



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs





OUR MISSION

Operation Homefront provides emergency financial and other assistance to the families of our service members and wounded warriors.

- ★ Operation Homefront leads more than 2,500 volunteers with nationwide presence who provide emergency and other financial assistance to the families of service members and wounded warriors.
- ★ The financial assistance we provide to military families is in the form of grants, not loans, paid directly to service providers for needs like car and home repairs, utilities, and rent or mortgage payments.
- ★ Our morale programs are based on making life easier for military families with tangible support that demonstrates that the American people care about their struggles.

★ EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE:

Grants to address unforeseen budget shortfalls for basic needs like rent, utilities, and food.

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Rent-free apartment communities for wounded warriors and their families transitioning from the military.

★ PERMANENT HOUSING:

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Programs designed to strengthen and uplift military families.

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Commander in Chief



Brig. Gen. (Alaska) Laurie Hummel
Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard
& Commissioner of the DMVA



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Wildfire Suppression Support. An Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, drops approximately 700 gallons of water from a "Bambi Bucket" on to the Stetson Creek Fire near Cooper Landing in June 2015. Two Alaska Army National Guard Black Hawk helicopters flew 200 bucket missions total, dumping more than 144,000 gallons of water on the 300-acre Stetson Creek Fire on the Kenai Peninsula.

Photo: Staff Sgt. Balinda Dresel, DMVA Public Affairs

At Attention. Cadets from the Alaska Military Youth Academy class 2015-2 represent the program at the annual Fourth of July parade in downtown Anchorage.

Photo: Roman Schara, Alaska Military Youth Academy

Winter Jump. Pararescuemen from the Alaska Air National Guard's 212th Rescue Squadron jump from a C-130 Hercules aircraft from the 144th Airlift Squadron during an airborne operation over Deadhorse in February for Exercise Spartan Pegasus.

Photo: Staff Sgt. Edward Eagerton, 176th Wing Public Affairs

Honoring Veterans. A wreath is presented on behalf of veterans at the Veterans Day ceremony at the Alaska National Guard armory in November 2015. Alaska is home to more veterans per capita than any state in the nation.

Photo: Sgt. Marisa Lindsay, DMVA Public Affairs



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Governor's Message



Gov. Bill Walker
Commander in Chief

Dear Fellow Alaskans,

Lt. Gov. Byron Mallott and I would like to thank the members of the Alaska National Guard and employees of the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs for steadfast service and dedication to Alaskans, our nation and the global community. Alaskans can be proud of the infrastructure our military has established throughout the state and the safety and security we enjoy because of the efforts of the Soldiers and Airmen of the Alaska National Guard.

The Alaska Air National Guard conducts search and rescue missions all across Alaska. Manned by members of the Alaska Air National Guard, the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center in early November 2015 reached its 5,326th mission, and 2,223rd life saved, since July 1, 1994, with more than 66 lives saved in 2015.

The 168th Air Refueling Wing, home to the KC-135 Stratotanker and based in interior Alaska at Eielson Air Force Base, maintains one of the highest operations tempos of any KC-135 aerial refueling wing. The Wing flew 3,933 hours,

flawlessly delivering and accounting for more than 20.13 million pounds of fuel during 328 combat sorties while providing global reach and vigilance to support state and national objectives.

The Alaska Army National Guard maintains constant support to the state and nation with Soldiers and equipment. In 2015, Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers deployed overseas in support of contingencies and operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo and participated in overseas deployment training in Mongolia, Australia and Cambodia. The Army National Guard is also integral in engaging communities at home in partnership and helping safeguard the lives of Alaskans when disaster hits. This year they helped fight one of the busiest wildfire seasons in Alaska's history and provided support during the historic visit by the President of the United States to the Last Frontier.

The Office of Veterans Affairs received the Veterans Affairs Highly Rural Transportation grant. This grant allows some of our veterans the ability to travel from their homes to medical facilities in their communities to receive the health care they need. A continued partnership with the VA to train tribal veterans representatives is critical to our success in reaching every veteran in Alaska. Today, we have more than 250 trained tribal veterans representatives statewide providing basic veteran services in their communities. This is the largest veteran volunteer corps in the nation under this program model.

These are but a few examples of the work of DMVA and the Alaska National Guard do every do on behalf of Alaskans. I thank them for their dedicated service and encourage all Alaskans to do the same.

Sincerely,

Gov. Bill Walker



Appreciation. Gov. Bill Walker and Brig. Gen. (Alaska) Laurie Hummel, the adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, visit Airmen with the 176th Civil Engineering Squadron during their static display presentation at the Alaska National Guard armory on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in October. Photo: Sgt. Marisa Lindsay, DMVA Public Affairs



The Adjutant General



Brig. Gen. (Alaska) Laurie Hummel
Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard
& Commissioner of the DMVA

Turning the Page

The only constant in life is change. We can safely predict things will change. It is inevitable and dependably difficult. Change is hard, but frequently good.

From its beginnings as the Alaska Territorial Guard in World War II through the defense buildup during the Cold War and into the austere present, the Alaska National Guard has embraced change. It is a resilient, responsive entity and an honorable organization justifiably proud of its traditions and practices.

But over the past several years, all Alaskans learned that significant problems had beset the Guard, impugned its good name and detracted from the wonderful work of its members. It was clear — the Alaska National Guard needed to change.

I am privileged to lead an excellent team in that process.

As the late Yogi Berra astutely observed, “If you don’t know where you’re going, you might not get there,” so one of my first tasks as adjutant general was to identify my goals for the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs. They’re pretty simple. I hope they’ll help the Guard get back to its time-honored basics.

The first three goals are:

1. Establish a culture of moral, ethical, positive, productive leadership and followership.
2. Restore the confidence of Alaskans in the Alaska National Guard.
3. Establish and implement sound processes: doctrinally based, legal, ethical, replicable, predictable and transparent.
4. It all boils down to this: We must Reboot, Refit, Reform.

The Guard has new leadership across the board at the highest levels. We’ve added key positions, including Alaska’s first provost marshal, to bolster our in-house law enforcement expertise, a special victims’ counsel to protect and represent victims of sexual assault and 40 trained and certified victim advocates.

We’ve implemented increased protections of Soldiers’ and Airmen’s private information, expanded command oversight and chain-of-command responsibility for professionalism in all functions and use every available partner to assist us in improving the organization.

Actions contrary to good order and discipline and in conflict with Army, Air Force or DMVA core values carry consequences. Every quarter in Warriors magazine, we now report the status of Army and Air Guard disciplinary actions. We have worked over the past year hand-in-hand with the legislature to create an Alaska Code of Military Justice that will provide commanders with a valuable tool for regulating conditions within the force.

The bottom line is, we’re going to work together to create an organization worthy of its members and ensure members are worthy of the organization. I’m encouraged by our progress so far and look forward to more.

We’re not done. New information may rekindle past investigations. Renewed scrutiny may inspire new allegations. Whatever comes, we will work with law enforcement to follow every lead. We’ll use every tool available to protect victims, bring offenders to justice and re-establish the culture of honor and respect that make the Guard a valued element of Alaska society.

I am confident this work will lead to restored faith in the Alaska National Guard. This sort of evolution doesn’t happen overnight. We recognize that. We’re fully committed to following through and chasing every last ghost from the machine, whatever that takes. We will turn the page and come back stronger.

I am proud to lead the men and women of the Alaska National Guard as they carry out federal missions in Alaska and around the world, provide support to civil authorities and train for the operational ready reserve role.

I’m also excited by the new missions and initiatives entrusted to us. For instance, we’re working hard to increase rural participation in the Guard and the Alaska State Defense Force. We are committed to having a force reflective of the strength and diversity of Alaska, and we respect the practical knowledge of Arctic operating conditions that our rural members bring with them. Many rural leaders have told us they value the positive benefits state-based military service brings to their communities, and we look forward to partnering with them.

2016 brings the dawn of new challenge, new promise and new victories. As the men and women of the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs work to serve their fellow Alaskans and Americans, we know the best is yet to come. And we’re ready to prove it.



Thanking Veterans. Brig. Gen. (Alaska) Laurie Hummel, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard and commissioner of the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, welcomes home World War II and Korean War veterans who returned to Alaska from a trip to Washington, D.C., in April. The veterans traveled to the nation’s capital with the Last Frontier Honor Flight, a program dedicated to providing veterans an opportunity to visit the war memorials erected in their honor. Photo: Lt. Col. Candis Olmstead, DMVA Public Affairs

Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Impact

State General Fund Dollars Spent
\$18,414,100

AIR NATIONAL GUARD
\$2,986,250

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
\$4,771,850

ALASKA MILITARY YOUTH ACADEMY
\$5,113,700

VETERANS SERVICES
\$1,940,500

HOMELAND SECURITY &
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
\$3,601,800

AIR NATIONAL GUARD
\$3,503,100 STATE BUDGET FEDERAL DOLLARS
\$163,185,206 DIRECT FEDERAL DOLLARS
\$166,688,306 TOTAL FEDERAL DOLLARS

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD
\$6,536,800 STATE BUDGET FEDERAL DOLLARS
\$51,165,550 DIRECT FEDERAL DOLLARS
\$57,702,350 TOTAL FEDERAL DOLLARS

ALASKA MILITARY YOUTH ACADEMY
\$3,635,900 STATE BUDGET FEDERAL DOLLARS

VETERANS SERVICES
\$158,300 STATE BUDGET FEDERAL DOLLARS
\$267,333,333 DIRECT FEDERAL DOLLARS
\$267,491,633 TOTAL FEDERAL DOLLARS

HOMELAND SECURITY &
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
\$4,143,300 STATE BUDGET FEDERAL DOLLARS

Federal Dollars Received
\$499,634,756

DMVA Vision and Core Values



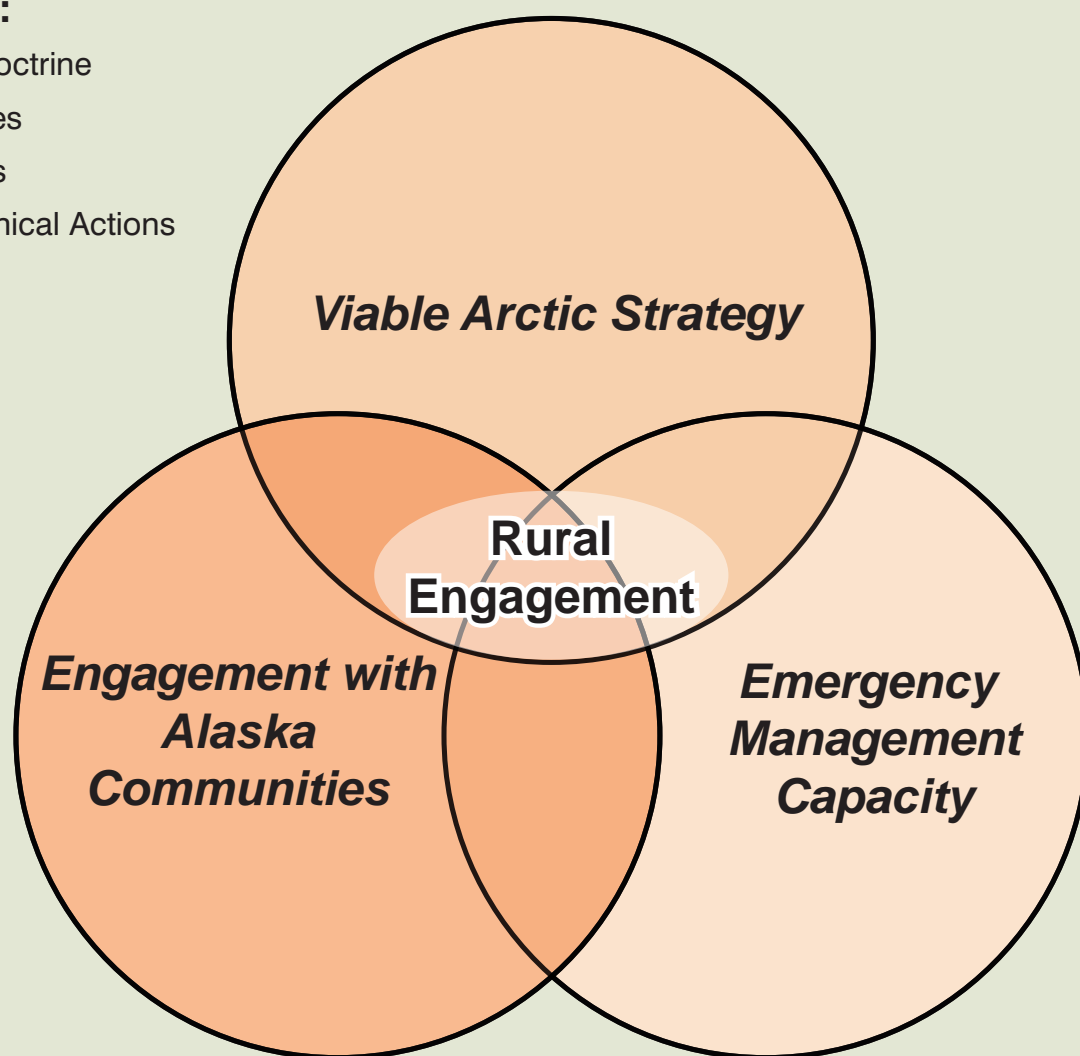
Vision: Through constant collaboration internally and with external partners, the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs implements a viable Arctic strategy, increases emergency management capacity and expands engagement with Alaska communities all while achieving federal mission assurance.

- **Core Values**

- Professionalism “Be the real deal”
- Commitment “All oars in the water ...”
- Teamwork “... rowing the same direction”

- **We will rely on:**

- Adherence to Doctrine
- Sound Processes
- Customer Focus
- Moral, Legal, Ethical Actions
- Transparency





Veterans



What an exciting year the Office of Veterans Affairs had in 2015. We continued our efforts welcoming home our Vietnam veterans and all veterans from all conflicts. We are still researching and documenting Alaska Territorial Guard Honorable Service; we added welcome events to all our outreach efforts; and we increased partnerships by enhancing our travel efforts across Alaska while working closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, especially in the areas of medical care, disability/pensions compensations and rural outreach. We also exceeded all the 2014 goals while providing stellar support to our 227,000 eligible Alaskans. We accomplished all of this while keeping our primary mission at the forefront: to develop and sustain comprehensive statewide veterans advocacy programs. This year we completed our goals on a very high note.

Veterans Served

This year the staff, contract personnel and volunteers managed by the Office of Veterans Affairs were successful in assisting veterans by ensuring the return of more than \$56 million in single one-time payments owed to veterans/eligible family members. We also assisted 57,989 veterans, active-duty personnel, reserve-component members and family members with federal and state benefits/claims questions and processing. In addition, we traveled to more than 100 communities across the state reaching many veterans for the first time.

The continued success of our programs is measured through eligible residents receiving an annual compensation on top of a one-time payment. This year, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs sent in excess of \$244 million for disability compensation and pension payments to veterans and/or their families who reside in Alaska. Veterans were also assisted in receiving needed medical care at five VA clinics and 122 local health care facilities. There are currently more than 34,000 enrolled in the VA Health Care System, and of those members, the VA treats 18,182 patients annually with managed care costs in excess of \$222 million.

Alaska currently has 4,605 students attending an Alaska university or employment program who are eligible for VA education benefits. The total funds paid to in-state institutions, employment programs

and to eligible members under the per diem program was slightly more than \$74 million. Working with all Alaskans who are eligible for these benefits ensures the future is brighter not only for them and their families but for the state as well.

As part of serving veterans, the Office of Veterans Affairs partnered with the VA and co-sponsored several rural outreach programs in Alaska. These outreach efforts greatly assisted veterans by providing services in their home communities. Participating in these events are Veterans Service Officers, VA benefits counselors, National Guard benefits counselors, Alaska Veterans Advisory Council members and staff from the Office of Veterans Affairs. This year representatives traveled to the following communities: Akiak, Akiachak, Anchor Point, Bethel, Cantwell, Chevak, Clear, Cordova, Craig, Delta Junction, Dillingham, Dutch Harbor/Unalaska, Fort Yukon, Gustavus, Galena, Glennallen, Healy, Homer, Houston, Hoonah, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Klawock, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Kwethluk, Mat-Su Correctional Facility, Metlakatla, Mountain Village, Nanilchik, Nenana, Nome, North Pole, Petersburg, Palmer, St. Mary's, Selawik, Seward, Sitka, Soldotna, Sutton, Talkeetna, Tok, Toksook Bay, Valdez, Venetie, Willow, Wrangell and the YWCA Anchorage.

Some of these locations received several follow-up visits in response to community requests. While visiting these locations, teams provided services in claims processing, education information, medical needs, vocational rehabilitation and enrollment in direct federal and state programs that improve the quality of life for our veterans and their dependents.

Highly Rural Transportation Grant

This year, the Office of Veterans Affairs received the VA Highly Rural Transportation grant. Alaska competed on a national level and received the largest award amount issued to a single state: \$250,000. This grant allows some of our veterans to travel from their home to medical facilities in their communities. The grant had stringent guidelines, and the following five boroughs received \$50,000 each in grant money for transportation under this program: Denali, Matanuska-Susitna, Kodiak Island, Kenai Peninsula

and Prince of Wales-Hyder. Veterans in those communities qualify to use an array of transportation options so they may seek the health care they need.

The Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs partnered with five transportation organizations to meet those needs: Interior Alaska Bus Line (Denali Borough), Valley Mover (Matanuska-Susitna Borough), Alaska Marine Highway System (Kodiak Island Borough), AAA Alaska Cab Inc. (Kenai Peninsula Borough) and Inter-Island Ferry System Authority (Prince of Wales-Hyder).

The Office of Veterans Affairs tried to change the grant requirements to expand to other areas off the road system, but we are unable to use the grant for air travel. The VA did provide an exception for the Alaska Marine Highway, and this proved to be a most welcome option to those who live along this system.

During its first year, this program had a huge learning curve not only for the Office of Veterans Affairs but for each person who participated in the program. In Alaska's first year, we had more than 5,900 veterans use the travel offered through the grant.

We are pleased to report that the VA renewed the transportation grant for \$250,000 in October 2015 so we can continue to serve our veterans in these rural areas.

Alaska Veterans Cemetery Update

We now have suitable land for the Interior Alaska Veterans Cemetery in the Fairbanks area, and the design phase of the project is underway. Our consultants are working on the three required master plans. After this is completed, the next phase is document preparation and presentation for the construction bid phase. After the construction phase has begun, the cemetery will require additional funding for a road and for annual operations costs. The Office of Veterans Affairs is working closely with the VA National Cemetery grant programs personnel to ensure we capture all the costs that will not be covered under the grant. We look forward to this construction project and the completion of the first state veterans cemetery.

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans

The Office of Veterans Affairs worked
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with the Department of Defense in 2013 to become a Vietnam commemorative partner to honor every Vietnam veteran who lives in Alaska. Upon signing the partnership, the Office of Veterans Affairs minted an Alaska Welcomes Home Honor Coin, and, since the first event on March 29, 2014, we have honored more than 5,000 veterans. This partnership will be in place until October 2017. Because of its success and the benefit to our veterans, we plan to continue this program until all Vietnam veterans are welcomed home.

Alaska Territorial Guard

We continue our agreements with the Department of Defense in finding, researching and issuing discharges to our Alaska Territorial Guard members. In 2014, our efforts were hindered because there were fewer family members requesting discharges. Communities in the past have identified those who have served, but today most ATG veterans have either passed away with no family left in the community they served or they moved to a larger community to receive health care.

Our goal is to ensure that every ATG veteran who served has a discharge document on file in the National Archives reflecting his or her honorable service. As research continues, living ATG members are still being found. This year we presented discharges to Sgt. Nick Abalama of Egegik and Pvt. Andronik Kashevarof of St. George Island.

Our authoritative list of those who served in the Alaska Territorial Guard can be found online at www.veterans.alaska.gov/alaska-territorial-guard.html. This list also allows the U.S. Army to expedite submitted discharge requests. In 2015, there were 210 records reviewed and 110 discharges authenticated with the Department of Defense.

More than 90 percent of the records reviewed are accomplished today without requests from family members. Our ultimate goal is to have all the ATG honorable discharges on file in Veterans Affairs before the family member sends the request for the discharge. While the goal is lofty, our focus is on correcting this previous oversight in 1947 so that future generations will have access to their ancestors' service records.

Veteran Service Officer (VSO) Grant Management

For veterans to receive the best service, there are 17 Veterans Service Officers located across the state. They provide services to veterans free. Some states deliver these services through entry-level state

employees who are in offices that do not perform outreach efforts. Alaska's veterans are served through state grants with the following veteran service organizations: Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans and Vietnam Veterans of America. All service officers are nationally certified by their respective organization as well as certified locally by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to keep their skills and certification up to date. We currently have service officers in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Wasilla, Kenai, Juneau and Ketchikan.

This program is the envy of numerous states, and we are asked frequently about our grant program. Washington state, throughout the past year, converted all of its county service officers into our grant model and are pleased with the outcome. It is easy to sell the program because today Alaska is rated as best in the nation for quality and speed in the VA claims process.

Statewide Stand Down

Stand Down is an annual program to provide veterans in need a hand up with various types of direct assistance including but not limited to medical and dental screening, housing assistance, employment assistance and financial assistance. Past success with hosting stand downs in communities off the road system prompted the Office of Veterans Affairs to request additional funding for this program from the VA's Office of Rural Health to support this effort. This year we were able to reach Unalaska, Homer, Soldotna, Kotzebue and Nome. Adding the veterans served from our rural efforts to our annual Anchorage and Fairbanks events, we were able to reach/serve 2,500 veterans who we normally could not reach.

These events are critical because they bring key staff together who have the ability to move fast on issues to assist veterans. For those veterans off the road system, it provides a venue for us to express that they are not forgotten and their service is important to Alaska and the nation. This venue is another great way the community comes together to honor our veterans who served.

Other Significant Accomplishments

A continued partnership with the VA to train Tribal Veterans Representatives is critical to our success in reaching every veteran in Alaska. This year, an additional 50 volunteer TVRs were trained through classes held before our rural stand downs. Today, we have more than 250 trained TVRs statewide providing basic veteran

services in their communities. This is the largest veterans volunteer corps in the nation under this program model.

This model is now being shared with Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Utah, California and Nevada. Nevada set up a program that is fully automated and allows for greater coverage. It is always wonderful to see that our program is adaptable to other environments and provides feedback to fine-tune our program as well.

Since the program's inception in 2011, veterans and their families have friendly boots on the ground in communities across Alaska. TVRs support our ability to reach those veterans who would never venture out of their home for assistance. The TVRs know the veterans in their community and what benefits they have earned. Because of their strength and knowledge, the goal is to one day have a TVR in every community.

We partnered with the VA Mortgage Servicing Assistance program assisting our veterans to receive their VA Certificate of Eligibility to purchase homes under this program. The result of this effort in 2014/15 was 5,208 guaranteed loans for a total of \$1.4 billion. This is the largest number of loans issued in Alaska since the start of the program.

The Office of Veterans Affairs will continue to look at ways to partner in the care of our veterans. We just completed a study that we commissioned through the University of Alaska's Institute of Social & Economic Research to determine the needs of veterans living in Alaska. The areas assessed were jobs, education, housing, disabilities and health care. The exciting thing about this effort is it will help us move our programs in the direction of the actual needs of the community we serve.

Throughout the past six years, Alaska has moved into a new era in regards to veteran services. We have seen the development of a two new VA medical facilities, the choice of local care over out-of-state health care given to veterans; the explosion in the delivery of education funds; the heightened welcome-home efforts for all our veterans — all this with the access to assistance at the forefront in all we do. We went from last in the nation on disability claims processing to first. We are the VA's model for delivery of care in the most remote locations. We still have a long way to go in meeting the goal of having every veteran in Alaska receiving all earned benefits, but the Office of Veterans Affairs maintains its promise that it will continue "Serving Alaska, One Veteran at a Time."

Alaska Army National Guard



The Alaska Army National Guard welcomed a new commander, Col. Joseph Streff, in February 2015. Streff, a career National Guardsman, has served more than 28 years in the Alaska National Guard in a number of command and staff assignments. Streff's new command team includes State Command Sgt. Maj. Marc Petersen, Command Chief Warrant Officer Four Pam Vitt and Chief of Staff Lt. Col. Joel Gilbert. Col. Lee Knowles commands the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, and Col. Jeff Roach leads the 38th Troop Command.

The Alaska Army National Guard has maintained constant support to the state and nation with Soldiers and equipment. In 2015, Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers deployed overseas in support of contingencies and operations in Afghanistan and Kosovo and participated in overseas deployment training in Mongolia, Australia and Cambodia.

Pilots from the 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment deployed to Afghanistan to serve on a task force flying fixed-wing missions. Two rotations of liaison teams deployed with the Mongolian Armed Forces to Afghanistan as leadership and

training mentors for a Mongolian Expeditionary Task Force conducting fixed site security. In addition, Alaskan Soldiers deployed to Kosovo to serve in the Balkans peace operations.

At home in Alaska, Soldiers worked to improve and safeguard the lives of citizens in the state through fire, flood and rescue-operation responses. The Alaska Army National Guard helped fight one of the busiest wildfire seasons in Alaska's history and provided support during the historic visit by President Barack Obama to the Last Frontier. Alaska Guardsmen also continued to train in the arctic environment and engage Alaska communities and local and state agencies.

297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade

With 28 years of service in the Alaska Army National Guard, Col. Lee Knowles took command of the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade in February 2015.

The 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade conducted two major training exercises in 2015. BfSB Soldiers conducted their two-week annual training in Bethel and outlying villages from March to

April 2015. Priorities of the Arctic exercise were cold weather survival training and community engagement involving the rural villages that surround Bethel. Guardsmen interacted with the residents of Nightmute, Napaskiak, Toksook Bay, Kwethluk, Akiachak and Akiak. A cultural day was held at the Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center and Museum in Bethel, where community leaders spoke with the Soldiers.

Overseas, the 297th BfSB participated in Khaan Quest 2015, a multinational exercise hosted annually by Mongolian Armed Forces at Five Hills Training Area in Tavantolgoi, Mongolia. Alaska Guardsmen have participated in this exercise for eight consecutive years. In 2015, the Alaska National Guard took the leading role in this exercise and provided one-third of all U.S. participants.

In addition to overseas deployment training, Soldiers from the 207th Brigade Support Company assisted active-duty Army counterparts by participating in the Platinum Wrench pilot program, designed to integrate National Guard and Army Reserve mechanics into an active-duty Army unit at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, California.

Wildfire Suppression Support. Sgt. Philip Peter, crew chief with 1-207th Aviation Regiment, monitors the "Bambi Bucket" that is used to dump water onto the wildfires near Tok in June. The Alaska Army National Guard supported wildfire suppression efforts with UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters across the state during an active summer fire season.

Photo: Sherman Hogue, Fort Wainwright Public Affairs



The BfSB is planning to conduct annual training in Barrow in 2016 for its last annual training prior to deactivation. The U.S. Army opted to eliminate the Battlefield Surveillance Brigade force structure from Active and Reserve formations. Consequently, the Alaska Army National Guard is standing down the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade at the end of 2016 and transitioning to a regional support group and an infantry battalion.

38th Troop Command

The 38th Troop Command and its subordinate units, including the 49th Missile Defense Battalion, 1-207th Aviation Regiment and the 761st Military Police Battalion, continued to provide a trained and ready force to conduct federal and state missions with excellence.

Since 2005, the 49th Missile Defense Battalion has operated the Ground-based Midcourse Defense Fire Control system and secured the Missile Defense Complex at Fort Greely. Lt. Col. Tim Brower took command in June 2015, and he hit the ground running. In addition to providing the 24/7/365-mission that gives the United States a defense against limited intercontinental ballistic missile threats, the 49th Missile Defense Battalion continues to conduct training exercises to hone their skills.

In March 2015, the 49th Missile Defense Battalion participated in Global Lightning 15, a command-and-control exercise designed to train Department of Defense forces and assess joint operational readiness. U.S. Strategic Command, one of nine U.S. unified commands under the Department of Defense, conducted Exercise Global Lightning 15 with components and task forces. Exercise Global Lightning 15 provided an opportunity to train headquarters staff, components, operational centers, task forces, command posts, and units to exercise the command and control necessary to deter, and if necessary, defeat a military attack against the United States and to employ forces as directed by the president. Additionally, the exercise provided a training opportunity for U.S. Strategic Command's other mission areas, including missile defense.

Alaska Army Aviation performed exceptionally in 2015, supporting the state and the nation. Alaska Army Aviation conducted more than 131 flying hours performing water bucket drops and other aviation support to help fight the Willow Sockeye wildfire, Kenai Peninsula wildfires and Bethel wildfires. Aviation conducted 1,108 bucket drops with 878,200 gallons of water. Wildfires burned more than



Missile Defense. Military police Soldiers with the 49th Missile Defense Battalion prepare for shift change on Fort Greely in October 2015. The military policemen assigned to the 49th Missile Defense Battalion make up a large portion of the military population on Fort Greely, providing round-the-clock security for the post.

Photo: Sgt. Marisa Lindsay, DMVA Public Affairs

five-million acres of land throughout Alaska in 2015, the second-worst wildfire season in Alaska since 1950. Under the leadership of the State Army Aviation officer, Lt. Col. Bob Kurtz, and the 1-207th Aviation Regiment commander, Lt. Col. Britt Reed, Alaska Army Aviation supported numerous major missions throughout the year.

Alaska Army Aviation transported 39 passengers and 3,850 pounds of cargo in support of President Barack Obama's visit; this is in addition to the transportation provided for Secretary of Veterans Affairs Robert McDonald's visit to Kotzebue and Point Hope. Furthermore, Army Guard Aviation continued to support the recovery efforts of the Colony Glacier plane crash of 1952 since Army Guard pilots first discovered the crash site in 2012.

In addition to providing homeland support, members of Aviation and Joint Forces Headquarters supported Angkor Sentinel 2015, an overseas deployment training in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The multinational exercise focused on training the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

Other 38th Troop Command units such as the 297th Military Police Company, 49th Personnel Detachment (Theater Gateway), 208th Construction Management Team and 103rd Civil Support Team made significant accomplishments in 2015. One year after returning from deployment from Guantanamo

Bay, Cuba, the 297th Military Police Company had the opportunity to train with local law enforcement agencies in support of the 2015 Conference on Global Leadership in the Arctic: Cooperation, Innovation, Engagement and Resilience hosted by the Department of State in Anchorage. The military police platoon trained as a quick reaction force with the Anchorage Police Department and other law enforcement agencies to provide support for the Conference on Global Leadership in the Arctic: Cooperation, Innovation, Engagement and Resilience, as well as for the president's visit.

The 49th Personnel Detachment (Theater Gateway) conducted overseas training in support of Talisman Sabre, the largest bilateral exercise between the United States and Australia. Alaskan Soldiers served in Combined Joint Reception Cells at theater gateways throughout Australia, where they conducted accountability of more than 18,000 inbound U.S. personnel.

In June 2015, the 208th Construction Management Team engineers participated in a joint-service airfield expansion project. Alaska Army National Guardsmen with the 208th Construction Management Team traveled to Old Harbor and Kodiak to assist with a joint-forces airfield expansion project as part of their annual training. The project, which was meant to extend the current airstrip by 2,000 feet for safety and expanded services, was federally funded under the "innovative readiness training" program. This service afforded training and



Rural Engagement. Spc. David Smart of Hooper Bay and fellow Alaska Army National Guard members with the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade visit with students at ZJ Williams K-12 Memorial School in Napaskiak during their annual training, which was based out of Bethel and included many of the smaller surrounding villages.

Photo: Sgt. Marisa Lindsay, DMVA Public Affairs

readiness for the military in conjunction with providing a service to communities.

The 103rd Civil Support Team (Weapons of Mass Destruction) provided critical expertise to the state to aid emergency managers in potentially hazardous material releases of a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or explosive nature. In 2015, the 103rd CST had one response, 18 assists, eight stand-by occurrences, eight exercises and 13 training events in coordination with and in support of civil authorities. A stand-by is defined as the deployment of the CST-WMD to provide expertise where the CST-WMD may be an asset or staged with other assets to conduct operations. This includes events identified by the state chain of command, VIP protective details or a National Special Security Event. Assistance is provided by the deployment of the unit or unit member to provide contingency operations liaison, capabilities briefs, technical assistance, mission reconnaissance, mutual support on how to minimize vulnerability to a CBRNE incident or as part of a national, state or local command post exercise where CST-WMD unit capabilities are planned and demonstrated in accordance with the scenario.

Recruiting and Retention Battalion

The Alaska Army National Guard Recruiting and Retention Battalion, under

the command of Lt. Col. Eric Barlow, conducted a variety of successful recruiting events throughout Alaska. These events included Nordic Journeys Village sponsorship, which provided cross country ski lessons to high school students in Bethel; Kuskokwim 300 recruiting booth at the opening ceremony in Bethel; Iron Dog high school outreach recruiting in Nome, Barrow and Bethel; Donlin Gold High School Basketball Classic recruiting; and various high school visits to Unalaska, Toksook Bay, Nunapitchuk, Atmautluak, Nightmute, Newtok, Kipnuk, Chevak, Nunam Iqua and Mountain Village.

AKARNG recruiters continued to contact high school students who take the Student Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test if the students choose to be contacted. The Recruiting and Retention Battalion, in addition to all branches of the Armed Forces, received the same list of names and competed for potential recruits. The AKARNG has one full-time recruiter stationed in Bethel who traveled throughout the region to inform and recruit future AKARNG Soldiers.

In 2015, the AKARNG Recruiting and Retention Battalion contracted through the State Media Services Program to send emails to 3,800 high school students in Alaska throughout the year. Recruiters also advertised in various print and social media. The Alaska Army National Guard recruited 196 Soldiers in fiscal year 2015.

University of Alaska Anchorage Army ROTC

The Alaska Army National Guard provided a full-time officer and non-commissioned officer to serve as the assistant professor of Military Science and Military Science instructor for the University of Alaska Anchorage's Army Reserve Officer Training Corps program. The ROTC's mission is to select, educate, train and commission student-cadets to serve as officers and leaders of character in the U.S. Army. In 2015, UAA commissioned nine cadets, a program record, into the Army's total force. The program has a highly active Ranger Challenge team, color guard team and through the Seawolf Cadet Club, supported many volunteer activities, including the annual Veterans Day 5K race. The corps of cadets continues to include many current and former Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers training to become adaptive, agile leaders capable of operating in today's complex environment.

Alaska/Mongolia State Partnership Program

The state of Alaska partnership between the Alaska National Guard and the nation of Mongolia spans more than a decade and has evolved into a strategic nation-state relationship. The Alaska-Mongolia partnership was selected by the National Guard Bureau and U.S. Pacific Command for the assignment of an Alaska National Guardsman to the embassy as the bilateral affairs officer and chief of defense cooperation.

The State Partnership Program is designed to be a mutually beneficial interaction between Alaska and Mongolia. Alaska National Guardsmen get the chance to share expertise, practice their teaching and training skills, experience another culture and learn how a foreign military force organizes and operates. The military-to-military relationship between the Alaska National Guard and Mongolian Armed Forces has been a catalyst for the nation-to-state initiative. The Alaska Army National Guard and Mongolian Armed Forces combat mission partnership in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom has continued since 2004.

The Alaska-Mongolia partnership has expanded to include relationships between the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management, the University of Alaska system, U.S. Army Alaska and the Alaska District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, along with their Mongolian counterparts. The U.S. ambassador to Mongolia from August 2012 to August



Alaska-Mongolia State Partnership. Sgt. Chantz Gaither, left, and Pfc. Taylor Shackelford, both with the 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, lift a simulated casualty during Exercise Khaan Quest 2015 at Five Hills Training Area in Tavantolgoi, Mongolia, in June.
Photo: Balinda O'Neal, DMVA Public Affairs

2015, Piper Campbell, visited Alaska in 2015 to help strengthen the already positive relationship and recognize the great work Alaska has done in Mongolia to promote peace and security, assist in disaster preparedness and partner for better education. Alaska has been working with the Mongolia National Emergency Management Agency since 2004.

This year, the Alaska National Guard and U.S. Army Alaska joined 100 participants from 30 agencies across Mongolia, the United States and other countries to participate in Gobi Wolf, a disaster response exercise and exchange hosted by the Mongolia National Emergency Management Agency. The exercise, which simulated an earthquake in Mongolia's largest city, Ulaanbaatar, resembled Alaska's Vigilant Guard exercise. Officials attended Vigilant Guard in 2014 and modeled the exercise after their participation in Alaska. "Alaska has contributed greatly in Mongolia," Campbell said. "Whether building hospitals or schools, providing medical and dental treatment in underserved areas, working with students or training with Mongolia's military, Alaskans have made a difference in the lives of Mongolians."

Warrior and Family Services

The Alaska National Guard Warrior and Family Services comprises more than a dozen programs, ranging from transition assistance to sexual assault prevention. The services are at no cost to service members and help is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, through the Family Assistance Center.

In 2015, Warrior and Family Services grew the Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition, part of the national Joining Community Forces initiative. The mission of the Alaska-Forget Me Not Coalition is to ensure that service members, veterans and families are supported and cared for within their communities through a collaborative effort. The coalition focuses on statewide coordination, community outreach, and education to identify gaps in service, enhance service delivery, minimize duplication of programs and maximize existing funding.

In addition, a newly formed partnership between the Alaska National Guard and faith-based organizations is also benefiting Alaska National Guardsmen. Partners in Care is a program that links faith-based organizations that provide specific services with the more than 4,000 Alaska National Guardsmen and their families to address the unique challenges service in the Guard presents.

Facilities Management

The state of Alaska invested in the sustainment and construction of Army National Guard facilities across the state during fiscal year 2015. Multiple projects were completed statewide, including a han-

gar roof design project in Nome; a shower upgrade in Kodiak; painting and flooring upgrades in Ketchikan; vehicle storage building repairs, armory roof repairs and hangar gutter repairs in Juneau; and door and window repairs in Chevak. The Fairbanks Readiness Center and Operational Maintenance shop renovation project was completed, ensuring facility use requirements were met and heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems were improved.

The three Army National Guard enclaves on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson — Camp Denali, Camp Carroll and Bryant Army Airfield — were all sustained through multiple construction projects. On Camp Denali, projects included a shower and locker room renovation and interior paint and flooring sustainment of the Combined Support Maintenance shop. At Camp Carroll, the AKARNG training site projects included roadway and parking lot resurfacing. Bryant Army Airfield projects focused on sustainment of 250 concrete helipads, a complete resurfacing of the runway, culvert upgrades and a fixed-wing hangar roof replacement. A grounds maintenance project of all enclaves was also completed to address antiterrorism/force protection shortfalls.

In 2015, the Alaska Army National Guard Environmental section remediated contaminated soil at six Defense Environmental Restoration Program sites throughout the Bethel region. Additionally, \$2 million was awarded in federal contracts for the remediation of contaminated soil at five sites statewide.



Support for the President's Visit. Alaska National Guardsmen with the 297th Military Police Company provide battlefield circulation control (air traffic control) for President Barack Obama during his visit to Alaska. From left: Sgt. Charles McGonigal, Sgt. Calixto Velazquez, Spc. Jacob Marlowe, Spc. Patric Patton and Sgt. Damian Collum.
Photo: Courtesy Sgt. Damian Collum, 297th Military Police Company

Alaska Air National Guard



Airframes of the 176th Wing. The 176th Wing is a diverse flying unit. Guard members at the 176th operate and maintain the HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter, the HC-130 and C-130 Hercules and the C-17.

Photo: Capt. Eric Rutter, 176th Wing

176th Wing

While the operations tempo of many Department of Defense organizations has decreased, the 176th Wing's "Midnight Sun Guardians" continued to project their relevance in 2015 with a consistent level of deployment and training rotations to support the citizens of our state and nation.

Following a 2014 deployment to the Horn of Africa on behalf of supporting Operation Enduring Freedom by the 212th Rescue Squadron, this year the 176th Wing saw two additional deployments there during fiscal year 2015. Supporting the personnel-recovery portion of the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa's mission, our 176th Wing members helped defeat extremist organizations and conducted focused military-to-military engagements to strengthen East African partner nation militaries.

In December 2014, 78 men and women primarily from the 211th Rescue Squadron and the 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron deployed with HC-130 King aircraft to the Horn of Africa and returned after a six-month rotation. In January 2015, 69 men and women from the 210th Rescue Squadron and the 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron deployed there with HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters.

In March 2015, the 210th and 211th Rescue Squadrons made the news after their involvement in the rescue of two Saudi pilots. A Saudi F-15 Eagle experienced a mechanical failure, forcing the pilots to eject over the Gulf of Aden. The 176th Wing members launched out of Djibouti and rescued the two Saudi airmen. The entire operation, from notification to the rescue of the pilots, took only two hours.

The 176th Security Forces Squadron deployed 14 men and women to Kandahar, Afghanistan, in March and an additional 15 men and women to Kuwait in direct support of combat and security operations in the Middle East.

Additionally, the 176th Civil Engineering Squadron deployed 26 personnel in June to Qatar to support U.S. Central Command with minor construction projects in its area of responsibility.

To maintain the level of proficiency required to operate at the highest standards amid this operations tempo, various units within the 176th Wing participated in multiple exercises throughout the year.



Red Flag-Alaska. Flight crew members from the 144th Airlift Squadron navigate the skies of Alaska in August 2015 during exercise Red Flag-Alaska. Conducted three to four times per year, Red Flag-Alaska provides U.S. and partner-nation forces a comprehensive, simulated combat-training environment that includes offensive counter-air operations, interdiction, close air support and large force employment.

Photo: Staff Sgt. Edward Eagerton, 176th Wing Public



Combined Training Environments. Members of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Fire Emergency Services practice fire suppression techniques alongside counterparts from Palmer and Chugiak Fire Departments on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in August 2015. Many of the Guardsmen work as either full-time or volunteer employees of fire departments in Alaska, and training with their counterparts in a combined environment helps further develop their knowledge base. Photo: Staff Sgt. Edward Egerton, 176th Wing Public Affairs

In May 2015, the 144th Airlift Squadron deployed for training to Yokota, Japan, to integrate with the 374th Airlift Wing to practice integrating with outside units and evacuating U.S. citizens in hazardous locations. There, they practiced a mock, non-combatant evacuation exercise during a week-long Samurai Readiness Inspection.

Red Flag-Alaska, a multinational, advanced aerial combat training exercise conducted multiple times per year, saw an unprecedented level of involvement from across the 176th Wing. All units from the 176th Operations Group, which include the 144th and 249th Airlift Squadrons, the 176th Air Defense Squadron and the 176th Operational Support Squadron, as well as the 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons, participated in this year's Red Flag-Alaska exercise.

Directly following Red Flag, this year marked the first time the Pacific Airlift Rally was hosted on U.S. soil, excluding the territory of Guam, and was hosted by the 176th Wing. The Pacific Airlift Rally, sponsored by the Pacific Air Forces, is a multinational military-airlift symposium for nations of the Indo-Pacific region. The symposium included informational seminars, a command-post exercise that focused on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and a field training exercise that built upon the command-post scenarios.

Polar Guard-15, an annual 176th Mission Support Group training event known locally as "Mad Bull," was held in August 2015. Located primarily at the base joint-regional training site, the event included training for radio communication, land navigation, force-on-force training, field kitchen duties, heavy equipment operation and fire suppression techniques.

Additional training exercises were conducted in Korea and New Zealand in late 2015.

Amid the high training and deployment tempos, the 176th Maintenance Group continued to pave the way, receiving accolades for its performance in 2015. In 2014, the 176th Maintenance Group commander directed the Isochronal Inspection times be reduced to 45 days per inspection. By 2015, the Maintenance Group achieved this milestone, reducing the aircraft downtime by 64 days and increasing maintenance productivity by 41 percent. Additionally, the HH-60Gs outperformed other Guard HH-60G units with an average mission capability of 8.7 percent higher than the next highest performer. Maintenance reached this metric while

having 79 personnel deployed, leaving the maintenance group's manpower at 53.8 percent fulfillment at home station.

Airmen of the 176th Air Defense Squadron had an extremely productive year at the Alaska NORAD Region Air Operations Center on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in 2015. They performed simultaneous 24/7 NORAD air sovereignty and USNORTHCOM air defense missions, defending against incursions into Alaska airspace by foreign military aircraft and other airborne threats. The ADS garnered the highest "Mission Ready" rating on the 2015 North American Aerospace Defense Command Regional Alert Force Evaluation, provided air defense for President Barack Obama's visit to Alaska and scrambled F-22 aircraft in response to Russian military jets headed toward U.S. sovereign airspace over the July Fourth holiday.

The Alaska Air National Guard's search-and-rescue mission continues to play a critical role across Alaska. The Alaska Rescue Coordination Center, manned by members of the AKANG, in early November 2015 reached its 5,326th mission and 2,223rd save since July, 1 1994, with 66 lives saved in 2015.

The Alaska Rescue Coordination Center has been operating in Alaska since 1961, but on July 1, 1994, the center became manned solely by Alaska Air National Guardsmen under the operational active-duty commander of the 11th Air Force. Since then, the men and women of the Alaska Air National Guard have been keeping watch 24 hours a day, seven days a week, coordinating an average of more than five missions a week for nearly 20 years.

To conduct these rescues, the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center often calls on the 176th Wing's 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons and their expertise in flying HH60G Pave Hawk helicopters and HC-130 King aircraft specially equipped for aerial refueling and search-and-rescue missions. The center can



Maintenance Mission. Senior Airman Marcus Hanselman, a structural apprentice with the 176th Maintenance Squadron, cuts a piece of aircraft ducting for disposal in September 2015. Photo: Tech. Sgt. N. Alicia Halla, 176th Wing Public Affairs



Top Airman. While reconstructing an engine, Senior Airman Shaun Hageman, a 168th Air Refueling Wing Vehicle Maintenance Flight vehicle mechanic, checks the torque of parts of an engine in February 2015. Hageman won several awards in 2015, including Alaska Air National Guard Airman of the Year. Photo: Master Sgt. Cornelius Mingo, 168th Air Refueling Wing

also invoke the expertise of the famed “Guardian Angels,” elite rescuers trained in combat medicine, marksmanship, special tactics, mountaineering, scuba diving, airborne and high altitude-low opening operations, and wilderness survival skills.

With 2016 underway, the 176th Wing continues to forecast a number of deployments in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, continues to protect the citizens of Alaska through its search-and-rescue commitment and continues to meet the 176th Wing commander’s top priorities of mission, standards and mentorship, thus maintaining a force ready and capable of meeting the challenges it meets in both the local and global theaters.

Welcome Home. Members of the 168th Security Forces Squadron return home in April to the Fairbanks International Airport following a six-month deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Photo: Master Sgt. Cornelius Mingo, 168th Air Refueling Wing



168th Air Refueling Wing

The 168th Air Refueling Wing, home to the KC-135 Stratotanker and based in interior Alaska at Eielson Air Force Base, maintains one of the highest operations tempos of any KC-135 aerial refueling wing. The Wing flew 3,933 mishap-free hours, delivering and flawlessly accounting for more than 20.13 million pounds of fuel to 1,819 receivers during 727 generated sorties. As the force provider for Air Force Space Command, the 213th Space Warning Squadron tracked more than 555,000 space objects and recorded in excess of 1.5 million measurable observations while maintaining a 99 percent mission capable rate.

More than 150 168th ARW Airmen deployed in support of federal and wartime missions during the year, maintaining a constant presence in the Central Command area of responsibility. The Guardians of the Last Frontier flew 686.6 combat hours and delivered more than 2.69 million pounds of fuel during 328 combat sorties while providing global reach and vigilance to support state and national objectives. Wing members received numerous accolades throughout the year, including the Air Force Logistics Unit Readiness Award, the Air Force Association’s Air National Guard Outstanding Unit Award and the Governor’s Distinguished Unit Citation.

168th ARW leadership is proud to have introduced a “Profession of Arms” segment to its weekly Wing-level meetings. The segment is based on the U.S. Air Force’s Profession of Arms Center of Excellence recommended videos that highlight one of many aspects of professionalism. The videos are well assembled, two-minute motivational spots that inspire and reaffirm our call to duty. The four goals of professionalism outlined on the PACE website are commitment, right mindset, relationships and culture. These have been overarching subjects in five- to 10-minute discussions held at the Wing-level meeting after watching one of the videos.



Mission of Mercy. Members of the 168th Medical Group join volunteer providers to treat hundreds of patients during the Alaska Mission of Mercy 2015 in Fairbanks. Volunteers at the Alaska Mission of Mercy event provided free dental care, including tooth extractions, fillings, cleanings, root canals and more. Photo: Senior Master Sgt. Danielle St. Laurent, 168th Medical Group

The Wing commander, Col. Mark Hedlund, has emphasized that group commanders use this “professionalism toolkit” in a similar way to showcase the pillars of professionalism and the resources available to senior leaders to frame a culture of professionalism rooted in shared trust and a rejuvenated commitment to the team and mission. The initiative also features one Airman per month describing why they serve and what their career aspirations are. The effects of both of these events have been profound throughout the Wing.

The Wing also focused heavily on Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness initiatives throughout the year. In April 2015, commanders and Wing personnel gathered on the drill weekend for an activity to recognize Sexual Assault Awareness Month. A team-building activity was assembled and Sexual Assault Prevention and Recognition dodgeball was played by numerous Wing members with the theme of “Don’t dodge the issue.”

OUTSTANDING PERFORMER

After four years in the Alaska Air National Guard, Senior Airman Shaun Hageman was selected as 168th Air Refueling Wing Airman of the Quarter in 2015. Hageman, a 168th Air Refueling Wing Vehicle Maintenance Flight vehicle mechanic, was later awarded 168th ARW Airman of the Year, followed by Alaska Air National Guard Airman of the Year and Alaska Serviceman of the Year. He went on to receive a nomination for National Guard Bureau Airman of the Year.

PROVIDING SERVICES AND CARE

As part of a joint-force effort, Airmen from the 168th Air Refueling Wing Medical Group provided care for veterans at the 17th annual Veterans Stand Down in Fairbanks in August 2015.

Twenty-one Airmen from the 168th Medical Group were part of a team providing services ranging from dental and eye exams to blood pressure and glucose testing, medical screenings and diabetic foot care. The joint-force team included civilian health care professionals, Soldiers stationed at Bassett Army Community Hospital and Airmen from the 354th Medical Group on Eielson Air Force Base.

Three hundred eighty-five veterans attended the event.

Members of the 168th Medical Group also participated in Alaska Mission of Mercy 2015 in Fairbanks, as volunteers treated 886 patients while providing \$849,331 in total value of care. The

Mission of Mercy concept, originating in Virginia, had volunteers donate their time, resources and unique skill sets to provide free tooth extractions, fillings, cleanings, root canals and more.

Volunteers said an important element of the Alaska Mission of Mercy is patient education, which is the most cost-effective way to reduce oral disease. A program to help patients understand the importance of good daily oral hygiene practices, healthy diet and routine preventive dental care was an essential part of the care given. Patients learned about the negative effects of soda, sugary beverages, tobacco products, the link between dental health and overall health, oral cancer and more.

The event was such a success that Alaska will host the program again in 2016.

MENTORSHIP

Airmen from the 168th Air Refueling Wing helped strengthen each other through a new program in 2015 that develops career and personal growth.

The mentorship program, Air wing Mentoring Professionals for Education and Development, or AMPED, launched in March 2015 and offers a matchmaking service for Airmen of all ranks who would like mentors.

The goal is to ensure that 168th ARW members have the opportunity to seek mentorship. Mentors can help Airmen grow professionally and personally, and Airmen don’t have to stay within their chain of command.

Airmen fill out a form identifying short- and long-term goals and aspirations, what they think mentors could help them with and what skills they would like to develop. The mentors also fill out a biography form.

Mentors, ranging from junior to senior noncommissioned officers to officers, are nominated and go through one hour of training before being matched with mentees. Based on the Airman’s goals, the mentorship program committee matches mentors’ skills with mentee’s aspirations. The committee gives the mentee three recommendations for a mentor. Once the mentee selects a mentor, they decide when and how often to meet and build their relationship independent of the program. Available worksheets help the mentor and mentee establish measurable goals and gauge progress.

At last count, there were at least 30 trained mentors and four Airmen requesting mentors.

Homeland Security & Emergency Management



Since statehood, Alaska has averaged a disaster declaration every 90 days, but between December 2014 and October 2015, Gov. Bill Walker issued nine disaster declarations. Throughout 2015, the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management responded to each disaster, overcame non-disaster challenges and made Alaska a safer place for all Alaskans.

Leadership

Mike O'Hare became the division director in May 2015 after serving as deputy director since 2008. Mike Sutton, who was previously employed in the division from 2005 to 2008, rejoined DHS&EM in June as deputy director after pursuing emergency management opportunities in the private sector.

Response

The early months of 2015 brought one of the warmest winters ever recorded in Alaska. With these warm conditions, a number of less-than-typical events occurred, including winter flooding along the Dalton Highway, the only road to oil fields that supply the trans-Alaska pipeline. The warm winter temperatures melted snow and river ice, leading to a dry spring with one of the most active wildfire seasons in decades.

The State Emergency Operations Center was activated to support a number of wildland fires that threatened populated areas. The Sockeye, Card Street and Alaska Statewide fires were all declared state disasters. On June 14, 2015, the Sockeye Fire was ignited in the Willow area, and DHS&EM activated the SEOC. The SEOC's pace of operations increased as the Card Street fire began on the Kenai Peninsula the next day. During the ensuing days and weeks, DHS&EM worked with state, federal and National Guard partners to ensure all local requests for emergency assistance were met.

By July 19, more than 304 fires were burning across the state, and Alaska was on track to surpass its record of acres burned set in 2004. Thankfully, wet weather later in the month reduced the wildfire threat, and the state did not surpass the record.



Sitka Landslide. Extreme rainfall and high winds in Sitka created multiple landslides, killing three people in August. This event prompted Gov. Bill Walker to declare a state disaster. Photo: Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM

In August, planned and unplanned events once again required activation of the SEOC. A Unified Command was established between the Department of Public Safety, Department of Health and Social Services, and Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to provide assistance for three simultaneous events: a mudslide in Sitka, a wildfire in Kodiak Island Borough and a visit from President Barack Obama.

Plans

COMMUNITY AND CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION PLANNING

The revised State Emergency Operations Plan, scheduled to be completed at the end of 2015, includes a new Cyber Incident Annex, which will be tested during Alaska Shield 2016.

The team completed 17 new Small Community Emergency Response plans, bringing the total number completed to 52 with six more in process. DHS&EM visited eight Local Emergency Planning Committees in 2015, participating in meetings and assisting with various emergency management preparedness and planning events and issues.

The team also completed three security vulnerability assessments this year and facilitated several Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness technician courses, workshops and tabletop exercises to increase preparedness/planning and response to a myriad of hazardous materials events.

Eleven new organizations joined the Alaska Partnership for Infrastructure Protection this year. APIP is working with chambers of commerce to strengthen disaster preparedness in the private sector and working with FEMA Region X to encourage interstate private sector collaboration, primarily via the National Business Emergency Operations Center.

MITIGATION

The Mitigation Team successfully pursued and received \$6.35 million in all-hazard, tsunami and earthquake grants and managed \$17.5 million in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Pre-disaster Mitigation grants.

The team also researched and coordinated the submission of more than \$200 million in mitigation projects under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant-National Disaster Resilience Competition. The final phase of competition ended in October, and results are expected in January 2016.

Mitigation conducted a southeast regional Tsunami Operations workshop in Ketchikan in February 2015 with 23 representatives from 14 remote at-risk communities participating. They also wrote and/or updated 21 Local Hazard Mitigation plans, bringing the total completed to 82.

CYBERSECURITY

DHS&EM's cybersecurity liaison initiated and organized a formal critical cybersecurity training program for the division in coordination with Enterprise Technology Services.



Disaster Declaration. Gov. Bill Walker signs a state disaster declaration for the Sitka landslides that killed three people in August. The disaster declaration triggered the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management's activation of the state's Individual and Public Assistance programs to help the community.

Photo: Sgt. Marisa Lindsay, DMVA Public Affairs

Disaster Assistance

In 2015, the State Disaster Assistance Section, consisting of Individual Assistance (private property) and Public Assistance (public infrastructure), responded to a significant number of disaster events and ongoing grant management activities.

Individual Assistance staff processed 114 Individual Family Grant applications, resulting in more than \$279,000 in awards. Forty-five of the Individual Family Grant applications were in need of a Temporary Housing application. Forty-five Temporary Housing applications were processed with more than \$253,000 awarded to help displaced Alaskans find or repair their dwellings.

Through the Emergency Mutual Aid Compact program, states may request disaster assistance from other participating states. Because Alaska is one of only a handful of states with active Individual Assistance programs, we have the resources to help other states with IA staffing needs. Two state Individual Assistance staff members deployed to California in response to its federally declared wildfire disaster. They helped California emergency response organizations manage their housing mission and Disaster Recovery centers. They also played a major role in the delivery of FEMA programs to the 3,534 families affected by the disaster.

During response to the 2015 summer Alaska wildfires, Individual Assistance staff orchestrated Emergency Mutual Aid Compact assistance from nationally recognized mass care expert Mike Whitehead from Florida. He helped clarify and organize our guidance documents and train our Mass Care Task Force, resulting in draft emergency operation plans and tools to better serve our residents in their time of need.

Public Assistance staff members are managing 12 federal disasters with 416 individual restoration projects currently active. There are also 16 state disasters open with 52 restoration projects active. These 468 projects represent approximately \$140 million in essential disaster recovery infrastructure projects.

During 2015 Public Assistance, staff conducted 56 project final inspections and project close-outs including site visits across the state to affected jurisdictions. Public Assistance staff participated in quarterly disaster project reconciliations with FEMA Region X and conducted Public Assistance program training to six jurisdictions. Public Assistance processed \$31,483,946 in federal restoration project payments and \$171,536 in state restoration projects to program applicants and contractors during 2015.

Grants

The division manages a number of grants that help local communities better prepare for disasters. DHS&EM handled more than \$3.1 million in Emergency Management Performance Grant dollars to sustain and enhance state and local emergency management capabilities across the Last Frontier.

In addition, DHS&EM administers State Homeland Security Grant funding, which provided more than \$2.9 million to state and local jurisdictions to address planning, organization, equipment, training and exercise needs in acts of terrorism or other catastrophic events.

In 2015, DHS&EM provided more than \$300,000 to 21 community-based Local Emergency Planning committees to fund activities. Local Emergency Planning committees use these funds to track hazardous materials within their communities and initiate community-based emergency preparedness activities.

Preparedness

EXERCISE

The exercise team began preparations for Alaska Shield 2016 in which 13 local communities and approximately 25 state and federal agencies will participate. Additionally, the team supported two Internal Continuity of Operations drills and assisted more than 10 communities with local workshops/exercises.

TRAINING

DHS&EM staff partnered with local jurisdictions and other state agencies to deliver more than 37 training events. The training staff approved 524 individuals to attend training offered by our national training partners.

OUTREACH

DHS&EM had a record-breaking year with participation in The Great Alaska ShakeOut in October 2015, registering more than 128,000 Alaskans to practice Drop, Cover, Hold On. By comparison, 103,000 registered for the March 2014 ShakeOut and 84,000 for the October 2014 ShakeOut.) Alaska's Earthquake Simulator and Outreach staff made numerous appearances and presentations across Southcentral and Interior Alaska.

The Outreach team also managed two preparedness conferences for emergency managers from around the state. The spring conference had 150 attendees with sessions addressing both urban and rural Alaska challenges. The fall conference had 260 attendees and offered sessions on mass casualty and fatality management, as well as protecting critical infrastructure in preparation for Alaska Shield 2016.



Disaster Assessment. Mariel Fonteyn, center, of the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management, conducts a preliminary disaster assessment in the Denali Borough with Clay Walker, borough mayor, and Paddy Tatum, a former member of the Denali Borough Planning Commission, following summer wildfires.

Photo: Courtesy Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management

Alaska Military Youth Academy



Community Service Fun.
Cadets participate in the annual Color Run in May on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson as a part of Service to Community, one of the ChalleNGe Program's Eight Core Components.
Photo: Roman Schara, Alaska Military Youth Academy

The National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program is a 17.5-month program for young adults who are failing in a traditional high school setting or have dropped out of high school. The program is subject to the oversight of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs within the Department of Defense. The National Guard Bureau administers the program nationally, and the Alaska National Guard adjutant general and Alaska Military Youth Academy program director manage the local site.

The Alaska Military Youth Academy formally opened its doors in January 1994 as one of the original 10 pilot programs and has grown along with the national program. There are currently 35 active sites nationally in 29 states, the District of Columbia and the territory of Puerto Rico. The program leads, trains and mentors 16- to 18-year-old young men and women so that they become productive citizens. The first AMYA class graduated 43 cadets; the most recent program class (2015-2) graduated 154 cadets.

The proven Youth ChalleNGe Program model uses a quasi-military, full-time,

tuition-free residential environment to strengthen the academic and social skills of program participants in the Eight Core Components of the program while encouraging emotional growth. The 17.5-month program includes a 5.5-month residential phase followed by a 12-month post-residential phase. This approach recognizes that opportunities for development are the outgrowth of positive changes in the physical, emotional and situational elements of the young adult's life. AMYA runs two residential classes per year, one beginning in April and the other in October.

The residential phase of the program is a 22-week experiential model conducted in Alaska National Guard facilities with separate sleeping quarters for male and female cadets. The residential phase begins with a two-week acclimation period, which is an extension of the screening process. During this time, the teens are referred to as "candidates" and are assessed for their ability to handle stress and program structure; propensity for gang activity and/or bullying activity, either as a victim or an inflictor; and a desire to succeed and complete the program.

During the acclimation period, candidates experience a caring, disciplined, tough-love environment that tests their physical, mental and emotional commitment to the program. Focus is on group and individual discipline, structure and goal-setting, while the staff provides medical service, emotional support, meals, counseling and instruction. The candidates who successfully complete this period earn the distinction of becoming an AMYA "cadet."

During the remaining 20 weeks of the residential phase, daily activities and experiences such as academics, vocational technical education, outdoor adventure training and service to the community add value to the transformation process. These elements build the cadet's education level and employment skills while contributing to a growing sense of community involvement and commitment.

During the winter and summer of 2015, eligible AMYA cadets successfully completed credit recovery and were awarded their high school diploma or General Educational Development Test by examination. Through the combined

efforts of the AMYA Academics section team of dedicated professionals, supporting staff and adult mentors, cadets in the spring 2015 class raised their average math and reading level by 1.4 and 1.12 grade levels respectively during the intense 17 weeks of instruction and assessment.

Cadets can earn up to 7.5 credits toward their secondary education, which brings them closer to the 21 credits the state of Alaska requires for graduation. This puts students returning to a secondary institution on par with their peers. Because the program is a secondary education institution accredited by AdvancED/NWAC, eligible students can receive an AMYA high school diploma when they attain 21 credits, complete the Armed Services Aptitude Battery, American College Test, Scholastic Aptitude Test or Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development WorkKeys Assessment. AMYA is certified to offer participants preparation and testing for the General Educational Development Test if they prefer this high school equivalency credential.

The Alaska Military Youth Academy also offers vocational technical education programs that include small engine repair, welding and heavy equipment simulation and culinary arts. The courses introduce cadets to available entry-level career pathways, teach workplace safety, impart technical knowledge and instill the confidence for them to transition into the workforce.

AMYA was selected as one of 10 pilot sites to offer digital education in partnership with the National Youth Foundation Everfi's Radius Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics course.

Radius is an eight- to 10-hour, self-directed online course that teaches students math and coding concepts while exposing them to STEM careers. AMYA also holds the distinction of being a satellite WorkKeys testing site with the authority to award Career Ready Certificates to eligible students.

On weekends, cadets are afforded the opportunity to support the community with service projects and to engage in Alaska-themed outdoor events such as rappelling, jump tower, seasonal activities, commemorative events, ceremonies and special event participation.

Cadets develop a Post-Residential Action Plan beginning in Week 3 as a goal-setting process with the guidance of staff and support from their mentors to provide a point of reference, discussion and focus when they return to their communities following graduation. Some of the goals may include completion of secondary and post-secondary education, entering the workplace or joining the military. Through the collaborative efforts of AMYA staff, parents and mentors, 100 percent of the graduates of 2015-1 and 2015-2 were placed in one of these categories.

The goal of the post-residential phase is for graduates to apply the strategies and learning in transition to serve as a productive member of society. Additionally, graduates recognize the need to refine their method of goal attainment while building upon the mentoring relationship. Mentors are considered to be a key element to sustaining cadet success and often one of the few healthy adult relationships in the earliest stages of the post-residential phase. AMYA has been blessed with a large number of dedicated adult community



Senior Trip. Team Leader Linda Dudley and cadet Amanda Polintan from Anchorage team up on ice skates during the winter 2015 senior trip at the Curtis Menard Sports Complex in Wasilla.

Photo: Roman Schara, Alaska Military Youth Academy

volunteers from across the state who share the cadets' desire for long-term success.

The Academy's staff remains committed to its mission of "helping intervene and reclaim the lives of Alaska's at-risk youth and produce graduates with the values, skills, education and self-discipline necessary to succeed as adults." AMYA is considered among the top ChalleNGe programs in the nation.

After more than 23 years of operation, AMYA has graduated 4,665 cadets and awarded more than 3,100 high school diplomas and/or GED certificates to deserving graduates who are demonstrating tremendous success in communities across Alaska and around the world. The academy's track record of sustained success strategically positions it to assist the next generation of families of Alaska.



Performance Perfection. Third Platoon cadets from Class 2015-2 lie in the prone position during the non-regulated portion of the final Drill and Ceremonies Competition at the Curtis Menard Memorial Sports Complex in Wasilla in February. Photo: Roman Schara, Alaska Military Youth Academy



Alaska State Defense Force



Exercise Partnerships. Lt. Col. John James, Alaska State Defense Force, assists with mock victim transport during the “Rock and a Hard Place” exercise in Homer in March 2015. The Defense Support to Civilian Authorities exercise was managed by the Department of Health and Social Services and partnered with several agencies to include the Alaska State Defense Force, Alaska National Guard and Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management. Photo: Staff Sgt. Balinda Dresel, DMVA Public Affairs

Military Exercises

STATE ACTIVE DUTY FOR ALASKA FIRES 2015

From June 17 to Aug. 14, 2015, Alaska State Defense Force personnel were activated in response to Alaska wildfires, which burned more than 5 million acres in Alaska. Fires such as the Sockeye Fire near Willow and the Card Street Fire on the Kenai Peninsula burned homes and threatened nearby communities. Alaska State Defense Force personnel provided victim assistance throughout the fire season in support of the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management. Members of the State Defense Force also served in the Joint Operations Center.

“ROCK AND A HARD PLACE” EXERCISE

In March 2015, the Alaska State Defense Force supported the “Rock and a Hard Place” Exercise in Homer. Duties performed included traffic control, secondary communications, shelter set up and placing victims on litters onto evacuation helicopters.

FIELD TRAINING EXERCISE

In September 2015, Alaska State Defense Force soldiers completed Warrior Skills training by an encampment and field exercise at Alcantra armory in Wasilla. Many Soldier tasks were accomplished

including security and perimeter operations, a field encampment and communications to headquarters.

VALDEZ EXERCISE

The Alaska State Defense Force supported the Valdez Local Emergency Planning Committee to assist the Valdez Fire Department and the Valdez Police Department in an active-shooter exercise. The Alaska State Defense Force provided support for the incident commander during the October exercise.

Engaging Communities

OPERATION STAND DOWN

This year, the Stand Down committee gave an award to the Alaska State Defense Force for supporting the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Stand Down committee for 25 years. Each year, the Alaska State Defense Force augments Operation Stand Down events for veterans in Anchorage and Fairbanks. These events focus on providing access to social services and health care services for veterans.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Other community events augmented by the Alaska State Defense Force included Polynesian Flag Day, the Governor’s Picnic and Special Olympics. The Alaska State Defense Force also assisted the Wounded Heroes program and the Kenai

River Foundation to provide free fishing trips and accommodations to wounded warriors.

RURAL ENGAGEMENT

In 2015, the Alaska State Defense Force actively planned to create military units in rural areas across the state. The Alaska State Defense Force will create an Alaska State Defense Force unit in Bethel in 2016.



Stand Down Support. Brig. Gen. Roger Holl, commander of the Alaska State Defense Force, receives an award from Shawn Duthie, board chairman for Stand Down, in front of a crowd of more than 250 veterans at the 23rd annual Stand Down for veterans in need at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport in October 2015. Stand Down is an annual event designed to be a one-stop shop for homeless or near-homeless veterans where they can access key resources they need. Photo: Chief Warrant Officer Two Jeffrey Arnold, Alaska Army National Guard



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