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The best preparation for tomorrow is doing our best today

Alaska Army Guard's Recruit Sustainment Program bolsters readiness, success

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Every general and sergeant major serving in the Army National Guard today, began their military career as a bright eyed, new recruit. Along the way, each of them was mentored and inspired by Soldiers who pushed them to pursue a high standard of professionalism and excellence. In the Alaska Army National Guard, our newest Soldiers get their first taste of that type of mentorship and leadership when they enter the Recruit Sustainment Program.

The mission of RSPs around the country is to foster the spirit of the "Paratus Preliator" or "Prepared Warrior." The program ensures that Army Guard recruits are mentally prepared, administratively correct, and physically fit prior to being handed off to their future units as qualified, competent warriors.

Program success is measured through the initial training pipeline and highlighted by the percentage of Soldiers who complete their basic training and military occupational speciality schools. The dedication of a professional team of recruiters and support personnel makes all of this possible. The Alaska Army National Guard's Recruiting and Retention Battalion heads up this effort in the 49th state.

"This program serves all Alaska Army Guard units by providing trained and ready Soldiers to increase each unit's readiness and performance," said Lt. Col. David Jurva, commander of the Alaska Army National Guard Recruiting Battalion. "Progress and growth is the direct result of a team that has helped the program advance through tailored training, molded by evaluating what's efficient and what isn't."

To improve the quality of training, each state and territory are authorized to send noncommissioned officers to the U.S. Army's Drill Sergeant Academy at Ft. Jackson, South Carolina in direct support of the program. Two cadre in the Alaska Army Guard's recruiting battalion have graduated from the academy and are drill sergeants for the RSP in addition to being full-time recruiters.

Alaska Army Guard leadership stresses the need for a continued influx of drill sergeants, due to their professional impact on the organization. The drill sergeants contribute to the growth of RSP Soldiers significantly, but also benefit enlisted personnel throughout the Guard with their influence and expertise.

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“Drill sergeants serve as pillars of the NCO profession and stand as subject matter experts in fundamental Soldier skills,” said Sgt. 1st Class Jack Carlson, the noncommissioned officer in charge of the program. “The skillsets that these professionals bring back reverberate throughout the organization as their impact on every Soldier around them is noticeable. They provide continuous mentorship long after their Soldiers return from their initial training,” he said.

Currently, there are 127 Alaska Army Guardsmen in the RSP and approximately half of them are at basic training.

“This program gave me a considerable amount of foreknowledge about the structure of the Army, customs and courtesies, and technical proficiency on the equipment we use in combat arms,” said Pfc. Justin Howes, an infantryman assigned to Alpha Company, 297th Infantry Regiment, who returned to Alaska recently after completing his initial training at Ft. Benning, Georgia. “Learning the fundamentals, boosted my level of confidence going into basic.”

While the recent COVID-19 pandemic has brought its share of challenges, the mission of the RSP has not faltered. Forty-five Soldiers attended the last drill weekends in person in June, July and August. They have adapted to the changing environment and recruiting leadership has implemented COVID-19 protocols into their operations. The health and safety of Soldiers remains a top priority for military leaders.

“We’re not going to oversell and under deliver,” Jurva said. “Despite COVID-19, our RSP cadre are able to continue successful operations in a safe and effective manner.”

In August, the Alaska Army Guard’s 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment flew Alaska’s newest recruits to Arctic Valley in Anchorage, Alaska via a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter during a scheduled training mission. That same weekend, the Soldiers also trained on a rappel tower and participated in other various development opportunities.

“These training opportunities serve to expose our warriors to different military occupational specialties and missions within our organization,” Carlson said. “Additionally, having our recruits participate in unit training events boosts morale and recruiting efforts across the entire state. We consistently seek out units that want to highlight their missions and allow us to participate with them,” he said.

The future success of the RSP hinges on the continued involvement and effort from members of the recruiting battalion and adaptive training that changes with the Alaska Army Guard’s force structure. As the Army profession makes substantial changes and improvements in uniform, fitness, and occupational specialty requisites, so will the Recruit Sustainment Program.

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PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and a small selection of low-resolution photos for viewing on screen.
2. **YouTube link** includes a short video of the October RSP drill weekend training.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_aabibi7Ec
3. **DVIDS link** includes the video, accessible from military computers.
<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/771030/alaska-army-national-guard-recruit-sustainment-program>



Alaska Army National Guard drill sergeant Sgt. 1st Class Jason Schlegel, instructs the AKARNG's newest Soldiers who are part of the Recruit and Sustainment Program during their drill weekend at Camp Carrol on JBER, Oct. 25, 2020. Schlegel led the recruits through fundamental Soldiering tasks that included physical fitness, customs and courtesies, and drill and ceremony. Schlegel works as both a full time recruiter and drill sergeant for the RSP, and is assigned to the Alaska Army Guard's Recruitment and Sustainment Battalion. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)



Alaska Army National Guard drill sergeant Sgt. 1st Class Jason Schlegel, disciplines the AKARNG's newest Soldiers who are part of the Recruit and Sustainment Program by putting them through intense physical fitness during their drill weekend at Camp Carrol on JBER, Oct. 25, 2020. Schlegel led the recruits through fundamental Soldiering tasks that included physical fitness, customs and courtesies, and drill and ceremony. Schlegel works as both a full time recruiter and drill sergeant for the RSP, and is assigned to the Alaska Army Guard's Recruitment and Sustainment Battalion. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Seth LaCount/Released)



Alaska Army National Guard recruits in the Recruit Sustainment program of the AKARNG Recruiting and Retention Battalion receive a block of instruction from noncommissioned officers with the RRB. The recruits were flown to the valley via a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flown by pilots with the AKARNG's 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment at Arctic Valley in Anchorage, Alaska, Aug. 1, 2020. The flight to the valley was part of an RSP drill weekend for the recruits, who utilized the aviation assets to participate in a unit training event. (U.S. Army National Guard courtesy photo by Sgt. Aaron Axel)



Alaska Army National Guard recruits in the Recruit Sustainment program of the AKARNG Recruiting and Retention Battalion board a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter flown by pilots with the AKARNG's 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment at Arctic Valley in Anchorage, Alaska, Aug. 1, 2020. The flight to the valley was part of an RSP drill weekend for the recruits, who utilized the aviation assets to participate in a unit training event. (U.S. Army National Guard courtesy photo by Sgt. Aaron Axel)