

2017 Annual Report

State of Alaska

Department Of Military & Veterans' Affairs



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Contact DMVA

State of Alaska
Department of Military & Veterans' Affairs
P.O. Box 5800
JBER, AK 99505-5800
Phone (907) 428-6003

DMVA VISION AND CORE VALUES

Vision: Through constant collaboration internally and with external partners, DMVA 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 in the same direction"

We rely on

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



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS' AFFAIRS

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER/THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

Laurel J. Hummel

The Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard

Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs

The mission of the Alaska Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs (DMVA) is to provide 1) military forces to accomplish military missions in the state or around the world; 2) homeland security and defense; 3) emergency preparedness, response, and recovery; 4) veterans services; and 5) youth military style training and education. As Commissioner and Adjutant General, I do my best to ensure the men and women of the DMVA work together to fulfill every aspect of this mission, from deployments overseas to protect our nation and response to catastrophic natural disasters, to assisting veterans during their greatest times of need and mentoring the next generation of leaders at the Alaska Military Youth Academy. It is my distinct honor to lead this organization of dedicated Alaskans.

Leading a successful team begins with establishing a shared vision and common efforts, supported by core values. Our vision at DMVA outlines four major common lines of effort across the entire department. Through constant collaboration internally and with external partners, DMVA 1) implements a viable Arctic strategy, 2) increases emergency management capacity, and 3) expands engagement with Alaskan communities, all while 4) achieving federal mission assurance. We strive for success in ongoing missions in support of the active component and being ready to go to war; doing all we can within the federal Departments of Defense (DOD) and Homeland Security (DHS) to promote 1) – 3) above. Everything we do as an organization directly supports one of these lines of effort. This focus makes us more efficient with our people, equipment, and fiscal resources.

VIABLE ARCTIC STRATEGY

Alaska makes the U.S. an Arctic Nation. Our Joint Staff ensures National Guard and Alaska interests are taken into account on DOD working groups charged with crafting policy and identifying requirements for Arctic operations. We are the primary member of the Office of the Secretary of Defense/Northern Command Arctic Strategy working group, and serve as a Member of US Northern Command Arctic Capabilities Working Group. In 2017, we continued our leadership of the National Guard Arctic Interest Council, a group engaging nearly 20 other states in policy development, legislation, training, equipment procurement, and sustainment.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CAPACITY

DMVA's emergency planning and disaster response professionals continued their impressive record of helping dozens of Alaska communities prepare for the worst to minimize negative impacts and then helping respond to actual disasters. They assist Alaskans in facing a wide array of trouble, including floods, fires, earthquakes, volcanoes, storms, and infrastructure failures, and in 2017, we responded to more requests for technical, logistical, and financial support than ever. "Always Ready, Always There" may be the Guard motto, but it applies equally to the civilian side of the house at DMVA.

Search and rescue training keeps skills sharp for wartime deployment. The same capabilities our service members use to locate and rescue downed airmen are used to the benefit of Alaskans; over 60 civilian saves have been awarded to the Alaska National Guard.

We deployed 108 Alaskans -- 45 AKANG, 59 AKARNG, and four ASDF service members -- for hurricane relief activities in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and United States Virgin Islands. Previously, only National Guard troops conducted emergency response missions outside Alaska. The four ASDF Soldiers who operated emergency communications equipment alongside our Guardsmen in Puerto Rico were the first ever to deploy outside Alaska, and proved the reorganization of the ASDF is paying dividends.

ENGAGE WITH ALASKA COMMUNITIES

The Alaska National Guard is deeply proud of its roots in the Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG), and we are working hard to expand our ties to rural Alaska. We recognize our retired and retiring rural service members, and are on a constant search for former ATG Members and their families to make sure all receive the benefits they earned.

Lending a hand in Alaska communities, Guard Members contributed over 30,000 hours of volunteer service this year. Our Counterdrug support team continues to help address the scourges of illegal drug traffic and opioid abuse. Operation ARCTIC CARE, a Guard and active component joint effort, brought health care services to hundreds of rural Alaskans. And 2017 marked the 61st anniversary of Operation Santa Claus, this year delivering elves and a planeload of goodies to the village of Saint Michael.

Meanwhile, the entire organization continues to work on character development and grow the next generation of leaders through our Ethical Fitness program.

FEDERAL MISSION ASSURANCE

The federal portions of the Alaska Organized Militia, the Army and Air National Guard, continue to train, deploy, operate, and return home as part of their federal mission sets. Our operations spanned the globe, from ICE-X in the Arctic Ocean and DEEP FREEZE in Antarctica, to KHAAN QUEST in Mongolia and NORTHERN EDGE here at home. These successful exercises and operations are a testament to how integrated the Total Force is here in Alaska.

Last year, we made headlines when the Guard took ownership of C-17 aircraft – a first. This year, the big news was the arrival of the HC-130J, the newest and most capable search and rescue aircraft. In fulfilling our federal mission, we transported more than 4,000 people, moved over 7,000 tons of cargo globally, offloaded 11.5 million pounds of aviation fuel, and supported major operations such as FREEDOM’S SENTINEL, INHERENT RESOLVE, and ENDURING FREEDOM. Our 24/7 missions are critical to public safety, state security, and national defense, and include Space Warning and Surveillance, Ground-based Missile Defense, Fighter Refueling Capability, Aerospace Warning and Control, and operating the Rescue Coordination Center.

Civil engineers of the 168th Wing conducted their annual training in Latvia, improving infrastructure with a key NATO partner. Here at home, Army Guard engineers continued to improve the runway at Old Harbor through Innovative Readiness Training, a true force enabler for Alaska. In a genuine win-win situation, units conduct federal mission training while executing projects that benefit local communities. Our cargo aircraft continue to move people and equipment around the world. We distributed 11.5 million pounds of aviation fuel, with a large portion of that going to active component aircraft in flight. Our 168th Wing refueled the equivalent over 115,000 cars – in mid-air at 450 miles per hour. We definitely run a full service station.

We continued to deploy Soldiers and Airmen – 295 of them in 2017, or about 7% of our force – in support of our Nation’s security objectives. We provided 189 service members for Operation Inherent Resolve in Iraq and Syria, 82 for Operation Freedom’s Sentinel in Afghanistan, four for Operation Deep Freeze, and sent ten to Kuwait, six to the Horn of Africa, and four to Afghanistan as Mongolian Liaisons.

As always, our Alaska National Guard is not solely a one weekend a month, two weeks a year outfit. Our everyday missions keep Alaska safe every second of every day.

Alaskans have lots of reasons to be proud of the men and women of their Alaska National Guard, and we look forward to serving our neighbors in the years ahead.

ALASKA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Brigadier General Joseph J. Streff, Commander Assistant Adjutant General – Army

The nearly 1,800 Soldiers of the Alaska Army National Guard (AKARNG) – the “Arctic Warriors” – are proud to serve our Nation and the great state of Alaska. Soldiers serve in the 38th Troop Command, the 297th Regional Support Group, and in Joint Force Headquarters, located in nineteen readiness centers and installations across Alaska. We fulfill our federal and state missions through four major lines of effort: 1) provide a relevant, ready, and available force; 2) continually improve AKARNG professionalism; 3) maintain subject matter expertise in the Arctic domain; and 4) partner and align with appropriate agencies.

This year, following a significant force structure reorganization in 2016, The AKARNG continued to improve the overall readiness of our three major commands as a professional and ready force. The AKARNG maintained ready units and Soldiers available to support Governor Walker and fellow Alaskans via domestic operations, as well as ready to deploy worldwide in support of the National Military Strategy. AKARNG “Arctic Warriors” trained at home and overseas, deployed abroad to Afghanistan, Kuwait, and the Horn of Africa, and supported domestic operations in Alaska, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

38th TROOP COMMAND

The 38th Troop Command consists of the 49th Missile Defense Battalion (Ground-Based Midcourse Missile Defense, or GMD) at Fort Greely, the 1-297th Infantry Battalion with an attached Forward Support Company, the 1-207th Aviation Battalion (Air Assault), which includes Charlie Company, the 2-641st Aviation (Fixed Wing), and Golf Company, the 2-104th Aviation (MEDEVAC), and includes a public affairs detachment, civil support team, contingency contracting team, regional training institute, military police battalion, recruiting and retention command, and a medical command.

49TH MISSILE DEFENSE BATTALION

More than 200 Active Guard Reserve (AGR) GMD Soldiers defend the nation against ballistic missile attack, 24/7, 365 days a year. Routine readiness inspections ensure fire direction crews are constantly ready to respond to any missile threat. The Military Police Ground-based Interceptor (GBI) Security Company provides site security for the Missile Defense Complex.

297th REGIONAL SUPPORT GROUP

The 297th Regional Support Group consists of the 207th Construction Management Team, 207th Engineer Utilities Detachment, 134th Public Affairs Detachment, 49th Personnel Detachment (Theater Gateway), 297th Network Support Company, and the 297th Military Police Company. The 761st Military Police Battalion, part of the AKARNG force structure since 2008, deactivated in January 2017.

JOINT FORCE HEADQUARTERS

Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQ – Army) maintains the Recruiting and Retention Battalion, 207th Multi-Functional Training Regiment, the Medical Detachment, and the JFHQ Detachment. The unit conducts intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations for the federal government and conducts Defense Support to Civil Authorities (DSCA) for the state.

OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENTS AND TRAINING

The AKARNG deployed and conducted training operations around the world. Two liaison teams undertook year-long deployments to Afghanistan, mentoring the Mongolian Armed Forces in support of Operation Freedom's Sentinel, a partnership that began in 2004. Nine Soldiers departed in October 2017 for training for a year-long deployment in support of Operation Enduring Freedom (Spartan Shield). Seven AKARNG Soldiers helped fly over 494 hours, transporting over 330 people and 15,086 pounds of cargo during a 10-month deployment to Djibouti in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Four Soldiers participated in Exercise Tiger Balm in July, an exercise with the Singapore Armed Forces to enhance regional security, interoperability, and military relationships. Six AKARNG Soldiers participated in Operation Pacific Reach 2017 at Pohang, Republic of Korea (ROK), testing U.S. and ROK forces' joint logistics capabilities, including abilities to transfer solid and liquid cargo from sea to shore, to validate the distribution process of essential items, and to operate the loading and unloading of military airlift.

Khaan Quest 2017, the annual multinational peacekeeping exercise hosted by Mongolian Armed Forces, brought 115 Alaska National Guard Soldiers and Airmen to Mongolia for the tenth consecutive year. This year, two AKARNG Soldiers trained the Mongolian National Emergency Management Agency public affairs team in Dalanzadgad, Mongolia, as part of a US Army humanitarian assistance and disaster relief Pacific Resilience exercise, sharpening strategic communication during emergency management scenarios.

RURAL ENGAGEMENT

The AKARNG stationing plan positioned units in nineteen locations throughout Alaska: Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Wasilla, Fairbanks, Fort Greely, Kenai, Kodiak, Valdez, Juneau, Sitka, Klawock, Ketchikan, Bethel, Hooper Bay, Kipnuk, Quinhagak, Kwethluk, Nome, Kotzebue, and Utqiagvik. Aviation support and operating facilities are located in Anchorage, Nome, Bethel, Fairbanks, and Juneau. The plan aligns armories and readiness centers with personnel strength, promotes growth in Guard participation in rural Alaska, sustains unit and Soldier training and readiness, and maximizes opportunities for qualified Alaskans to serve.

The AKARNG Construction and Facilities Management Office (CFMO) completed the Utqiagvik barracks construction project. The barracks are available to all Department of Defense entities, generating an agency-wide sustainment option for training and emergency response in the Arctic.

In 2017, the CFMO finalized a plan for transferring ownership of former Scout armories and facilities. Disposing of vacant or underutilized facilities reduces annual operating costs and mitigates risk and liability from unauthorized access. Due to complex ownership, environmental issues, and local interest in these facilities, the AKARNG works with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, National Guard Bureau (NGB), and State of Alaska to turn properties over to new users. Some 60 properties are slated for divestiture; nine are complete, 10 began the process in 2017, and the remainder will follow over the next four years. "Operation Clean Sweep" removed equipment and other Guard property prior to divestiture.

AKARNG received full funding for drill pay and travel, resulting in significant improvements in unit and individual readiness, and positively affected training, recruitment, and retention. NGB granted our request for increased authority for reimbursement of travel-related expenses for qualifying Soldiers. AGR armory readiness NCOs in Bethel, Kodiak, Kenai, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, and Juneau provide full-time support to part-time drilling Soldiers, their families, and military retirees. They also act as liaisons to communities and local and state agencies, trained to assist civil authorities in case of a local emergency.

AKARNG units and Recruiting and Retention Battalion (RRB), actively participated in and supported community organizations, programs, and venues statewide. Despite a significant reduction in the RRB marketing budget in 2017, the AKARNG maximized its resources and participated in over 130 events in Alaskan communities, with future plans for many more.

A highlight of the year's community events calendar was an awards and veterans recognition ceremony at the 30th Annual Lower Kuskokwim School District 1A Coastal Conference boys and girls basketball tournament at Bethel Regional High School. The local VFW provided U.S. flags for spectators, and the AKARNG presented awards, recognized individual Soldiers' accomplishments and gave Freedom Salute coins to all Veterans in attendance.

Soldiers with Arctic expertise are critical to maintaining readiness for state and federal missions, and at our request in 2016, the National Guard Bureau authorized a three-year pilot program to bolster recruiting efforts in rural Alaska. This year, seven rural Soldiers, from villages including Tuntutuliak, Fort Yukon, and Stebbins have enlisted under the pilot program.

The Department of Defense Innovative Readiness Training (IRT) program allows military units to assist civilian communities and organizations with projects such as construction and health care initiatives. In March and April, twenty-one AKARNG personnel and three UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters transported Air Force and Navy Reserve personnel who provided health and dental care services to the Kodiak communities of Karluk, Akhiok, Old Harbor, Larsen Bay, Port Lions, and Ouzinkie as part of Arctic Care 2017.

The 207th Engineer Utilities Detachment (EUD) conducted training in Old Harbor on Kodiak Island in support of the 4th Marine Aircraft Wing and the Old Harbor Native Corporation IRT project. Soldiers participated in horizontal construction operations and strengthened their heavy equipment operator proficiency.

The federally funded, full-time AKARNG Military Funeral Honors team provided outstanding support to Alaska Soldiers, Veterans, and families with over 280 missions in more than 60 communities since 2015.

DEFENSE SUPPORT OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES

As part of emergency management planning and response, the AKARNG provides Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) when needed. The Army Guard worked with partner agencies to identify state emergency response capability gaps, and executed 14 Mission Response Packages to improve AKARNG capabilities and response timeliness. AKARNG participation in the state emergency management exercise Alaska Shield improved interagency interoperability and emergency response.

The 1-207th Aviation Battalion and the State Army Aviation Office provided fixed wing and rotary wing airlift, wildfire suppression, and search and rescue support statewide. In May 2017, the AKARNG completed Department of Interior - Office of Aviation Services requirements for aviation wildland firefighting operations, and AKARNG Aviation conducted seven Rescue Coordination Center (RCC) search

and rescue missions, earning 4 saves in fiscal year 2017. RCC missions included rescue of two men overdue on an all-terrain vehicle trip from White Mountain to Nome, flying a doctor and a paramedic to the Red Dog Mine, and then transporting the patient to Kotzebue when civilian air ambulances were grounded by poor weather, and rescuing several groups of stranded snowmachiners.

AKARNG DSCA missions extended beyond Alaska's borders. In support of Operation Strong Guardian in January 2017, 47 Soldiers from the 297th Military Police Company and Airmen from the 176th and 168th Wings joined forces with more than 7,500 National Guard Soldiers and Airmen from 44 states, three territories, and the District of Columbia to provide security support to local law enforcement for the 58th Presidential Inauguration.

The AKARNG also provided hurricane relief efforts to the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico. Units provided logistics support, communications expertise, and operation of the Joint Incident Site Communications Capability system, providing critical voice, data, video, and radio communications.

TOTAL FORCE PARTNERSHIPS

The AKARNG continued to strengthen partnership with U.S. Army Alaska (USARAK) in training, logistics, aviation, Small Unit Support Vehicle (SUSV) maintenance, tool loans, M50 mask joint fielding, and cold weather equipment testing and procurement. Regarding Arctic ground mobility vehicles, the AKARNG has requested that NGB support USARAK's Joint All-weather/All-terrain Support Vehicle (JAASV) initial capabilities document, which was approved by the Department of the Army as a requirement to compete for funding in 2019-2023. The AKARNG supported USARAK with rotary and fixed wing airlift missions throughout the year, including participation in the Extreme Cold Weather and High Altitude Mountaineering Equipment Symposium at Fort Wainwright. Total force partnership program training initiatives tested associated unit opportunities, and the NGB has agreed to evaluate future association opportunities with the active component for the AKARNG.

Operation Colony Glacier, a joint annual mission to recover human remains and aircraft debris from the 1952 crash of a U.S. Air Force C-124 Globemaster II continued as a partnership between AKARNG's 1-207th Aviation and the USAF 3rd Wing. So far, recovery efforts have identified 37 of the 52 service members who perished. The mission will continue as long as debris and remains appear or until extraction becomes too dangerous.

"ARCTIC WARRIORS"

The AKARNG continues to recruit skilled Soldiers with Arctic expertise throughout the state to ensure every qualified Alaskan has an opportunity to serve. We are committed to equipping, training, and retaining the best Soldiers to be always ready to perform our federal and state missions. We invest in a resilient force by providing Soldiers and families the resources, time, and opportunities to be successful Citizen Soldiers.

The AKARNG made significant improvements across the organization, from personnel management to medical readiness, operations and training, property accountability, network support, resource management, and construction and facilities management. Improving professionalism and ethical fitness remains an ongoing line of effort of the highest priority.

The AKARNG will continue to pursue major initiatives in the upcoming years, including associate unit opportunities with the active component military, increased rural engagement and growing rural Guard membership, aviation force structure realignment to increase heavy lift capability, modernization of equipment and facilities, and dedicated funding for drill and training travel programs. These initiatives

will ensure continued mission success in maintaining ready units and Soldiers available to support the Governor and fellow Alaskans for domestic operations while ready to deploy worldwide in support of the National Military Strategy.

THE ALASKA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Brigadier General Karen E. Mansfield, Commander Assistant Adjutant General – Air

The Alaska Air National Guard (AKANG) maintained an extremely high operational tempo and deployment pace in 2017, enabling global mobility, airlifting over 7,000 tons of cargo, transferring over 11.5 million pounds of fuel to over 1,200 receivers, and logging nearly 20,000 flight hours. Airmen provided 24/7 year-round missile warning and space surveillance, tracking over 279,000 objects, and controlled over 800 local and regional joint and combined training sorties, executing 90 search and rescue missions, and saving 26 lives. In any given month, 30-40 AKANG members were deployed and performed superbly in worldwide operations and exercises.

The AKANG consists of two Wings, the 168th Wing (168 WG) in Interior Alaska and the 176th Wing (176 WG) in the Anchorage Bowl. Both fulfill federal and state missions by integrating seamlessly into all Department of Defense (DoD), active component military, Air Reserve Component, and Defense Support to Civil Authorities operations.

The 168 WG includes the 168th Air Refueling Squadron at Eielson Air Force Base near Fairbanks and the 213th Space Warning Squadron at Clear Air Force Station (AFS) outside of Healy, and encompasses the 168th Operations Support, Civil Engineer, Logistics Readiness, and Security Forces Squadrons, Maintenance and Medical Groups, and Communications and Force Support Flights.

The 176 WG, an elite force of some 1,500 professional Airmen headquartered at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) in Anchorage, includes the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center (AKRCC), the 210th, 211th, and 212th Rescue Squadrons (RQS), the 176th Operations Support, Air Defense, Civil Engineer, Logistics Readiness, Security Forces, and Maintenance Squadrons, the 249th Airlift Squadron, and the Communications and Maintenance Operations Flights.

168TH WING

The 168 WG, with nine KC-135 Stratotankers, sees one of the highest operations tempos among 90 Air National Guard (ANG) wings. A shift to long-term, full-time funding enables the 168 WG to provide 24/7 tanker access for the Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Command and the Air Mobility Command, and saved significant funds for both by eliminating the need for Outside crews to perform temporary duty to Alaska. The 168 WG successfully maintained an extremely high availability and reliability rate – equal to that of annual Middle East deployments – due to Eielson’s strategic location, demand for tanker support to Alaska-based receivers, proximity to the Joint Pacific Alaska Range Complex, and PACAF’s use of 168 WG tankers for missions throughout the Pacific theater.

The 168 WG's real-world operational tempo kept technical skills sharp, and leadership focused on continued growth and professional development of its members by re-energizing the Airmen Mentoring Professionals for Education and Development program, facilitating long-term mentorship on career planning, work-life balance, effective ratings, dealing with stress, managing deployments, and other professional challenges.

176TH WING

The 176 WG operates and maintains eight C-17 Globemaster III, four HC-130J Combat King II, and six HH-60 Pave Hawk aircraft. The wing conducts federal missions of Strategic and Tactical Airlift, Combat Search and Rescue, and Agile Combat Support for Air Expeditionary Force taskings.

The highly skilled and motivated Airmen of the 176 WG employ leading edge strategies, tactics, techniques, and procedures. These innovative Airmen recently developed a long-range search and rescue mission capability in anticipation of a mass casualty event in the Arctic. The wing's culture is one of respect, empowerment, safety, and compliance with DoD, Air Force, National Guard Bureau, and The Adjutant General's policy directives. Leaders are accountable and committed to unfailingly doing the right thing and are responsible stewards of the taxpayers' dollars.

The 176 WG is poised to expand into new missions and continues to forecast and prepare for upcoming deployments around the world. We proactively seek opportunities to establish and maintain healthy, mutually beneficial relationships with total force and mission partners, community and state leaders and agencies, and myriad relevant federal offices.

OVERSEAS DEPLOYMENTS AND TRAINING

The 212th RQS deployed to Afghanistan, providing continuous Personnel Recovery alert. At home, the unit continued to excel in numerous search and rescue missions, grueling overland training missions in the Brooks Range, and a groundbreaking two-day dive search of an overturned fishing vessel.

Members of the 176th CES joined 168 WG and NATO allies to Riga, Latvia, where they renovated a school for special needs children. At home, they executed over \$5M in construction projects, enabling two aircraft conversions and improving the solid platform for 176 WG operations.

The 168th Force Support Flight received the 2016 Governor's Trophy for attaining 100% personnel accountability and was a pivotal link in the successful deployment of 351 wing personnel worldwide. The 176th Maintenance Squadron reorganized due to divestiture of eight C-130 and four HC-130 aircraft, gain of four HC-130J aircraft, and acquisition of eight C-17s, accomplishing necessary retraining ahead of schedule. The unit is pending deployment to the Middle East in support of counter-terrorism operations. The 168th Maintenance Group's achieved a 76% fully mission capable rate since May 2016, enabling support of real world missions and proving the wing is, indeed, the Arctic expert in operating and maintaining tankers in subzero environments.

The 210th RQS maintained 24/7 rescue alert, participated in goodwill missions throughout the Pacific theater, and trained to enhance combat search and rescue capabilities.

The 168th Civil Engineer Squadron (CES) conducted their second-ever Annual Tour, where Members from all nine civil engineer career fields participated in hands-on training at Eielson AFB, completed a three-acre survey of the 168th Medical Group property in preparation for the expansion of the existing facility,

and completed required skill level upgrade training. The unit's first-ever Deployment for Training sent Members to Latvia, as noted above.

The 176th Operations Support Squadron provided intelligence, aircrew flight equipment, aircrew records management, training, current operations, weapons and tactics, and personnel administration, and enabled the execution of a \$41 million annual flight-training program, deployed to exercises in Germany and Antarctica, and coordinated aviation support to Operation Santa Claus, delivering gifts to the community of St. Michael.

The 176th LRS flawlessly received, processed, and distributed parts orders resulting in 627 sorties and 36 rescue missions, saving 12 lives. LRS Airmen fueled 202 aircraft with 1.2 million gallons of jet fuel, managed a fleet of 117 vehicles, maintaining an 88% in-commission rate, and coordinated all aspects of Operation Santa Claus.

The 176th Maintenance Operations Flight (MOF) began the year with airframe divestiture and transfer as noted above. Throughout this time, 176th MOF Members performed hundreds of document inspections and thousands of transactions, accounted for all serially controlled aircraft parts and equipment, coordinated training for 130+ maintainers, and organized deployment of 50 maintenance personnel and 143,000 tons of cargo in direct support of national security objectives in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The 176th Security Forces Squadron supported base security operations at Clear AFS, provided active shooter training to Guard, Reserve, and active component JBER personnel, protected aviation assets at the Great Alaska Aviation Tradeshow, and deployed in support of Exercise Khaan Quest and Operation Freedom's Sentinel.

RURAL ENGAGEMENT

The 176th Operations Support Squadron coordinated aviation support to Operation Santa Claus, delivering gifts to the community of St. Michael; the 176th LRS coordinated all aspects of Operation Santa Claus.

DEFENSE SUPPORT OF CIVIL AUTHORITIES

The AKANG's search-and-rescue professionals at the AKRCC saved 22 lives this year, reaching its 5,484th mission and 2,303rd save since July 1, 1994. The 210th RQS's Detachment 1 maintained rescue alert for ejection seat aircraft flying north of the Alaska Range, covering both regular Alaska-based training and multiple exercises. The Detachment provided rescue support to the 2017 Arctic Man competition, while potentially recruiting future Alaska Guard personnel. The 211th RQS is the first Air Reserve Component rescue squadron selected to receive the new HC-130J model aircraft, offering greater power, increased range, a digitized cockpit, and the ability to receive fuel via air-to-air refueling over the legacy HC-130N.

The 168th Medical Group (MDG) was ranked 11th out of 90 ANG Medical Units. The 168th MDG supported PACAF Command's Theater Security Package, and Members voluntarily performed more than 5,100 medical and dental procedures for local veterans and community members.

The 176th Communications Flight deployed to train and support the 299th Network Operations Support Squadron, enhance Cyber Support wartime tasking proficiencies, in support of the Arctic Agile Combat Employment Joint Services Communications Exercise at Ft. Greely, Alaska, and upgraded Alaska Land Mobile Radio and Satellite Communications, increasing rescue and emergency response coordination statewide.

TOTAL FORCE PARTNERSHIPS

The 176th Air Defense Squadron earned another highest "Mission Ready" rating, providing air control for F-22 training and numerous exercises, and improving overall air defense around the world.

The 168th Air Refueling Squadron flew to over 30 countries in 2,476 safe hours, delivering and flawlessly accounting for nearly 11.5 million pounds of fuel to 1,209 receivers during 571 generated sorties. The "Guardians of the Last Frontier" flew 301 combat hours and delivered in excess of 2.93 million pounds of fuel and 25 tons of cargo over nearly 300 combat sorties.

The Governor's Distinguished Unit for the second year, the 249th Airlift Squadron assumed operations lead when the AKANG officially took possession of the eight C-17s stationed at JBER. Members provided strategic airlift around the globe every day for the active component, deployed in support of multiple exercises and training missions, and worked with NASA's manned space capsule recovery team.

Members of the 168th Security Forces Squadron provided security for the national-level strategic asset at Clear AFS, working alongside active duty counterparts while enhancing security and protection for Eielson AFB.

The 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron executed sortie generation for all three airframes in the 176 WG – HH-60, HC-130J, and C-17 – and received the 2016 PACAF Daedalian Trophy. Since transitioning to C-17s, the unit increased its on-time delivery rate by 30% and mission capability rate by 18%.

The 168th Logistics Readiness Squadron (LRS) rewrote its Base Support Plan, while managing transportation, recordkeeping, supply and stock control, and flight service center activity. Constant attention to efficiency and a shift from paper to electronic records saved tens of thousands of dollars.

The 168th Communications Flight (CF) successfully defended the network, and assured communications in an increasingly challenging environment. The 168th CF Cyber Surety office assured 100% countermeasure compliance and directly contributed to the USAF 354th Fighter Wing's Command Cyber Readiness Inspection Excellent rating.

The 213th Space Warning Squadron tracked over 279,000 space objects and recorded over 4.7 million measurable observations to support the United States Strategic Command and the Joint Space Operations Center Space Situational Awareness. The ANG provided additional security forces to fulfill requirements resulting from an increase of over 300 Long Range Discrimination Radar construction workers on Clear AFS.

The 168th Operations Support Squadron provided all required training and mission planning to support local and overseas flying requirements in the areas of intelligence, aircrew flight equipment, aircrew records management, training, current operations, and weapons and tactics.

DIVISION OF HOMELAND SECURITY & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Michael J. Sutton, Director

The Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (DHS&EM) fosters a culture of preparedness and helps Alaska communities plan for, mitigate damage from, respond to, and recover from disasters. During this successful and productive year, DHS&EM's 62 staff reached several significant milestones, and Deputy Director Mike Sutton was chosen to serve as Director after Mike O'Hare departed to become the FEMA Region X Administrator.

RESPONSE

DHS&EM's Operations Section (Ops) and State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) handled a wide variety of community emergencies and disasters, including riverine and coastal flooding, unusually strong sea storms and tidal surges, windstorms, fires, volcanic eruptions, power outages, and water and fuel shortages. In 2017, 362 wildland fires – 208 human-caused and 154 due to lightning – burned 653,148 acres in Alaska. The SEOC addressed over 50 separate requests for technical, logistical, or financial support or interagency coordination.

The year began with a series of coastal storms striking several west coast communities with high winds, powerful sea surges, and severely cold temperatures. In February, Governor Bill Walker signed a state declaration of disaster emergency including the storm-damaged villages of Gambell and Savoonga. DHS&EM Ops was heavily involved in other state-declared events, including disaster relief for victims of an Anchorage apartment complex fire in March, and a response to a strong, destructive fall sea storm on the North Slope in September.

Over the summer and fall, the SEOC coordinated the deployment of state resources under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) to disasters in several states and territories, including wildfires in Montana and hurricanes in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Alaska provided an Emergency Operations Center support team, GIS specialists, volunteers and donations, public information specialists, and Alaska National Guard personnel and equipment. Virtually all will be reimbursed 100% by the federal government. The SEOC supported the Alaska State Troopers in emergency alert system and social media broadcasts during multiple Silver Alerts and the first AMBER Alert in several years.

DHS&EM Ops continued a rigorous schedule of multiple planning exercises, disaster trainings, and resilience workshops statewide to help communities prepare for emergencies.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

The Disaster Assistance (DA) Section responded to one new state-declared disaster and monitored progress on projects associated with 15 currently active state and six federally declared disasters, with 229 ongoing open projects. Staff assessed requested changes to open projects, provided guidance to sub-recipient project managers, and performed site and project inspections across the state.

In all, 891 projects, both open and closed, represent \$186.1M in recovery funds available to affected communities. DA reviewed and audited over 300 hundred payment requests and disbursed about \$24M through the Public Assistance Program, and nearly \$290K via the Individual Assistance Program.

In the fall, a brutal winter sea storm lashed the North Slope Borough with nearly 50-mph winds and 8-foot waves, causing at least \$6.3M in damage. Utqiagvik suffered significant flooding and damage, including several breaches to the gravel berm seawall, damage to roads, and interruptions in utility service. Areas inaccessible because of snow and ice will be assessed in the spring. Ongoing repair of the Tununak Seawall was heavily disrupted, threatening transportation and community safety. Restoration work was completed for a project cost of \$2.4M. President Trump declared a federal disaster, triggering the Public Assistance program.

GRANTS

The Grants Division was awarded six unique grants supporting multiple communities, and continues to support 10 additional multi-year grants issued previously, totaling in excess of \$31 M:

- More than \$6.2 M (\$3.1 M in 2016) in Emergency Management Performance Grant (EMPG) dollars sustain and enhance state and local emergency management capabilities in 13 communities statewide;
- State Homeland Security Program Grants exceeding \$3.7 M (\$2.9 M in 2016) support 23 communities to address, plan for, organize, equip, train, and exercise in response to acts of terrorism and other catastrophic events;
- A \$450 K Pre-Disaster Mitigation Competitive Grant enables 7 communities and the State of Alaska to implement a pre-disaster natural hazard mitigation program to reduce overall risk;
- Over \$590 K in National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Grant funds to the state are used to accurately assess tsunami hazards in coastal communities through scenario planning and use of mitigation and education tools;
- Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) Grant funding in excess of \$180 K supports the state's comprehensive approach to emergency training and planning by addressing Alaska's unique challenges to transportation situation responses; and
- The more than \$300 K (in addition to over \$300 K in 2016) Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) Grant helps 21 communities track hazardous materials and initiate community-based emergency preparedness activities.

PLANS

MITIGATION

The Mitigation Team successfully prioritized \$26.1 M in state and FEMA Mitigation funding for seismic, flood risk reduction, planning, and wildfire mitigation projects, and managed \$25.3 M from FEMA and the state and \$856 K in NOAA funding for mitigation projects statewide. The Team conducted its annual Tsunami Operations Workshop in Homer, including six remote at-risk communities, and completed five new FEMA-approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plans (LHMP) – in addition to LHMPs already in progress – making a total of 69 FEMA-approved LHMP Alaska communities.

COMMUNITY PLANNING

The updated State Emergency Operations Plan is complete and in review. The Community Planning Team completed five new Small Community Emergency Operations Plans (SCERP); 71 are now complete, with 96 more in progress. DHS&EM visited 10 LEPCs in 2017, participating in meetings and assisting with various emergency management preparedness and planning events. The team facilitated several HMEP technician courses, workshops, and tabletop exercises to increase preparedness/planning and communities' ability to respond to a myriad of hazardous materials events.

ALL-HAZARDS RESILIENCY TEAM

The All-Hazards Resiliency Team collaboratively engages rural communities and other agencies/partners to improve communities' emergency management capabilities and help communities prepare for, effectively mitigate, and quickly recover from all-hazards events. The Team held two Rural Resiliency Workshops: in Bethel for the surrounding communities; and in Kotzebue for Northwest Arctic Borough communities. Participants learned in a tabletop exercise how to complete a SCERP and how to use it in an actual event.

The Alaska Partnership for Infrastructure Protection (APIP) – which integrates private and public sector critical infrastructure owners into the overall emergency response framework – developed a three-year plan, focusing on expanding member knowledge and skills in critical infrastructure (CI), disaster response, and disaster recovery. APIP members worked with the Blood Bank of Alaska in an ongoing partnership for in-person training on Alaska's CI. APIP conducted a disaster tabletop drill in the annual Continuity of Operations Exercise to practice disaster response with partners, and is exploring new interface technology to better integrate members statewide.

PREPAREDNESS

TRAINING

Training staff coordinated 60 specialized trainings statewide, covering the Incident Command System, Public Information Officer and Joint Information Center/Joint Information System courses, local leadership, management, and awareness, both training and train-the-trainer courses, and Virtual Tabletop Exercises. Partners included the Center for Domestic Preparedness, the National Disaster Preparedness Training Center, and the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services.

OUTREACH

Outreach personnel conducted more than 60 events with entities including private businesses, childcare providers, military units, local utility companies, hospitals, and local communities. In years past, DHS&EM has conducted bi-annual preparedness conferences in Anchorage. Typically, these conferences are attended mostly by LEPC representatives and communities receiving EMPG funds, various state and federal agencies, and other organizations from the public and private sectors. Bi-annual conferences are effective venues to inform, educate, and bring together emergency management representatives from all over the state.

Outreach staff conducted two Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) courses at the Alaska Military Youth Academy. The first pilot program course took place over a 7-week period with 30 cadets. Due to the high success of the pilot program, CERT was offered to the next class of 96 cadets, who earned .5 credits in their academic track over a 15-week period.

EXERCISE

Following Homeland Security Exercise Evaluation Program guidelines, staff guided the Copper River LEPC through the planning and development process for their emergency preparedness workshop, and then facilitated the event at their request. Our team prepared all necessary exercise documents for several remote Western Alaska villages and assisted their leaders in conducting their first tabletop exercises, which tested their SCERPs. Preparedness Section personnel served as subject matter experts during the development and execution of two national-level Department of Defense exercises, ORCA and Arctic Eagle. The Exercise Section helped plan and develop of a full-scale oil spill exercise in Cordova, an HMEP Preparedness Workshop in Skagway, a full-scale HAZMAT/EMS exercise in the Mat-Su Borough, and several Tabletop Exercises (TTX)/Workshops for Statewide LEPCs and communities to test their SCERPs. The team also developed and facilitated TTXs for the Alaska Seismic Safety Commission and the APIP.

ALASKA MILITARY YOUTH ACADEMY

John R. “Bob” Roses, Director

In 2017, the Alaska Military Youth Academy (AMYA) graduated 344 cadets, with the most recent program class of 2017-2 graduating 180 cadets, the largest to date (the first AMYA class graduated 43). Cadets contributed 20,243 hours of community service in 2017. They even rolled up their sleeves and donated 104 units of blood.

AMYA administers the National Guard Youth ChalleNGe Program, a 17-½ month program (5-½ month Residential, followed by 12-month Post-Residential Phase) for teens ages 16 -18 and having difficulty succeeding in a traditional high school setting or who have dropped out of high school. The Program is subject to the oversight of the Office of Youth Development within the National Guard Bureau. NGB-J1-Y administers the Program nationally and the Alaska Adjutant General and Program Director manage the local site.

AMYA formally opened its doors January 30, 1994 as one of the original ten pilot programs and has grown along with the national program. There are presently 40 active sites nationally in 29 states, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The Program leads, trains, and mentors young men and women so they become productive citizens.

The proven Youth ChalleNGe Program holistic model uses a quasi-military, tuition-free residential environment to strengthen the academic and social skills of program participants in eight core components – health and hygiene, job skills, leadership/followership, life-coping skills, physical fitness, responsible citizenship, and service to community – all while encouraging emotional growth. This approach recognizes 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 learning model conducted in Alaska National Guard facilities with separate sleeping quarters for male and female cadets. This Phase begins with a two-week Acclimation Period, considered as an extension of the screening process. During this time, the applicants are referred to as “candidates” and assessed for their 1) ability to handle stress and Program structure, 2) propensity for gang and/or bullying activity, either as victims or inflictors, and 3) desire to succeed and complete the Program. Candidates experience a caring, disciplined, “tough-love” environment that tests their physical, mental, and emotional commitment to the Program. AMYA staff focus candidates on group and individual discipline, structure, and goal-setting, while providing medical service, emotional support, meals, counseling, and instruction. Candidates who successfully complete Acclimation earn the distinction of becoming AMYA “cadets.”

In the remaining 20 weeks of the Residential Phase, daily activities and experiences, including academics, physical fitness, vocational/technical education, outdoor adventure training, and service to the community add value to the transformation process. These elements build Cadets’ education levels,

promote healthy living, and help develop employability skills, while contributing to a growing sense of community involvement and commitment.

Cadets may earn up to 7.5 credits toward their secondary educations bringing them closer to the needed required credits should they opt to return to public school for graduation. As a secondary education institution accredited by AdvancED/Northwest Accreditation Commission, eligible students may receive an AMYA high school diploma when they meet State standards, complete the Armed Services Aptitude Battery, Scholastic Aptitude Test, or Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development WorkKeys Assessment. AMYA is certified to offer participants preparation and testing for the GED if they prefer this high school equivalency credential.

In 2017, 21 eligible AMYA cadets successfully completed credit recovery, and award of their high school diplomas; while 170 others earned GEDs. Through the combined efforts of the AMYA Academics Section's team of dedicated professionals, support staff, community volunteer tutors, and adult mentors, Cadets in the 2017 winter class raised their average math and reading proficiency by 1.5 and 1.2 grade levels, respectively, during the intense 17 weeks of instruction and assessment. Cadets in the spring/summer 2017 class raised their averages by 1.7 and 1.2 grade levels.

Again this year, a federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act grant allowed AMYA to offer vocational/technical education programs through a pre-apprenticeship training program in cooperation with local unions. Cadets have the opportunity to emerge from the pre-apprenticeship program with hands-on training, certifications and connections to potential entry-level jobs or apprenticeship programs. Seventy-two cadets participated in construction trades training, where they received 40 hours of instruction in each of the following trades: carpentry, electrical, labor, and ironwork/welding. Included in the training is scaffolding safety and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10-hour training. Thirty-nine (39) cadets completed the Healthcare Specialties Course while 24 cadets took the opportunity to receive Culinary Arts ServeSafe® Food Handlers' certification, AK Dept. of Environmental Conservation Food Workers' card and barista training. DMVA's Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management provided Community Emergency Responder Training (CERT) to 87 cadets, each of whom is now a valuable resource to their local Emergency Response Teams.

The Post-Residential Phase is for graduates to apply the strategies and skills learned to enable them to serve as productive members of society. In Week 3 of the Residential Phase, under the guidance of staff and with support from mentors, each cadet begins to develop a Post-Residential Action Plan (P-RAP) as a goal-setting exercise. Graduates recognize the need to refine their methods of goal attainment while building upon the mentoring relationship. P-RAPs provide a point of reference, discussion, and focus when cadets return to their communities following graduation. Some 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 2017-1 and 2017-2 were placed in one of these categories. Mentors are vital to sustained cadet success and often provide pivotal healthy adult relationships in the earliest stages of the post-residential phase. AMYA has been blessed with a large number of dedicated adult community volunteers from across the state who share the cadets' desire for long-term success.

AMYA's professional 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." Their dedication and consistently superior work contribute to AMYA's position among the top ChalleNGe Programs in the nation.

Now entering into its 25th year of operation, AMYA looks forward to building on its notable successes. Over 5,300 young Alaskans have graduated from this physically demanding and educationally stimulating Program, earning more than 3,240 high school diplomas and/or GED certificates. Our graduates have demonstrated tremendous success in communities across Alaska and around the world. The Academy's track record of sustained success strategically positions it to positively affect the next generation of Alaska's families.

OFFICE OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

Verdie A. Bowen, Sr., Director

The Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA) is the primary advocate for Alaska's veterans and their families, helping them file claims for education, medical, and other benefits. Its chief mission is to develop and sustain comprehensive statewide veterans' advocacy programs. The four-person Office staff and seventeen contracted Veterans Service Officers are trained to help veterans, active duty, guard, and reserve personnel, and their families identify, understand, and claim all earned military benefits and awards – and always free of charge. OVA works diligently to promote awareness, assist eligible recipients, administer all current programs, anticipate future needs, and plan appropriate actions to meet those needs. OVA strives every day to maintain its promise to continue "Serving Alaska, One Veteran at a Time."

OVA is proud to report Alaska has moved into a new era in veteran services. Alaska veterans have two new VA medical facilities, and may select local over out-of-state health care. Access to assistance and delivery of education funds have dramatically increased, as have welcome-home efforts for all veterans. Since 2010, Alaska has leapt from last in the nation to first on disability claims processing. Alaska is the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) model for delivery of care in remote locations, and was instrumental in passing the Appeals Modernization Act of 2017.

VETERANS SERVED

This year, OVA staff, contract personnel, and volunteers assisted over 62,000 individuals with federal and state benefits/claims questions and processing. OVA personnel traveled to over 100 communities statewide, reaching many veterans for the first time, and ensuring the return of over \$51 million in single, one-time payments.

OVA measures the continued success of its programs through eligible residents receiving annual compensation in addition to one-time payments. This year, VA sent in excess of \$280 million to Alaska veterans and their families, for disability compensation, pension payments, and other ongoing benefits. Alaska veterans received medical care at five VA clinics and 122 local health care facilities. More than 34,000 are now enrolled in the VA Health Care System; of those, more than 20,037 are treated annually, with managed care benefits exceeding \$252 million.

More than 4,200 students attending Alaska educational facilities or in employment programs are eligible for VA education benefits. Total funds paid to in-state institutions, employment programs, and to the eligible members exceeded \$76.5 million. Working to deliver these benefits to eligible Alaskans – more than \$76.5 million last year – ensures their bright futures and brings countless benefits to the entire state.

In collaboration with the VA, OVA co-sponsored several rural outreach programs and assisted hundreds of Alaska veterans in their home communities. Veteran Service Officers, VA Benefits counselors, National Guard Benefits counselors, Alaska Veterans Advisory Council members, tribal veteran representatives, and OVA staff traveled to Anchor Point, Bethel, Cantwell, Clear, Cordova, Craig, Delta Junction, Dillingham, Gustavus, Girdwood, Glennallen, Healy, Homer, Hoonah, Hydaburg, Juneau, Kenai, Kenny Lake, Ketchikan, Klawock, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Nikiski, Nome, North Pole, Petersburg, Palmer Correctional Facility, Seward, Sitka, Soldotna, Sterling, Sutton, Talkeetna, Tenakee Springs, Tok, Utqiagvik, Valdez, Venetie, Willow, and Wrangell.

HIGHLY RURAL TRANSPORTATION GRANT

For the third straight year, OVA received a \$250,000 VA Highly Rural Transportation grant to provide transportation for veterans residing in five boroughs who need to travel to receive healthcare services. The Denali, Matanuska-Susitna, Kodiak Island, Kenai Peninsula and Prince of Wales-Hyder boroughs each received \$50,000 to provide more than 8,600 veterans with needed transportation. The program has already helped more than 20,000 veterans, and since the VA renewed the grant for FY18, OVA can continue this important service.

WELCOME HOME VIETNAM VETERANS

In partnership with the Department of Defense (DoD), OVA continues to honor every Vietnam veteran living in Alaska. Since 2014, OVA has honored over 6,000 veterans with a custom-minted and sanctioned Alaska Vietnam Welcome Home Honor Coin, and will continue the program until all Vietnam Veterans are officially welcomed home. DoD made Alaska its first Charter Member for Life due to the program's success. Welcome Home events are now key elements of all outreach efforts.

ALASKA TERRITORIAL GUARD

Through an agreement with DoD, OVA works to locate and issue discharges to Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG) veterans. This becomes more difficult every year, due to fewer family members requesting discharges, but OVA is committed to ensuring every ATG veteran has a discharge document on record. So far, OVA has authenticated more than 2,600 discharges through DoD and issued them to family members. In 2017, OVA and the Alaska Native Heritage Center conducted a ceremony to honor ATG veterans. Sixteen families received discharge documents and medals on behalf of family members who served. OVA will continue to strive to preserve service records on file and ensure future generations access to their ancestors' documentation.

VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER GRANT MANAGEMENT

Seventeen nationally certified Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) statewide provide free services to veterans through Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans, and Vietnam Veterans of America. Through the work of our VSOs in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Wasilla, Kenai, Juneau, and Palmer, Alaska is rated best in the nation for quality and speed of processing VA claims.

STATEWIDE STAND DOWN

Stand Down is an annual program to provide veterans a hand up with services such as medical and dental screening, and housing, employment, and financial assistance. Through events in Anchorage and Fairbanks, OVA reached over 1,500 otherwise inaccessible veterans. These gatherings bring together key personnel who can move quickly to assist veterans in critical need. Stand Down events often attract veterans from off the road system, allowing OVA to express they are not forgotten and their service is important – an effective way communities can come together to honor our veterans.

VETERANS MEMORIAL ENDOWMENT FUND

After revising regulations governing the Veterans Memorial Endowment Fund – for maintenance, repair, replacement, and enhancement of, or addition to, veterans memorials or monuments – OVA awarded grants to Alaska’s Healing Hearts, Rolling Honor, and the Alaska Highway Project. All were for the development of new memorials.

THE ALASKA VETERANS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Office administers the Alaska Veterans Advisory Council, which listens to Alaska’s veteran communities and brings informed recommendations about veterans’ needs and benefits to OVA and the governor. They report on the success of existing legislation, regulations, benefits, and services, and bring forward concerns about veterans’ and dependents’ needs.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Because DoD now provides states veteran discharge documents in electronic format only, OVA strengthened electronic data and storage systems to meet federal security standards, and developed the Veterans Information System (VIS) software program. VIS allows for a myriad of targeted outreach efforts, provides secure storage of veterans’ driver license, Permanent Fund Dividend, and other records, and helps identify incarcerated veterans so they may connect with all federal/state veteran resources upon release, increasing the likelihood of successful transitions and minimizing additional stress on the public assistance system. This year, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs recognized the Alaska Office of Veterans' Affairs VIS software package with the Abraham Lincoln Pillars of Excellence Award for Innovations Serving Veterans programs.

OVA’s continuing partnership with the VA trained an additional 47 volunteer Tribal Veterans Representatives (TVR), who are critical to success in reaching rural veterans. More than 350 TVRs statewide provide basic veteran services in their communities – the largest veteran volunteer corps in the nation. TVRs strength is in knowing local veterans and what benefits they have earned. OVA’s goal is to have a TVR in every Alaska community.

OVA helped 4,129 veterans receive VA Certificate of Eligibility to purchase homes under the VA Mortgage Servicing Assistance program, guaranteeing loans worth over \$1.2 billion.

The Office sponsored establishment of the Forget-Me-Not Coalition, providing not-for-profit services to veterans, active duty and reserve component personnel, and their families, led the Coalition forward, and developed its web site.

After the success of the first-ever claims clinic co-hosted by OVA and VA in Kodiak, the Office held clinics in Wasilla, Kenai, and Dillingham. These unique programs allow veterans, families, survivors and legal representatives to file disability claims, submit evidence or additional information for existing claims, and work directly with claims processors on the spot. Bringing claims clinics to people where they live speeds up processing and presents positive opportunities to serve Alaskans who might otherwise have not sought assistance.

The Emir of Kuwait graciously purchased and shipped every state copies of a 157-page photographic book, “The Liberation of Kuwait – Honoring the Veterans of Desert Storm,” in recognition of the 25th Anniversary of Operation Desert Storm and to honor veterans of that conflict. OVA distributed copies to 250 of Alaska’s Desert Storm veterans.

THE ALASKA STATE DEFENSE FORCE

Colonel (AK) John C. James, Commander

The Alaska Organized Militia consists of the Alaska Army National Guard, the Alaska Air National Guard, the Alaska Naval Militia, and the Alaska State Defense Force (ASDF). The ASDF is a 120-person, all-volunteer organization whose primary role is to augment and support the Alaska National Guard in homeland security and civil support operations. ASDF Soldiers are equipped and trained for various missions, including incident response, damage assessment, military police and security support, communications, emergency management, medical assistance, logistical support, movement and replenishment, chaplaincy, shelter management, community disaster pre-mitigation support, and domain awareness. Soldiers meet for training on a monthly basis. The ASDF is 100% state-funded and always under state control, unlike the National Guard, which can be called into federal service by the President.

Because our state is seismically active and subject to extreme weather, wildland fire, flooding, and other potentially widely destructive events, Alaskans must be prepared for when, not if, the next disaster strikes. This is especially true in rural, sparsely-populated locations. Time and distance may challenge

federal and state military forces to provide timely assistance to community first responders, but local ASDF Soldiers can provide a ready, trained, and available force to lend a hand.

Consequently, in 2017, the ASDF continued its efforts to expand in rural Alaska. Locally deployed, self-sufficient, trained observers and responders are increasingly important, in light of increased Arctic development, expanding access due to diminishing sea ice, intensifying military interest in the Arctic and the circumpolar north – especially by potentially belligerent or adversarial agents such as Russia, North Korea, and China – increasing numbers and severity of storms, and growing commercial and recreational interest in the north.

Further, given the heavy concentration of military and first responders in Southcentral Alaska, rural ASDF Soldiers could provide important assistance in the instance of another event like the 1964 earthquake, where Anchorage-area Soldiers and Guardsmen were engaged in securing their own homes and families before being able to assist the community at large.

When a major event affects Alaska, thousands of troops could come to the state to assist. The ASDF would augment the National Guard by in-processing the troops, giving them an orientation to Alaska and getting them to the points of need. In this way, the ASDF assists in providing a tremendous force multiplier to the disaster or emergency by assisting in the deployment of thousands of trained and equipped soldiers to where they can do they most good. At the end of the event or exercise, the ASDF would also out-process troops back to their home states.

In 2017, for the first time in the organization's history, ASDF Soldiers augmented AKNG relief efforts outside of Alaska. Four ASDFG volunteers responded to the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. Their three-week mission included communications and infrastructure recovery and repair. This work provided tremendous training opportunities, and all costs were reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In addition to existing units in Anchorage, Bethel, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Kodiak, Valdez, and Wasilla, this year the ASDF stood up new detachments in the communities of Kipnuk, Kodiak, Kwethluk, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, and Utqiagvik. We anticipate formation of additional units in Fort Greely, Hooper Bay, Kotzebue, and Nome.

Similar militias in other States have demonstrated their value in assisting communities after mass disasters, such as those seen recently following widespread hurricane damage in the Southeastern United States. Texas, in fact, sees its State Guard – the Texas equivalent of our ASDF – as so valuable, it is working to expand it from 2,500 to 5,000 volunteers, including its 50+ person full-time force. State military operations and exercises are initiated by the Joint Operations Center (JOC) of the Joint Forces Headquarters Task Force, DMVA. Disasters can prompt the DMVA State Emergency Operations Center to request military assistance in the form of personnel and equipment from the JOC. Along with the National Guard, the ASDF is a participant in planning and execution of DMVA military plans for disaster and military response for Alaska, and has a seat in the JOC to fully participate in plans, exercises, and actual events.

Other recent joint training scenarios include domain awareness patrols in Western Alaska coastal communities and along the eastern border with Canadian forces. ASDF Soldiers donated over 21,120 hours of volunteer time to the state in 2017, and supported a number of special projects, including the Special Olympics, the Wounded Warrior Program, and Operation Stand Down for Homeless Veterans.

Chaplaincy is an important and essential mission of the ASDF, whose importance of is magnified in times of disaster or war. Primarily, our Chaplaincy provides support to members of the ASDF and their families, but being highly trained in Critical Stress Management can also minister to victims and first responders in a meaningful way. ASDF Chaplains have provided training and assistance in the important field of suicide prevention and have presided over many military funerals.

ASDF participation is a cost-effective means to enhance responsible citizenship, nurture and develop community leadership, increase emergency management capacity, strengthen community resiliency, and teach anger intervention and violence de-escalation techniques. The Alaska State Defense Force is on track to promote these valuable community services and looks ahead with enthusiasm for continuing the Force's expansion.

ALASKA AEROSPACE CORPORATION

Craig E. Campbell, President and Chief Executive Officer

The Alaska Aerospace Corporation (AAC) continues to develop a high-technology aerospace industry in Alaska. Kodiak Island's Pacific Spaceport Complex - Alaska (PSCA), the AAC's operational base, is the nation's only high-latitude, non-federal, full-service spaceport, providing unrestricted ability to launch high-inclination missions without overflight of land.

AAC conducted two successful launches for the US government from the PSCA in 2017, and signed a contract for more launches in the future. A contracted federal mission in 2018 – whose customer's name, program, dates, and objectives are classified – is leading the way to additional US Government programs. Agreements with private companies include 1) a contract with Vector, for planning a commercial launch from PSCA in late 2018; 2) a multi-year lease contract with SpaceX, to install and maintain a tracking antenna system at PSCA; and 3) AAC's first purely commercial contract with a California small launch vehicle company for multiple launches from PSCA in 2018.

In 2017, AAC completed infrastructure improvements to enhance PSCA's ability to support increasing activity, including: 1) developing an area for temporary housing of military members during launch missions; 2) constructing a new road and installing three gravel pads for government vehicles supporting launch operations; 3) developing a support area for both mission and ancillary equipment that included extending power, communications, and data lines; and 4) installing two new telemetry tracking antennas for both government and commercial customer use.

AAC also established Aurora Launch Services, LLC, a wholly-owned subsidiary designed to offer launch team services to the worldwide commercial market. It initiated a lease and rental rates study to establish commercial rates for use of PSCA land and facilities, and expanded its public outreach program.

With AAC support, the University of Hawaii's Space Flight Laboratory is navigating the environmental process toward developing an equatorial launch site in East Hawaii to support the emerging small launch vehicle market. AAC would be the spaceport operator, should that site be developed. AAC provided Range Safety and Telemetry System (RSTS) Services to Rocket Lab USA for the first launch of their commercial Electron rocket from Launch Complex One in Mahia, New Zealand 25 May 2017. An additional contract with Rocket Lab USA will continue provision of RSTS services throughout 2018; the company expects to complete nine to twelve launches in 2018.

In FY17, AAC purchased over \$15 million in goods, services, and labor from Alaskan vendors to support the final rebuild of its facilities and in support of FY17 contracts. AAC also invested \$1.4 million into the maintenance and sustainment of state-owned facilities and equipment, and earned over \$5 million to expand PSCA's range capacity.

AAC attracted \$4.1 Million in federal funds for additional facility upgrades and improvements to increase capability to serve US government customers in the future. This funding supported four programs at PSCA: 1) liquid fuel capabilities; 2) upgraded communications and processing capabilities; 3) upgraded network and computer systems; and 4) improved cybersecurity systems.

AAC has received no state general funds for operations and sustainment since 2014. In 2017, AAC increased its total net position \$11.3 million, from \$76.3 million in 2016 to \$87.7 million in 2017.

Finally, the AAC Financial Office began developing a Dividend Distribution Plan with the intent of establishing an equitable formula for distribution of earned profits between required retained earnings, capital improvement and deferred maintenance requirements, and providing the State of Alaska with a Return on Investment for ownership of Alaska Aerospace. Once approved by the Board of Directors, this plan will be implemented by AAC.