercise and develop a level of interagency interoperability to ensure an efficient response to a catastrophic event, alleviating impacts to the citizens of Alaska and setting conditions for recovery operations.

“By training other states that aren’t Alaska, it allows them to get experience in the extreme cold,” said Schwalber, “So should we need assistance here in Alaska, we have individuals who are trained and equipped for the conditions.”

The Alaska National Guard is prepared and trained for domestic operations, crisis response, homeland security, and homeland defense.

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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/72157713253264612>
3. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/ArcticEagle2020>

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A Federal Emergency Management Agency search and rescue K9 team conducts a search and extraction training event in which they are tasked with finding and assisting hypothetical casualties in a scenario in which a helicopter crashed into a hotel during exercise Arctic Eagle 2020 on Fort Wainwright, Alaska, Feb. 24. This event is designed to train participating agencies to conduct sustained operations in extreme cold-weather conditions. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Spc. Grace Nechanicky)



Members of the 212th Rescue Squadron (212th RS), pararescuemen (PJs), combat rescue officers (CROs) and Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) specialists jump out of a HC-130J Combat King II assigned to the 211th Rescue Squadron in response to a simulated alert rescue call at Deadhorse, Alaska, in support of exercise Arctic Eagle 2020, Feb. 25. The Alaska National Guard is hosting exercise Arctic Eagle, a joint-training exercise, Feb. 20 – March 6, 2020 throughout Alaska, including Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Eielson Air Force Base, Fort Wainwright, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and as far north as Teshekpuk Lake. As a homeland security and emergency response exercise, AE20 is designed to increase the National Guard's ability and effectiveness to operate in the extreme cold-weather conditions found in Arctic environments. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Xavier Navarro)



Captain Jason Grupp assists in building a polar chief arctic weather shelter as part of the ski way construction team during National Guard exercise Arctic Eagle 2020. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by Technical Sergeant Jamie Spaulding/released)



Members of 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment based in Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, and part of the Alaska National Guard, conduct unit level marksmanship tasks in the Yukon Training Area Feb. 28, on Eielson Air Force Base as part of exercise Arctic Eagle 2020. (US Army National Guard photo by Spc. Kyle Odum, 139th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment)