
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs



Annual Report 2018

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WHO WE ARE

Laurel J. Hummel, Commissioner and Adjutant General

Mission

The Alaska Department of Military and Veterans Affairs provides highly motivated, effective professionals to execute global, theater, and state operations. We are always prepared to respond to and assist in the recovery from domestic disasters and emergencies; we serve and support Alaska's veterans; educate Alaska teens in disciplined, structured environments; and cultivate ethically driven members into strong, capable, and innovative leaders.

Office of the Commissioner and Adjutant General

The Adjutant General (TAG) reports to the Governor of Alaska. The incumbent also holds federal recognition as a military officer and participates extensively in federal military matters while paid by the federal government. The Adjutant General's responsibilities include:

- Serving as the official liaison between the State and the active duty military in the state as well as the federal Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Homeland Security (including its components the United States Coast Guard and the Federal Emergency Management Agency);
- Serving as the Governor's Homeland Security Advisor;
- Supporting Congressional Delegation, Community, and legislative requests for assistance specific to the military, veterans' matters, homeland security and emergency management;
- Serving on the Alaska Civilian-Armed Services Team (ACAST);
- Serving on the board of Alaska Aerospace Corporation (AAC);
- Handling requests to establish military facility zones (MFZ) in Alaska and related matters.

On the federal side, TAG serves on: The Army Reserve Forces Policy Committee; the National Guard Theater Security Cooperation General Officer Advisory Council; the National Guard Arctic Interest Council (Alaska is Chair); the National Guard Joint Diversity Executive Council; and the Adjutant General Panel to select General Officers for federal service-specific and joint positions.

HOMELAND SECURITY & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Michael J. Sutton, Director

Mission

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. This year DHS&EM focused on engaging community members and leaders to promote safety and resilience to the array of man-made and natural disasters Alaskans face.

Response

DHS&EM's Operations Section continues to manage a wide variety of community emergencies and disasters, including riverine and coastal flooding, unusually strong sea storms, windstorms, major building and wildland fires, volcanic eruptions, power outages, community water and sewer system failures, and fuel shortages. The State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) addressed over 55 separate requests for technical, logistical, or financial support or interagency coordination this year.

The SEOC coordinated the deployment of state resources under the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) to disasters in several states, including volcanic eruption and lava flows in Hawaii and hurricanes in Southeast US. During the year, the SEOC focused special attention on improving the Emergency Alert System regarding tsunami warnings, child abduction, and severe weather alerts.

Plans

Mitigation

The Mitigation Team successfully prioritized \$28.1 M in state and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mitigation funding for seismic, flood risk reduction, planning, and wildfire mitigation projects, and managed \$25.5 M from FEMA and the state and \$992 K in National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration funding for mitigation projects statewide. The team conducted its annual Tsunami Operations Workshop in Sitka, where nine remote, at-risk communities participated, and the Mitigation Team completed 49 new FEMA-approved Local Hazard Mitigation Plans.

Community Planning

The 2018 State Emergency Operations Plan update was completed and has been published. The Community Planning Team completed nine new Small Community Emergency Response Plans (SCERPs); 80 SCERPs are now completed, and 13 are in-progress. Over 40 communities have been contacted to initiate the SCERP process.

All-Hazards Resiliency Team

The All-Hazards Resiliency Team collaboratively engages rural communities and other agencies and partners to improve communities' emergency management capabilities and help communities prepare for, effectively mitigate, and quickly recover from all-hazards events. In cooperation with the local Native Non-Profit Kawerak, the team conducted a Rural Resiliency Workshop in Nome for the 14 surrounding communities. The workshop brought two delegates from each of the 14 communities, including tribal leaders, city government officials, and first responders.

The Alaska Partnership for Infrastructure Protection, which integrates private and public sector critical infrastructure owners into the overall emergency response framework, adopted a new charter and conducted monthly meetings focused on sector specific capabilities.

Disaster Assistance

The Disaster Assistance (DA) Section responded to four new state-declared disasters, three new federal disasters, and monitored progress on projects associated with 17 active state and 10 federally declared disasters. The 201 ongoing projects represented approximately \$166M in state and federal assistance for impacted communities across the state.

DA staff continue to work with FEMA on restoration efforts for the North Slope Borough from 2017's fall storm with damages currently estimated at nearly \$18.2M. The Kenai Peninsula Borough, including the City of Seward, experienced damages from a heavy storm that caused approximately \$6.5M in damages and resulted in state and federal disaster declarations. In May, the Alaska Railroad Corporation suffered flood damages estimated at \$2.0M and was subsequently declared state and federal disasters as well. During the fall of 2018, Kenai Peninsula Borough was impacted by flooding again which resulted in a state-declared disaster.

Preparedness

Training

The training section provided training to 1,525 personnel belonging to state, local, and tribal entities. The training section also coordinated a total of 65 specialized training events in the state and approved 121 individuals to attend training offered by national training partners.

Outreach

The Earthquake Simulator was used at 17 events across the state. During August, the simulator toured interior Alaska stopping in Healy, Fairbanks, North Pole, Ester, and Fort Wainwright. The Outreach Team conducted 52 events, reaching out to over 6,000 people. And Outreach staff continue to partner with the Alaska Military Youth Academy to conduct Community Emergency Response Team training for all cadets.

Exercise

The exercise helped guide the planning and development process for rural resilience workshop exercises for the Nome and Kotzebue regions. The exercise team prepared all the necessary documents to support the Denali Commission-funded SCERP exercises in three rural communities and then facilitated those exercises. The Exercise Team also provided subject matter expertise to two national-level, Department of Defense exercises. The section made substantial contributions to community-based exercises and designed more than 18 individual community exercises. The team supported 12 individual communities and five boroughs in developing locally created and facilitated exercises. The Exercise Team also began work on Alaska Shield 2019, the State's triennial, premier, full-scale training exercise.

Grants

The Division received a new Non-Profit Homeland Security Grant Award for \$103,000. All other grants remain at historic levels of funding. The 2018 State Homeland Security Program awarded grants to 19 communities (one more than last year). The 2018 Emergency Management Performance Grant was awarded to 13 communities (two more than last year).

AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Colonel Torrence W. Saxe, Commander
Assistant Adjutant General – Air

Mission

The Alaska Air National Guard (AKANG) provides mission-ready forces and combat capability to the nation to secure the homeland. Additionally, the AKANG protects the citizens of Alaska and local communities through medical, civil engineering, security, and communications support to civil authorities during emergencies and natural disasters. Over 2,100 trained and ready AKANG Airmen proudly serve in the 168th Wing at both Eielson Air Force Base (AFB) and Clear Air Force Station (AFS), and at the 176th Wing at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

The AKANG maintained a high operational tempo and deployment pace in 2018, enabling global mobility, airlifting over 7,000 tons of cargo, transferring over 17 million pounds of fuel to over 2,000 receivers, and logging over 11,000 flight hours. Airmen provided 24/7 year-round support to North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), National Missile Warning and Space Surveillance, Search and Rescue, and C-17 strategic airlift taskings. Guardsmen controlled over 3,100 local and regional, joint and combined training sorties, tracked over 347,000 objects, and executed 127 search and rescue missions in Alaska's extreme arctic conditions, saving 72 lives. In any given month, 30-40 AKANG members were deployed and performed superbly in worldwide operations and exercises.

168th Wing

The 168th Wing's "Guardians of the Last Frontier" operate and maintain nine KC-135R Stratotankers at Eielson Air Force Base and operate, secure, and support the AN/FPS-123 Ballistic Missile Early Warning Radar (EWR) at Clear AFS.

The shift to long-term, full-time funding enabled the 168th Wing to provide 24/7 tanker access for Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Command and Air Mobility Command, and saved significant funds for both by eliminating the need for outside crews to perform temporary duty to Alaska. The 168th Wing continues to successfully maintain 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 168th Wing tankers for missions throughout the Pacific theater. The 168th Wing's real-world operational tempo keeps their technical skills sharp, and

leadership's focus on the development and continued growth of its members produced the highest recruiting and retentions levels in wing history.

176th Wing

The 176th Wing's "Arctic Guardians" are an elite force of well-trained professional Airmen who integrate seamlessly into all Department of Defense (DoD), Active Component, Air Reserve Component (ARC), and Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) operations. The 176th Wing operates and maintains eight C-17 Globemaster III, four HC-130J Combat King II, and five 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 Airmen of the 176th Wing employ leading edge strategies, tactics, techniques, and procedures. Leaders are accountable and committed to unfailingly doing the right thing and are responsible stewards of the taxpayers' dollars.

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

Mission Assurance

On any given day, the AKANG had Airmen deployed worldwide in support of the federal mission with no degradation of service to the State of Alaska. AKANG members performed superbly in multiple world-wide deployments, operations, and international/national/state-level exercises throughout the year. Airmen provided direct support to the US President; the Global War On Terrorism; Operations INHERENT RESOLVE, FREEDOM'S SENTINEL, and NOBLE EAGLE; European Command support to North Atlantic Treaty Organization refueling operations; Pacific Command Theater Security Package in Guam; United Nations peacekeeping field-training exercise Khaan Quest support in Mongolia; Operation DEEP FREEZE missions in Antarctica; Innovative Readiness Training exercises; sustained operations in arctic conditions during the statewide Arctic Eagle exercise; and homeland defense and hurricane support.

Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) and Emergency Management

The AKANG's search-and-rescue professionals at the Alaska Rescue Coordination Center saved 72 lives throughout the state this year, reaching its 5,650th mission and 2,360th save since January 1, 1991.

AKANG Airmen performed multiple humanitarian missions in response to on-going hurricane relief efforts. Electricians, carpenters, surveyors, HVAC, power production, and heavy equipment operators from the Civil Engineer Squadrons mobilized to repair facilities; Communications Flights members worked diligently to provide communications to devastated areas; while Logistic Readiness Squadron personnel provided logistical support and erected aerial port operations, expediting relief efforts to ravaged shores.

Logistics Readiness Squadron members also volunteered over 2,800 hours to Alaska's Civil Air Patrol Wing, coordinating eight training events for 207 total force members and bolstering the state's emergency response capabilities.

Community Engagements

AKANG members volunteered and served local communities, organizations, and remote Alaska villages, supporting hundreds of events throughout the state. Medical Group members voluntarily performed more than 1,700 medical and dental procedures during the Veterans' Stand Down, Tropic Care Innovative Readiness Training, and Nenana Health Fair, saving more than \$1.2 million to veterans and community members in need. During Arctic Care 2018, medical service members provided \$461,541 in medical services to almost 2,000 patients across 12 villages in rural Alaska. Members also lectured the Alaska Academy of Family Physicians on Head Injuries and Return to Play Protocol and taught an Emergency Trauma Technician course hosted by the Tanana Chiefs Conference as part of the Rural Outreach Program. Security Forces personnel provided security details for the Great Alaska Aviation Tradeshow and the National Championship Air Races in Reno, Nevada.

The AKANG continued the 62-year tradition generating two Operation Santa missions, ferrying over 6,000 pounds of donations to two rural Alaska villages. Additionally, the AKANG established a recruiting presence in Juneau, providing greater opportunity for Alaskans to join.

The AKANG's culture is one of respect, empowerment, safety, and compliance with DoD, Air Force, National Guard Bureau, and The Adjutant General's policy directives. The Alaska Air National Guard is committed to providing ready and lethal forces to execute global, theatre,

and state operations. Airmen are committed to serving the communities in which they work and live. The AKANG will continue to provide combat-ready, adaptable airmen, able to respond to the state's and nation's call.

ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

Brigadier General Joseph Streff, Commander
Assistant Adjutant General - Army

Mission

The Alaska Army National Guard (AKARNG) faced both challenges and opportunities in 2018. Changes to force structure, the demands of deployments, and commitments to mission and community partners tested the limits of the AKARNG organizations and Soldiers. The summary below highlights just a few accomplishments and reaffirms the perennial professional excellence, selfless service, and outstanding technical competence of Alaska's Army National Guard Citizen-Soldiers.

Force Structure and Modernization

The AKARNG continued managing changes to units and facilities in a way that best supports training, mission requirements, and the stationing of units and Soldiers in Alaska's communities. Army force structure adjustments at the national level precipitated significant changes for AKARNG units, personnel, and equipment. Specifically, the loss of a signal unit, a reduction of authorized personnel from 1773 to 1741, and major changes to the aviation unit resulted in a more diverse inventory of helicopters and an additional airplane for a total of 24 aircraft. Despite the changes, the AKARNG possesses the capability and capacity to execute its federal and state missions.

The AKARNG Construction and Facilities Maintenance Office (CFMO) made great strides in "right-sizing" the facilities footprint by executing facility improvement projects and divesting excess land, buildings, and property across Alaska. The \$24-million United States Property and Fiscal Office on Camp Denali is in the design process, and CFMO executed 53 facility improvement projects totaling over \$3.36 million. Additionally, four armories were divested which reduced overhead costs and directed critical manpower and funding towards active armories and other projects.

Mission Assurance

Once again, the organization demonstrated it is an operational force capable of mobilizing, deploying, and successfully operating anywhere in the world when called to active duty.

AKARNG units supported multiple regional exercises in Asia and Europe in addition to contingency operations in the Middle East.

The 49th Personnel Detachment deployed to Kuwait for a year-long mission and provided personnel accountability support for the theater, and the 208th Construction Management Team deployed to manage construction projects in Jordan for a year. Additionally, the AKARNG continued support of its Mongolian partners in Afghanistan with two liaison teams as leadership and training mentors. Alaska's state partnership with Mongolia began in 2003, and the AKARNG has continued the combat mission partnership since 2004.

In addition to contingency operations, Alaska Army Guard units conducted overseas deployment training and exercises in South Korea, Mongolia, Bangladesh, and Germany.

Arctic Expertise

In Alaska, the AKARNG continued Arctic skills training with the goal of increasing Soldier survivability and unit performance in cold weather operations. The 1-297th Infantry Battalion and the 207th Aviation Regiment conducted annual training at the Donnelly Training Area at Fort Greely with Guard units from other states and Canada. National Guard Soldiers from Alaska, Wyoming, Vermont, Hawaii, and Colorado, along with forces from the 39 Canadian Brigade Group, worked on improving partner nation force interoperability. The Arctic skills training challenged participants by testing field-craft skills, remote communications capabilities, and ground and air transportation capabilities in extreme cold weather and high latitude environments. AKARNG aviators supported two special events here in Alaska, as well.

In April, Bravo Company 1-207th Aviation Battalion supported Arctic Care 2018 in Kotzebue and several surrounding villages with five UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters, crew members, maintenance, and operations personnel. Air crews transported Navy and Air Force Reservists who provided medical, dental, and veterinary services for village residents as part of the Innovative Readiness Training Program. In June, two UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters crews conducted recovery operations in support of Operation Colony Glacier. AKARNG aviators have supported this operation since 2012 when an AKARNG Blackhawk crew on a routine training flight discovered a C-124 Globemaster cargo plane that crashed in November 1952.

Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) and Emergency Management

The Alaska Army Guard improved its record of working with local, state, and federal partners. At the local level, units participated in emergency management planning events with local community law enforcement, search and rescue groups, and local emergency planning committees. At the state and federal level, we partnered with the Alaska Department of Public Safety, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Interior, the Alaska Division of Forestry, and other agencies in an effort to increase overall emergency management response capacity for Alaska.

Not only did the AKARNG prepare, it responded. In 2018, Army Guard aviation assets located in Bethel, Fairbanks, Juneau, Nome, and on JBER responded to emergency and search and rescue missions across the state. In September, 23 Soldiers from the 207th Aviation Regiment and the 134th Public Affairs Detachment outfitted with two hoist-equipped UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters responded for the Hurricane Florence relief efforts in the Carolinas. The response provided an opportunity for Soldiers to render life-saving aid to fellow Americans and provided vital training and experience for emergency response missions within Alaska.

Community Engagements

Throughout the state, the AKARNG supported and participated in hundreds of events with schools, community organizations, Native corporations, tribal organizations, and Chambers of Commerce, educating fellow Alaskans about career opportunities, organizational services, and the benefits of Army Guard service. The AKARNG conducted community-level key leader engagements throughout rural Alaska and hosted “Guard for a Day” open houses, showcasing Soldiers, equipment, and available career paths to Alaskans. Guard for a Day allows participants direct interaction with Alaska Guard members who share their service experiences, and the events afford the opportunity for citizens to see and handle military equipment and ask questions. Additionally, the AKARNG increased its recruiting force in Bethel, Sitka, and Juneau with the intent of increasing enlistments and, ultimately, Army Guard participation in rural Alaska.

Recruiting engagements revealed an opportunity to partner with schools and youth programs to share military programs and expertise useful for increasing Alaska youth resiliency. Military resiliency programs teach coping skills, health and fitness, anti-bullying, suicide awareness, and many other skills designed to help youth face and overcome difficult challenges. The partnerships are investments in Alaska’s youth, communities, and future.

The Alaska Army National Guard remains committed to its local, state, and federal partners. As shown above, Soldiers and units are ready to deploy and operate anywhere in or outside of

Alaska when called. Citizen-Soldiers are dedicated to building relationships that strengthen Alaska communities and improve response capabilities. By achieving the Army's number one priority of readiness, mission-ready Guard members will continue providing the services and results Alaska and AKARNG partners have come to expect.

Always ready, always there!

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Verdie Bowen, Director

Mission

The Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA) was busy in 2018: Welcoming Home Alaska's Vietnam veterans and veterans from all conflicts; researching and documenting Alaska Territorial Guard Honorable Service; increasing partnerships through enhanced travel efforts across Alaska while working closely with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in the areas of medical care, disability/pensions compensations, and rural outreach. OVA accomplished all of this while keeping its primary mission at the forefront: to develop and sustain comprehensive statewide veterans' advocacy programs.

Veterans Served

This year the staff, contract personnel, and OVA-managed volunteers were successful in assisting veterans by ensuring the return of over \$71 million in single back payments owed by the Veterans Courts of Appeal to the veterans and eligible family member. OVA also assisted 68,628 veterans, active duty, reserve component members, and family members with federal and state benefits/claims questions and processing. Staff traveled to over 260 communities around the state reaching many veterans for the first time.

OVA programs succeed by helping eligible residents receive the benefits they have earned. In 2018, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) sent in excess of \$281 million for disability compensation and pension payments to veterans and/or their families who reside in Alaska for federal FY2017. Veterans also received more than \$310 million in medical care across five VA clinics, 122 local Native Alaskan healthcare facilities, and local contracted care.

Alaska currently has over 4,000 students attending an Alaskan educational facility or employment program who are eligible for VA education benefits. Total funds paid to in-state institutions, employment programs, and to eligible members under the per diem program was over \$69.5 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.

OVA collaborated with the VA and co-sponsored several rural outreach programs in Alaska. These efforts assisted veterans by providing services in their home communities. Veterans Service Officers, VA Benefits counselors, National Guard Benefits counselors, Alaska Veterans Advisory Council members, Tribal Veteran Representatives (TVRs), and staff from OVA

participated. This year, OVA and service representatives traveled to the following communities, often several times: Anchor Point, Anderson, Angoon, Barrow, Bethel, Cantwell, Clear, Copper River, Cordova, Craig, Delta Junction, Dillingham, Dutch Harbor, Fairbanks, Fort Greely, Fort Yukon, Glennallen, Healy, Homer, Kenny Lake, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Kotzebue, Nenana, Nikiski, North Pole, Petersburg, Palmer, Seward, Sitka, Soldotna, Talkeetna, Tok, Valdez, Willow, and Wrangell.

Highly Rural Transportation Grant

This year OVA again received the VA Highly Rural Transportation grant for \$225,000. This grant provides transportation options to veterans residing in five boroughs who need to travel to receive healthcare services. The following boroughs received \$50,000 each to provide this service: Denali, Matanuska-Susitna, Kenai Peninsula, and Prince of Wales-Hyder; Kodiak Peninsula received \$25,000. Since inception, 30,000 veterans have traveled using this grant, and this year more than 8,600 veterans benefited from it. OVA is pleased to report that the VA renewed the grant for federal FY19, so this service will continue to be available to veterans in these areas.

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans

OVA continues its partnership with the Department of Defense (DoD) to honor every Vietnam veteran living in Alaska. In 2014, OVA minted and sanctioned an Alaska Vietnam Welcome Home Honor Coin and has since honored over 7,000 veterans. This official partnership has expired, but due to the success of the events and the impact on Alaska's veterans, OVA has plans to continue this program until all Vietnam veterans are welcomed home.

Alaska Territorial Guard

OVA continues working with the DoD to research, find, and issue discharges to Alaska Territorial Guard (ATG) members. Each year, it becomes more difficult due to fewer family members requesting discharges, but OVA continues working to ensure that every ATG veteran has a discharge document on record. In 2018, OVA had the pleasure of collaborating with the Aleutian Pribilof Island Association (APIA) to honor the last known living Aleut ATG soldier, PVT Herman "Buddy" Bendixen in a ceremony at the APIA headquarters. To date, DoD and OVA have authenticated more than 2,600 discharges and have issued Honorable Discharges to living

ATG members or their families. Since beginning these efforts, over 4,800 ATG records have been reviewed for discharge action. The aim is to ensure future generations will have access to their ancestors' service records by having those records on file at the National Archives.

Veteran Service Officer (VSO) Grant Management

Alaska's peers continue to rate Alaska as best in the nation for quality and speed in the VA claims process. To ensure veterans receive the best service, there are 18 Veterans Service Officers (VSOs) located across the state. They are nationally certified and provide free services to veterans. The following organizations receive grants to serve Alaska's veterans: Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, The Military Order of the Purple Heart, Disabled American Veterans, and Vietnam Veterans of America. Currently, service officers are located in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Wasilla, Kenai, Juneau, and Palmer.

Statewide Stand Down

Stand Down is an annual program to help veterans in need with various types of support, including: medical and dental screening, housing assistance, employment assistance, and financial assistance. One event was held in Anchorage and one in Fairbanks. OVA reached and served over 911 veterans who would otherwise fall outside OVA's usual reach.

These events are critical, because they bring key staff together who have the ability to move quickly on issues to assist veterans. A Stand Down event often attracts veterans off the road system, and it provides a venue for staff to demonstrate that veterans are not forgotten and their service is important to Alaska and the nation. This is another great way communities come together to honor Alaska's veterans who served.

Veterans Memorial Endowment Fund

OVA administers the Veterans Memorial Endowment Fund. Monies from this fund are designated for: the maintenance, repair, replacement and enhancement of—or addition to—existing veterans' memorials or military monuments as well as the development and construction of new veterans' memorials or military monuments. In 2018, OVA awarded one grant under this program to Bethel's Alaska Territorial Guard Memorial Park and Veterans Cemetery to support continued development and maintenance of this honored site.

Other Significant Accomplishments

OVA continues to partner with the VA to train Tribal Veterans Representatives (TVRs); this is critical to OVA's success in reaching every veteran in Alaska. This year, an additional 30 volunteer TVRs completed training. Today, over 380 TVRs statewide provide basic services to veterans in their communities. This is the largest veterans volunteer corps in the nation. Since the program's inception in 2011, veterans and their families have familiar and friendly local contacts in communities across Alaska. The TVRs know the veterans in their community and what benefits individuals have earned. This program is directly responsible for adding to enrollment numbers in the Alaska VA Healthcare System. TVRs are a huge force multiplier for OVA. OVA aims to one day have a TVR in every community, ensuring all Alaska's veterans are enrolled in the VA Healthcare System.

OVA collaborated with the VA Mortgage Servicing Assistance program, which helps veterans receive their VA Certificate of Eligibility to purchase homes. In 2017/18, this effort resulted in 3,595 guaranteed loans for a total of over \$1.082 billion.

OVA completed its first full contract year with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, providing the services of the Alaska State Approving Agency (SAA). The SAA approves all education and training across Alaska, in accordance with Title 38 CFR, so veterans and their eligible dependents can utilize earned education benefits at approved facilities. In 2018, Alaska's veterans had 77 approved education and training facility options, offering 884 programs of study. The SAA approved Alaska's first Village Public Safety Officer Program for Veterans Education benefits in the NW Arctic Borough, giving those eligible the opportunity to "earn while they learn."

OVA partnered with the VA and Veteran Centers in Wasilla and Kenai, sharing a booth at the 2018 Alaska State Fair in Palmer and Kenai. Staff assisted over 1,800 veterans apply for VA benefits and healthcare earned through their military service.

OVA continues to maintain the Alaska Coalition for Veterans & Military Families—formerly the Forget-Me-Not Coalition—providing not-for-profit services to veterans, active duty, reserve components, and their families. Since this sponsorship, OVA has become the lead in moving the Coalition forward by increasing community capacity to better assist service members, veterans, and their families in their home communities. Current projects include revamping the website, updating the strategic plan, as well as continued outreach, training and education throughout

the state. For instance, in 2018 OVA provided Alaska Clergy Suicide Prevention training and several clinics on preparing legal wills.

OVA and the VA continue to host veteran claims clinics. After the success of the first-ever claims clinic in Kodiak in 2016, clinics were held in Wasilla, Kenai, Dillingham, Nome, and Copper River. These clinics serve discharging service members, veterans and their families, survivors, and those who hold powers of attorney for veterans. This program is unique because it allows for filing of disability claims, submittal of evidence or additional evidence for existing claims, and communication with claims processors on-the-spot. Bringing claims clinics to people where they live allows for speedy processing times and an opportunity to serve those who may not otherwise seek service.

In recognition of the 50th Anniversary of the Vietnam War, Remember My Service Productions published a 156-page photographic book, “Vietnam War 50th Commemoration - A Time to Honor.” The Governor and Military Order of the Purple Heart created a 9-page Alaska-specific section in this book and graciously purchased this book on behalf of a grateful state and nation to honor Alaskan veterans who served during the Vietnam War. OVA distributed 1,250 of these books to Alaska’s veterans who served in this area of operation. This is a cherished visual perspective on the brave men and women who served in Vietnam during a pivotal time in America’s history half a world away.

Throughout 2018, Alaska has moved into a new era in regards to veteran services. The past year has seen: development of a second Fisher House; continued choice of local over out-of-state health care provided to veterans; collaborative efforts for a State Veterans Cemetery in the Heartland of Alaska; heightened welcome-home efforts for all our veterans. All this has occurred while OVA has continued to provide veterans with access to assistance. The goal of having every veteran in Alaska receiving all earned benefits remains to be fulfilled, but the Office of Veterans Affairs maintains its promise to continue “Serving Alaska, One Veteran at a Time.”

ALASKA MILITARY YOUTH ACADEMY

Bob Roses, Director

Mission

AMYA is a 22-week residential quasi-military program for at-risk youth, ages 16 to 18. AMYA's mission is to produce program graduates with the values, skills, education, and self-discipline to succeed as adults. Cadets have the opportunity to earn 7.5 high school credits, credit recovery, a high school diploma, or a general education diploma (GED). Cadets who complete their academic requirements early have the opportunity to participate in the Cadet to Work Program (CWP) for the last four weeks of the residential phase. Areas of instruction include the following options: Culinary Arts, Small Engine Repair, Health Care Pathways, Media Production, Drones, and Construction Trades. Starting in 2019, graduates will also have the option to participate in a 75-percent federally-funded, on-site program that provides occupational certificates.

Major Accomplishments

The Alaska Military Youth Academy (AMYA) is an accredited secondary institution for teens ages 16 -18 who are having difficulty succeeding in a traditional high school setting or have left high school without receiving a credential. The program is subject to the oversight of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs, Reserve Integration, OSAD/RA). The National Guard Bureau Office of Youth Programs administers the Program nationally and the Alaska Adjutant General and Division Director manage the local site. AMYA formally opened its doors January 30, 1994 as one of the original ten pilot sites and has grown along with the national program. There are currently 39 active sites in 29 states, the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. AMYA leads, trains, and mentors young men and women to become productive citizens. The first class graduated 43 cadets; the most recent program class (2018-2) graduated 187 cadets, the largest in history. Over 5,600 youth have completed this physically demanding and educationally stimulating program, and over 3,340 have earned high school diplomas and/or GED certificates.

The proven Youth ChalleNGe approach uses a tuition-free, quasi-military environment, with an experiential learning model to strengthen the academic and social skills of participants in the Eight Core Components while encouraging emotional growth. The 17 ½ month program includes a 5 ½ month (22-week) Residential Phase followed by a 12-month Post-Residential Phase. AMYA runs two residential classes per year, one beginning in spring and the other in fall.

The Residential Phase is conducted in National Guard facilities with separate sleeping quarters for male and female cadets. This begins with a two-week Acclimation Period, where the applicants are referred to as “candidates” and assessed for their desire to succeed and complete the program. Additionally, 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. Candidates who successfully complete Acclimation earn the distinction of becoming “cadets.”

In the remaining 20 weeks, academics, physical fitness, 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, promote healthy living, and aid in the development of employment skills while contributing to a growing sense of community involvement and commitment.

During the winter and summer of 2018, eligible cadets successfully completed credit recovery, and award of their high school diploma or GED Test, by examination. Through the combined efforts of the Academics Section’s dedicated professionals, supporting staff, volunteer tutors, and adult mentors, cadets in the 2018 winter class raised the average math and reading level by 1.7 and 1.5 grade levels, respectively during the intense 17 weeks of instruction and assessment. Cadets in the spring/summer 2018 class raised the average math and reading level by 1.7 and 1.9 grade levels. Cadets can earn up to 7.5 credits toward their secondary education, bringing them closer to the required credits should they opt to return to public school for graduation. As an AdvancED/NWAC accredited institution, eligible students can receive an AMYA high school diploma when they meet the State standards. AMYA is certified to offer participants preparation and testing for the General Educational Development (GED) if they prefer this high school equivalency credential.

The AMYA offers vocational and technical education programs beginning five weeks before graduation through federal and state grant funds. Selected cadets have the opportunity to participate 40 hours of instruction in construction trades training in each of the following disciplines: carpentry, electrical, laborers, and iron workers/ welders. Included in the training is scaffolding/fall protection and OSHA 10 safety training. Another group of cadets complete the Healthcare Specialties Course while others train in Culinary Arts ServeSafe® Food Handlers’ certification. AMYA provides additional certification training in small engine and unmanned aerial vehicles. One hundred percent of cadets receive instruction in exploratory vocation courses and Community Emergency Responder Team (CERT) training.

Cadets develop a Post-Residential Action Plan (P-RAP) beginning in Week 3 as a goal-setting process with the guidance of staff and support from their mentors. Some of the goals may include completion of secondary and post-secondary education, entering the workplace or joining the military. The goal of the post-residential phase is for graduates to apply the strategies and learning to serve as a productive member of society. Mentors are considered to be a key element to sustained cadet successes and often one of the 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 cadet's 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.

Entering into its 26th year of operation, graduates are demonstrating tremendous success in communities across Alaska and around the world. The Academy's track record of sustained success strategically positions it to impact the next generation of Alaska's families.

DIVISION OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

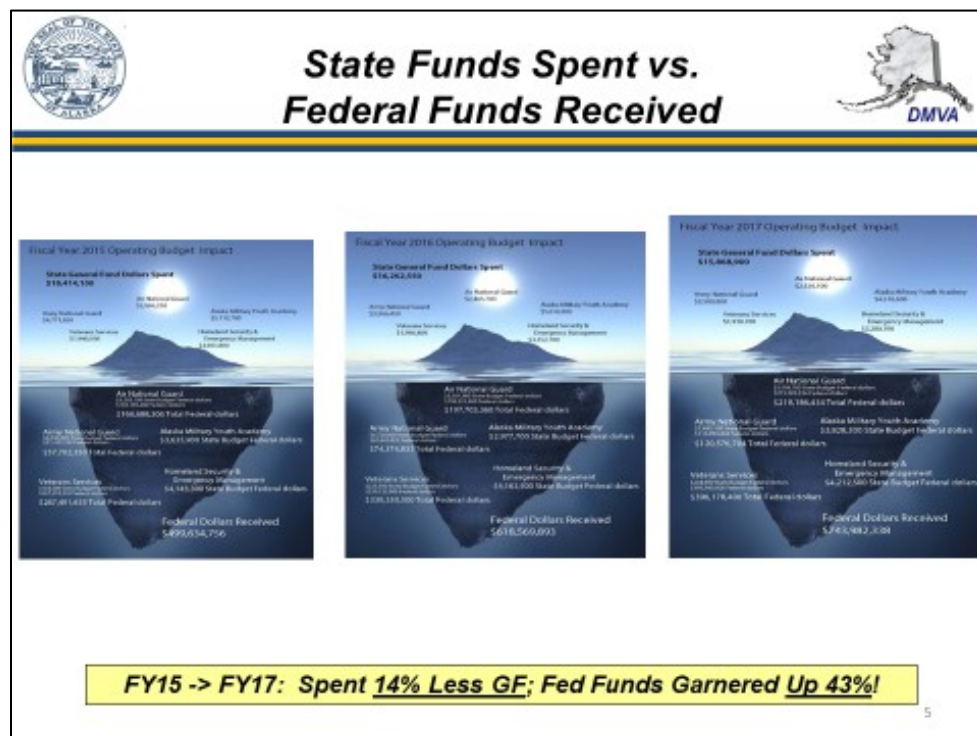
Brian P. Duffy, Director

Mission

DMVA's Division of Administrative Services' (DAS) team of dedicated professionals that leveraged their unique capabilities to execute the Department's mission, consistent with the Commissioner's and Governor's intent. Specifically, DAS team:

1. **Deliver** critical budget, financial management, human resources, information technology, procurement, and administrative products and services;
2. **Assist** colleagues across DMVA in executing their assigned duties and responsibilities; and
3. **Serve** the state's Veteran population and the citizens of Alaska

With DMVA's budget representing only 0.36% of total General Fund in the annual Walker/Mallott Administration budget, the smallest agency budget in the state, the DAS team partnered with other DMVA Divisions to bring significant federal funding to Alaska, as depicted below. In FY 2018, with just under \$16 million in state GF, DMVA brought in more than \$743 million in federal funding; from FY 15 to FY 17, that represents a 14% smaller GF investment but a 43% increase in federal funding.



ALASKA STATE DEFENSE FORCE

Colonel (AK) John C. James, Commander

Mission

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 the Alaska National Guard (AKNG) and Naval Militia in performance of their state missions. 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.

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.

ASDF Detachments

Because Alaska 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 2018, the ASDF continued its efforts to expand in rural Alaska. Locally deployed, self-sufficient, trained observers and responders are increasingly important due to the following factors: increasing 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 are available to provide important assistance in the instance of another event like the 1964 earthquake.

In addition to existing units in Anchorage, Bethel, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Kodiak, Valdez, Wasilla, Kodiak, Kwethluk, and Quinhagak, this year the ASDF stood up new detachments in the communities of Kipnuk, Utquiagvik, Scammon Bay, St Paul, and Little Diomed. The ASDF anticipates formation of additional units in Fort Greely, Hooper Bay, Kotzebue, and Nome.

Lines of Effort

In 2017, for the first time in the organization's history, ASDF Soldiers augmented AKNG relief efforts outside of Alaska. Four ASDF 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.

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 23,420 hours of volunteer time to the state in 2018, and supported a number of special projects, including the Alaska Federation of Natives Conference, the Kuskokwim 300 race in Bethel, the City of Wasilla Independence Day Parade, the City of Houston's Founders Day event, and Operation Stand Down for Homeless Veterans in both Fairbanks and Anchorage.

Chaplaincy is an important and essential mission of the ASDF, whose importance 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.