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By David Bedard

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## **176th Wing hosts senatorial delegation**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** — Alaska Air National Guard Airmen of 176th Wing hosted a staff delegation representing U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski Sept. 8 at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

The delegation visit provided congressional staff with an overview of U.S. military entities in Alaska, focusing on their impacts and relevance to the Pacific theater.

Wing leadership updated the delegation on current projects, future exercises and readiness, with an emphasis on forces assigned in Alaska and evolving Indo-Pacific Command and Arctic issues.

Alaska Air National Guard Col. Anthony Stratton, 176th Wing commander, informed the delegation the unit is the largest wing in the state and the sixth largest in the National Guard, comprising 17 squadrons, including six squadrons in the 176th Operations Group.

The operations group executes air defense via the Region Air Operations Center embedded with Alaskan NORAD Region, strategic airlift via C-17A Globemaster III cargo aircraft, and combat search and rescue via the rescue triad: HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters, fixed-wing HC-130J Combat King II aircraft and Guardian Angel rescue personnel.

The Combat King II, the Air Force's only dedicated fixed-wing personnel recovery platform, replaced older 211th Rescue Squadron HC-130N aircraft in 2017.

Stratton said the wing is looking forward to fielding the in-development HH-60W Combat Rescue Helicopter around 2026, greatly improving operational readiness over the aging HH-60G fleet.

"We typically have the highest operational tempo utilization rate of that weapon system in the entire Air Force enterprise for HH-60s," he said.

Stratton said Alaska's challenge of distance makes it a state dependent on aviation as a lifeline to remote towns and villages.

"If you took a map of Alaska and laid it over the Continental United States, there would be no major highways connecting towns west of the Mississippi," he said.

Stratton said combat support units are also busy. Airmen of 176th Maintenance Group recently deployed as an integral part of the 211th RQS deployment to Iraq and the 210th Rescue Squadron's

mission in Africa. Security forces and engineer Airmen have deployed to the Near East and Africa in support of multiple contingency operations.

Airmen of 176th Medical Group have carried out Innovative Readiness Training treating more than 7,500 real-world patients in Kotzebue, Alaska; Puerto Rico; and the three-state region of Missouri, Kentucky and Kansas. In response to COVID-19, 176th MDG supported the Joint Task Force Alaska Medical Cell, contact tracers supporting the State of Alaska, and medical planning capabilities to Alaskan Command.

Alaska Air National Guard Lt. Col. John Romspert, 212th Rescue Squadron director of operations, presented the wing's Arctic Sustainment Package staged in warm storage on Elmendorf Airfield.

The ASP is a rapidly deployable air-droppable package that can provide shelter, heat, transportation, fuel and food for 28 people for up to six and a half days in extreme Arctic conditions. Men and women from the 212th RQS and the 176th Operations Support Squadron keep the ASP on alert year-round for potential remote or Arctic mass-casualty rescue operations.

Romspert said preparation of the ASP amounts to six months of cumulative man hours. Stratton said the ASP is designed to support complex rescue operations of a large military aircraft like an Air Force E-3 Sentry Airborne Warning And Control System or a Navy P8 Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft.

Lt. Col. Joshua Armstrong, 211th Rescue Squadron commander, led the delegation through a tour of an HC-130J, and he highlighted the new airframe will continue to undergo systems upgrades, which will continue to enhance its combat capabilities.

Stratton highlighted how JBER C-17s are part of the Total Force Integration Active Association construct, which means the Air National Guard owns the aircraft, while the Active Duty's 3rd Wing provides additional crew and maintainers. The colonel said this arrangement allows the 144th Airlift Squadron to be the busiest Globemaster unit in the National Guard.

"Everyone is involved — it's not Active versus Guard," he said. "It becomes a team sport."

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#### **PHOTOS**

**Story link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.) <https://www.176wg.ang.af.mil/Media/Article-Display/Article/2343873/176th-wing-hosts-senatorial-delegation/>

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Alaska Air National Guard Maj. Ben Leonard, an HH-60G Pave Hawk pilot with 210th Rescue Squadron, briefs a staff delegation representing U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski about the helicopter's capabilities Sept. 8, 2020, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The delegation visit provides Congressional staff with an overview of U.S. military entities in Alaska, focusing on their impacts and relevance to the Pacific theater. Wing leadership updated the delegation on current projects, future exercises, and readiness, with an emphasis on forces assigned in Alaska and evolving PACOM and Arctic issues. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)



Alaska Air National Guard Lt. Col. Joshua Armstrong, 211th Rescue Squadron commander, greets Air Force Reserve Maj. Alea Nadeem, legislative fellow, during a Sept. 8, 2020, staff delegation visit representing U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The delegation visit provides Congressional staff with an overview of U.S. military entities in Alaska, focusing on their impacts and relevance to the Pacific theater. Wing leadership updated the delegation on current projects, future exercises, and readiness, with an emphasis on forces assigned in Alaska and evolving PACOM and Arctic issues. (U.S. Air National Guard photo by David Bedard/Released)