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Commissioner & Adjutant General

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Frag Out!

Alaska Air Guard PJs throw grenades with Geronimo Soldiers

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska – As April came to a close amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. military in Alaska continued to make strides toward maintaining mission readiness.

On April 29, in a joint effort with U.S. Army Alaska's 3rd Battalion, 509th Infantry Regiment, 14 pararescuemen (PJs) from the Alaska Air National Guard's 212th Rescue Squadron used the Small Arms Complex's grenade range on JBER to prepare for their upcoming deployment.

"Working in a COVID environment can be challenging," said Alaska Air National Guard Lt. Col. Matthew Kirby, commander of the 212th RQS. "You fight the war you have, not the one you want. We're tasked with outmaneuvering this invisible enemy."

With a signature swagger and jovial attitude common among Air Force Special Warfare units, the PJs lined the concrete barrier of the grenade range, comically jeering at each other to "throw it farther" and "be more accurate."

While on the range, the PJs worked through a progressive table that included employing the M69 training grenade, followed by familiarization with the AN-M14 TH3 incendiary hand grenade, and concluding with engaging targets with the M67 fragmentation grenade.

In real-world scenarios, when an injured servicemember needs saving from a hostile force or from isolation in an otherwise unreachable area, PJs rescue and medically treat downed air crew and other isolated military personnel all over the battlefield. They take part in every aspect of the mission and are skilled parachutists, scuba divers and rock climbers, and they are even arctic-trained in order to access any environment to save a life when they're called to do so.

"We deploy hand grenades in combat, so to deploy them in a training event gives our guys a level of comfort that is very significant," Kirby said. "Grenades are one of the best ways to break contact from the enemy, and our job in combat rescue is to do just that. Our primary function is to save life, not take it."

Regular Army paratroopers of 3-509th Infantry established command and control over the range to assist the 212th RQS with safety measures, issuing the grenades, and demonstrating correct employment of the weapons.

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“The coordination was flawless between the AKANG and our brothers in the Army,” Kirby said. “They supported our efforts with their Soldiers in operations effortlessly.”

The Alaska Air National Guard continues its mission in both mitigating the harm done by COVID-19 and remaining resilient and ready for its mission abroad.

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PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72157713741264467>
3. <https://www.dvidshub.net/news/368959/frag-out-alaska-air-guard-pjs-throw-grenades-with-geronimo-soldiers>



Alaska Air National Guardsmen assigned to the 212th Rescue Squadron place AN-M14 TH3 incendiary hand grenades atop steel silhouettes at the Small Arms Complex on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Apr. 29, 2020. These grenades use TH3, a form of thermite, which burns at very hot temperatures for 40 seconds, burning through half-inch steel plate and fusing metallic parts. It produces its own oxygen and can even burn underwater. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)



Alaska Air National Guardsmen assigned to the 212th Rescue Squadron maneuver after placing AN-M14 TH3 incendiary hand grenades at the Small Arms Complex on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Apr. 29, 2020. This type of grenade is exclusively used to destroy equipment. It can damage, immobilize or destroy vehicles, weapons systems, shelters or munitions. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)



An Alaska Air National Guard pararescueman assigned to the 212th Rescue Squadron blows a paper silhouette off a steel target using an M67 fragmentation grenade at the Small Arms Complex on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Apr. 29, 2020. In cooperation with U.S. Army Alaska Soldiers, 14 PJs used the grenade range to prepare for an upcoming deployment. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)



An Alaska Air National Guard pararescueman assigned to the 212th Rescue Squadron hits his mark using an M67 fragmentation grenade and sends a rubber tire flying through the air at the Small Arms Complex on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Apr. 29, 2020. 14 AKANG PJs used the grenade range run U.S. Army paratroopers (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)