

Quarterly Magazine for the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs

WINTER 2012/2013

WARRIORS



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Commander in Chief



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On the Cover: Private Richard Mitchell, B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul, visits with children of a village in northern Qalat, Afghanistan, in May. The children of the village received humanitarian aid from the provincial reconstruction team during the visit to assess security and irrigation in the village. Mitchell and his unit returned home to Alaska in November after a one-year deployment. For more on the homecoming, see page 10.

Photo: Senior Airman Joshua Turner, U.S. Air Force



Skycrane On Display. Members of the Alaska Army National Guard move Isabell, a Sikorsky CH-54B Skycrane, to her final nesting spot in the Alaska National Guard Memorial Park on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in October. The Sikorsky CH-54B Skycrane is famous for setting several records and also for using a five-ton hammer to break through the ice in an attempt to rescue three gray whales during "Operation Breakthrough" near Point Barrow, Alaska, in 1988. It was also featured in the 2012 film "Big Miracle." Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

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veterans and families are invited and encouraged. Please send articles and photos with name, phone number, e-mail, complete mailing address and comments to:

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For the People

Governor Sean Parnell
Commander in Chief



Taking Care of Alaskans

As we begin 2013, we are grateful to have most of our Guardsmen and women at home with their families. Currently, Alaska National Guard has the lowest number of deployed Guard members since the United States entered the global War on Terrorism – this is thanks in part to successful partnerships with coalition forces and the result of years of boots-on-the-ground hard work. Our thoughts are with those who remain deployed overseas, as well as with those who will soon depart. We are proud of their willingness to serve, thankful for their families who remain on the home front, and pray for their safe return.

I have been honored to welcome many of our Guard members home to Alaska from their deployments, most recently greeting the Alaska Air National Guardsmen who deployed last year to Afghanistan as part of the 176th Wing's largest deployment since 2003. Throughout the last several years, hundreds of Alaska National Guardsmen have been called up to support deployments in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Djibouti, Egypt and other locations. They served honorably with missions ranging from security forces and aviation support to training Afghan National Army Soldiers and working with Mongolian Armed

Forces personnel. Alaska National Guard members have made great contributions to protect all Americans and the freedoms we enjoy.

Caring for our veterans and military families remains a priority. The state's Veterans Affairs Office has been working to ensure the 77,000 Alaska veterans receive the benefits and services they earned. We now have 17 veterans service officers located across the state. In addition, the Veterans Affairs Office has partnered with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and sponsored many rural outreach efforts to provide services to veterans close to home. Recently, the Anchorage Veterans Affairs Office relocated to 4600 Debarr Road. By moving the office off of Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, veterans now have direct access to service providers and Veterans Affairs staff. In just the first few weeks the new location has been open, the staff has seen an exponential increase in the number of people seeking assistance.

Personal and community preparedness for disasters and emergencies is important for all Alaskans. An upcoming preparedness conference will focus on critical decision-making in significant events. The conference will be led by the Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management and assisted by our partners in disaster mitigation. The distinguished professors from the Harvard schools of government and public health, who lead the National Preparedness Leadership Initiative, will give specific training to emergency managers from across the state. Helping community leaders set the tone for response and recovery for our neighbors is important to protecting the safety of Alaskans.

Thank you to all members of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs for taking care of Alaskans. Together, we strive to make Alaska a safe and better place to live every day.



Thank You. Governor Sean Parnell thanks Specialist Lawrence Yeaton, of Port Graham, for his service during a welcome home ceremony honoring the return of Alaska Army National Guard members with B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment. The Soldiers were deployed for one year in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Photo: Sergeant Michelle Brown, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



The Adjutant General



Major General Thomas H. Katkus
Adjutant General, Alaska National Guard
& Commissioner, Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs

Partnering for Success

The Department of Military & Veterans Affairs is an exemplary organization that succeeds because of the partnerships and relationships its members have developed with local, state and federal agencies here in Alaska and around the world.

Whether it's emergency response or day-to-day activities, partnering with the Coast Guard, active-duty forces, the Alaska State Troopers or local emergency responders, our partnerships bring together like-minded organizations dedicated to Alaska communities.

In the Alaska National Guard, our associations and total force integration with the active duty in rescue coordination, air sovereignty missions, space and missile warning, ground-based missile defense, and flying, supporting and maintaining the C-17 and the C-130 have become models for other organizations to emulate.

These long-term partnerships with our joint military partners here in Alaska are successful because we share resources and align ourselves with the Department of Defense strategic guidance, current constrained budget and reduced force structure. These partnerships allow the Alaska National Guard to achieve much more than we could ever on our own and ensures long term stability and total force effectiveness.

Opening lines of communication and aligning our efforts with the U.S. Coast Guard has been fruitful and good for the state of Alaska as well. Supporting efforts during rescue operations, working together to provide domestic military response with developments in the arctic, and protecting the citizens of Alaska along the coastlines, we share similar goals, values and a vision to provide support around the state.

The department's Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management also continues to be a successful partnership model of cooperation and coordination during emergency response. Its long-term commitment to reach out and build lasting relationships within all communities and regions of Alaska through preparedness conferences, exercises, and outreach programs is making a difference in the lives of many Alaska citizens because of its clear agenda, defined objectives and communication with every community.

As commissioner of the Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, I place significant value on these partnerships, and as we move forward, we must maintain and develop new relationships to ensure we continue to serve the citizens of Alaska. This mutual respect will allow for our continued growth and will draw on the strengths of every organization dedicated to providing emergency response and defending our freedoms here in Alaska. ■



Welcome Home to Alaska. Senior Master Sergeant Steve Kausal, 210th Rescue Squadron, Alaska Air National Guard, shakes hands with Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, after returning from Afghanistan in October. In Afghanistan, the rescue personnel conducted combat search and rescue. This involved challenging casualty-evacuation missions, flying into "hot" combat zones, frequently under fire, to pull wounded coalition service members to safety and transport them to a treatment facility within one hour. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

Mine was earned in Vietnam. By my dad.

Barbara Q., USAA member



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Dispatches from the Front...

Airmen Save 305 Lives in Afghanistan

By Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Wars are won by the courageous men and women who fight in the air, on the sea and in the trenches.

Spirited in fight, these brave Soldiers meet the enemy on uneven ground, some giving their lives for fellow service members, while others are seriously injured on the field of battle. In the critical moments that follow, where prompt intervention is needed to get an injured Soldier to a trauma care facility, America's warriors depend on elite combat search and rescue units like the Alaska Air National Guard's 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons.

From late May to October, more than 180 citizen-Airmen of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing were deployed to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. At the peril of losing their own lives, these men and women dedicated themselves to the mission of helping fellow service members get the critical help they needed, resulting in 305 lives saved.

"The men were very satisfied with the missions we executed over the five-month stretch," said Major Matt Komatsu, 212th Rescue Squadron director of operations. "We saw it all – wounded coalition and Afghan civilians, downed aircraft, extended ground operations while integrated with U.S. Marine Corps recon troops. We even fought alongside United Kingdom troopers in defense of Camp Bastion during the most devastating airfield incursion to occur since the Vietnam War. The experiences were diverse, challenging, and dangerous, and each man was tested and found equal to the task."

Intervening to save lives, Komatsu and fellow Guardian Angels from the Alaska Air National Guard rescue squadrons often found themselves in difficult situations engaging enemies while attempting to bring back the sons and daughters of coalition forces.

"In late July, we were alerted with a casevac [casualty evacuation] of two Danish soldiers whose vehicle hit an IED and were in the middle of a fire fight," Komatsu said. "Guardian Angel teams responded on HH-60s [Pave Hawk helicopters] into an active landing zone with small arms fire and grenade launches coming from multiple directions. When the helo landed, Technical Sergeant Chris Harding, Staff Sergeant Nick Watson and Staff Sergeant Bill Cenna made a run under fire through an uncleared IED field, a flowing canal, and then climbed a 12-foot embankment to reach the wounded Danish soldiers. After rendering care to the wounded, they realized they had four, not two patients to move, so the team quickly stabilized the patients and made their way back to the helicopter through a barrage of small arms fire before turning around and going back to bring the other two back safely to the helo waiting to take them to the hospital. Their actions resulted in four lives saved."

Extreme stories of heroism and courageous actions, as shared by Komatsu, have become the norm for Guardian Angels from the Alaska Air National Guard at home and abroad. Their missions are detailed in the countless recommendations for decorations from this deployment, but it's the team and the unity of effort at every level of the operation they will tout as the reason they are so successful in saving lives in these austere conditions.

"Guys were getting off the ground in six minutes, even though we were on a 15-minute response time per the directive," said Lieutenant Colonel Steve Latham, 210th Rescue Squadron director of operations. "I think our quickest mission from takeoff to landing was 13 minutes, and the Soldier was seven miles away. These guys were always ready to go when the call came in and



Preparing for Combat Rescues. Alaska Air National Guard pararescuemen assist a simulated Marine survivor during Exercise Mojave Viper in March 2012. The Alaska Air National Guard's 210th, 211th and 212th Rescue Squadrons participated in the exercise with the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marines, Camp Lejeune, N.C., before they deployed together to Afghanistan. The exercise prepared both forces for real-world combat in Afghanistan and assisted them in saving 305 lives from late May to October.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Cynthia Spalding, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Public Affairs

performed extremely well under pressure, frequently taking fire during rescues."

Flying more than 850 missions and nearly 600 hours in a five-month period also requires a significant support team ready to assist any way it can, and according to Komatsu and Latham, the 176th maintenance personnel deserve a lot of credit for their role in Afghanistan.

"Maintenance deserves a lot of praise for what they did," said Komatsu. "They got birds up in the air, kept them up in the air and repaired them after they got shot up; it was a huge team effort."

"Our maintenance troops were stellar," Latham said. "We fly them hard over there, and it's hard to maintain them because stuff breaks more often, but they were extremely focused and absolutely understood the importance of what was going on. When we got a radio call, these guys were sprinting out toward the helicopter to help get us airborne, throwing vests on the guys, helping them strap in, and that's not something you normally see in the helicopter world, but because we've known most of these guys for 10 to 15 years, in some cases, there's a motivation to do the best you can for your bros. There's a special relationship with a Guard or Reserve unit."

Back at home in Alaska, the unit now continues to focus on training and the mission of saving lives here in Alaska, a mission Komatsu says helped them greatly in Afghanistan.

"It is a concrete truth that the 11th Air Force Search and Rescue mission and the 100-plus search and rescues we execute a year prepare us for an effortless transition to combat personnel recovery," Komatsu said. "We have seamless integration with our HH-60s and HC-130s up here in Alaska, which became absolutely crucial in Afghanistan. Guardian Angels in Alaska don't have to be sharp [just for] the four months they deploy, they have to stay sharp 365 days a year. You can't buy that kind of mission focus through training; it can only come with repeated operations, which we have up here. The transition is seamless, the mission essentially the same; we simply transition from weather and environmental threats to combat threats."

The deployment to Afghanistan was the single largest deployment of personnel from the 176th Wing since 2003. ■

Where in the World

Soldiers Deploy as Liaisons to Mongolians

By Sergeant Balinda O'Neal,
DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ...

Two Alaska Army National Guardsmen deployed in December as U.S. liaisons in support of the Mongolian Expeditionary Task Forces in Afghanistan.

Lieutenant Colonel Simon Brown, Joint Force Headquarters, and Sergeant First Class Todd Patnode, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, departed Alaska in November for Fort Benning, Ga., where they received two weeks of pre-mobilization training before deploying to Camp Eggers, Kabul, for approximately nine months.

The seventh team from the Alaska Army National Guard to support the METF, Brown and Patnode will be liaisons and tactical advisors based on the needs of the Mongolian Armed Forces.

"In the past, the METF have provided mobile training teams to support artillery, heavy weapons and helicopter maintenance to the Afghan Army," said Major Mark Binggeli, a former liaison officer to the METF. "This rotation has a force protection requirement for guard tower security at Camp Eggers and airfield security elements at Kabul International Airport."

As the Mongolians' direct link to the U.S. Forces-Afghanistan and the Base Support Group at Camp Eggers and other sites in country, the Alaska Guardsmen act specifically as U.S. representative liaisons and advisors to ensure proper communication and understanding between the Mongolians and other U.S. or NATO elements during their deployment. ■

Mongolia



Hometown Heroes. The son of Staff Sergeant Jessica Barodte, 176th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, salutes the crowd after his mother received a Hometown Hero award in November on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The Hometown Hero awards are in honor of all National Guard members who have deployed to war zones. Photo: First Lieutenant Bernie Kale, DMVA Public Affairs



Alaska Territorial Guard. Retired Private Paul C. Charles receives a U.S. Army discharge certificate in Bethel from Brigadier General Mike Bridges, commander of the Alaska Army National Guard, recognizing his service as a member of the Alaska Territorial Guard during World War II. Charles, lying about his age, enlisted at 12 years old into the ATG to protect the Territory of Alaska from potential Japanese invaders. Photo: First Lieutenant Bernie Kale, DMVA Public Affairs

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Happy To Be Home. Chief Warrant Officer Brian Baranek carries his daughter on his shoulders after returning to Alaska in December from a six-month deployment to Sinai, Egypt. Five Alaska Army National Guard aviators from F Company, 1-207th Aviation, deployed to the Sinai region in June, flying the C-23 Sherpa aircraft in support of diplomatic efforts in Egypt and throughout the Middle East.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes,
DMVA Public Affairs

Senior Enlisted Leader Heads South

By Kalei Rupp, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... The Guardsman who has been at the helm of the enlisted forces for the Alaska National Guard left Alaska in December headed for the military command that defends America's homeland.

Command Sergeant Major Gordon Choate, the Alaska National Guard senior enlisted leader to the adjutant general, moved to U.S. Northern Command

at Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colo., where he is now the senior enlisted leader to the director of joint training and exercises, Joseph Bonnet.

"I'll be managing Mr. Bonnet's enlisted force along with planning and developing components for the Ardent Sentry exercise, which is really all about exercising what we currently do in our states to protect the homeland, specifically focusing on a chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear event," Choate said.

Ardent Sentry is a major exercise that U.S. Northern Command plans each year, and Alaska will host the exercise in 2014.



Sinai Soldiers. From left, Staff Sergeant Billy Austin, Sergeant Michael Ortwig, Warrant Officer James Smith, Chief Warrant Officer Ross Wise and Chief Warrant Officer Brian Baranek stand in front of a C-23 Sherpa aircraft during a deployment in Sinai, Egypt. The five Alaska Army National Guardsmen with F Company, 207th Theater Activation Company, deployed for approximately six months in support of the Multinational Force Observers and Civilian Observers Unit missions. Photo: Courtesy Alaska Army National Guard



Security Duty. Specialist Darshan Dogra, B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, Alaska Army National Guard, Provincial Reconstruction Team Farah, pulls security alongside two of his Afghan counterparts during a mission in Farah City, Farah province, Afghanistan, in September. The Afghan National Security Force units are seeing an increased role in maintaining peace and order in the province. Dogra and his unit returned to Alaska from this deployment in November. For more on the homecoming, see page 10.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Jonathan Lovelady, U.S. Air Force

Sherpa unit returns to Alaska

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ...

Five Alaska Army National Guardsmen returned to Alaska in December following a six-month deployment to Sinai, Egypt, in support of diplomatic efforts there and throughout the Middle East.

Chief Warrant Officer Brian Baranek, Chief Warrant Officer Ross Wise, Warrant Officer James Smith, Staff Sergeant Billy Austin and Sergeant Michael Ortwig with F Company, 207th Theater Activation Company, deployed in June to fly the C-23 Sherpa in support of the Multinational Force Observers and Civilian Observers Unit missions in Sinai.

“Our unit was part of a multi-national force with military service members from all over the world to include Canada, Norway, Australia and New Zealand,” Baranek said. “It was a great opportunity to work with different nationalities while conducting an important mission.”

Flying the C-23 Sherpa, the Alaska Army National Guardsmen played a critical role transporting observer units to supervise the implementation of the 1979



Deployment Support. First Lieutenant Sherry Ferno, 176th Security Forces Squadron commander, Alaska Air National Guard, presents a flag and certificate to Alaska Department of Public Safety Commissioner Joseph Masters for supporting her through a nine-month deployment to Southeast Asia to work in anti-terrorism. Ferno is also an Alaska State Trooper investigator. The flag was flown in Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom on May 25, 2012. From left, Major Dennis Casanovas, Alaska State Troopers deputy director; Captain Craig Allen, AST Alaska Bureau of Investigation commander; Colonel Keith Mallard, AST director; Joseph Masters, Department of Public Safety

commissioner; First Lieutenant Sherry Ferno, 176th Security Forces Squadron commander and AST investigator; Colonel Patty Wilbanks, 176th Maintenance Support Group commander; Chief Master Sergeant Curtis Brenton, 176th Maintenance Support Group superintendent; Master Sergeant Thomas Gregory, 176th Security Forces Squadron. Photo: Courtesy of Department of Public Safety

The main objective of U.S. Northern Command is to partner in conducting homeland defense, civil support and security cooperation to defend and secure the United States and its interests. Civil support missions include domestic disaster relief, counterdrug operations and management of the consequences of a terrorist event employing a weapon of mass destruction.

“When I called to inquire about a senior enlisted position at U.S. Northcom, they thought I would be a good fit because of my working relationship with other states in dealing with North America defense and my involvement with defense support to civil authorities,” Choate said.

His tour at U.S. Northern Command could be as long as three years. He’s looking forward to working in a “broader, diverse, joint environment,” he said.

“Command Sergeant Major Choate has a long, dedicated career in the Alaska National Guard with a commitment to grow and strengthen the enlisted corps,” said Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard.

“While we will miss seeing him every day, he will remain an Alaska National Guardsman during his time at U.S. Northcom; we know he will represent us well and make great contributions to the protection of Americans here at home.” ■

Egyptian-Israeli Treaty of Peace.

“The C-23 allowed us to conduct aerial observation at low altitudes while flying slow with good maneuverability,” Baranek said. “We were able to haul up to 23 people and their gear between different locations, which was critical because with the current situations in the region and road closures, we were often the only mode of transportation from Sinai.”

The unit returned home to Alaska in mid-December.

“It was awesome arriving back in Alaska for Christmas,” Baranek said. “Our families were very happy, and it was great to be home.” ■

Excitement. Several Alaska Air National Guardsmen run down the flightline on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson to their waiting families in October. The Guardsmen deployed to Afghanistan in support of combat search and rescue.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Airmen Come Home from Afghanistan

By Public Affairs Staff

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska ... More than 140 Alaska Air National Guardsmen from the 176th Wing returned to Alaska in October after deploying to Afghanistan for approximately five months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. It was the wing's single largest deployment of personnel since 2003.



New Addition. Airman First Class Zacharie Abair holds his baby daughter for the first time after returning from Afghanistan in October. This deployment was the 176th Wing's single largest deployment of personnel since 2003. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

The returning Airmen were primarily maintenance crews from the wing's 176th Maintenance Group and rescue personnel from the wing's three rescue units: HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter pilots and crew from the 210th Rescue Squadron, HC-130 King pilots and crew from the 211th, and pararescuemen and combat rescue officers from the 212th. Together with a handful of expeditionary combat support personnel from other 176th Wing units, the Guardsmen formed a highly capable and versatile rescue package.

In Afghanistan, the rescue personnel conducted combat search and rescue. This involved challenging casualty-evacuation missions, flying into "hot" combat zones, frequently under fire, to pull wounded coalition service members to safety and transport them to a treatment facility within one hour. The maintenance crews supported this vital work by keeping the rescuers' planes and helicopters ready for flight at a moment's notice.

"Our Alaska Air National Guard members accepted the challenge, and because of their expertise and professionalism, they saved lives performing critical combat search and rescue missions in support of coalition forces," said Colonel Donald S. "Scott" Wenke, 176th Wing commander. "We are proud to welcome these accomplished Airmen home and are grateful for their service to our state and nation."

Since 1952, the 176th Wing has effectively served Alaskans at home and American interests abroad and has supported large-scale deployments each year since 2003. ■



Flightline Hug. Staff Sergeant Nicholas Watson hugs his wife, Christine, after returning from a deployment to Afghanistan in October. More than 140 Alaska Air National Guardsmen returned to Alaska last fall after deploying to Afghanistan in May in support of combat search and rescue. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

Waiting For Daddy. Danielle Bowman holds her daughters, Kepler and Audrie, while waiting for her husband, Master Sergeant Brian Bowman, to step off a plane from Afghanistan. More than 140 Alaska Air National Guardsmen from the 176th Wing returned to Alaska in October after approximately five months.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Happy To Have Daddy Home. Captain Hans Jagow, 176th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard, embraces his two daughters, Saylor, right, and Liberty, while his wife, Tamera, shares in the emotional moment of his return from Afghanistan.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

Elation. Technical Sergeant Michael Lajcsak, 211th Rescue Squadron, embraces his son on the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson flightline after returning from a five-month deployment to Afghanistan.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Arrival Anticipation. Family and friends gather behind Hangar 18 on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson to welcome home citizen-Airmen of the Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing in October. More than 140 Alaska Air National Guardsmen from the 176th Wing returned to Alaska in October after deploying to Afghanistan for approximately five months in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Welcome Home. Family and friends of Alaska National Guard members from B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, eagerly await the return of their Soldiers at the Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport. The unit was deployed for one year on a security forces mission in support of the provincial reconstruction teams that are helping to rebuild Afghanistan. Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

SOLDIERS RETURN FROM SECURITY FORCES MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

By Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. ... More than 100 Alaska Army National Guardsmen returned to the United States in early November, following a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Soldiers of B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, arrived in Indianapolis and were greeted at the plane by U.S. Senator Mark Begich, Alaska Lieutenant Governor Mead Treadwell, Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, and several other Alaska National Guard senior leaders.

In Afghanistan, the Alaska Guardsmen provided security forces for provincial reconstruction teams operating in dangerous areas across the country to rebuild infrastructure, assist with agriculture, build wells and provide health care.

"I'm very proud of our Alaska National Guardsmen, and I'm honored to welcome them home to the United States," Treadwell said. "These brave Soldiers courageously performed security forces missions in extremely dangerous areas throughout Afghanistan to assist the provincial reconstruction teams that are rebuilding the country. They are true American heroes, and I, along with all Alaskans, thank them for their exemplary service."



Good To Be In Alaska Again. Sergeant Paul Pingayak is welcomed home by loved ones at Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport in November. The company had been deployed to Afghanistan for a yearlong security forces mission.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

The Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers hail from Anchorage, Bethel, Chevak, Delta Junction, Dillingham, Eagle River, Ekwok, Emmonak, Fairbanks, Fort Greely, Hooper Bay, Houston, Juneau, Kipnuk, Kodiak, Kongiganak, Kwethluk, Little Diomed, Marshal, Nikiski, Nome, North Pole, Palmer, Port Graham, Quinhagak, Scammon Bay, Shishmaref, Sitka, Tuluksak, Upper Kalskag, Valdez, Wasilla and Wrangell. ■



Proud Grandma. Specialist Randell Andrew, B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, is greeted by his grandmother Natasia Lomack after he returned to Alaska from a one-year deployment to Afghanistan where his unit provided security forces to provincial reconstruction teams.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Family. Specialist Axel Joe, B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, is reunited with his family after returning to Alaska from a one-year deployment to Afghanistan. Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Back in the U.S.A. Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, welcomes home Specialist Darshan Dogra in November, along with 107 other Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers from B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, after a yearlong tour in Afghanistan. The Soldiers landed in Indianapolis to begin their demobilization training before returning to Alaska.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Daddy's Home. Sergeant Paul Oliver, B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, is met by his excited 2-year-old son, Connor, and wife, Michelle, when he returned from a one-year deployment to Afghanistan in November.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Group Hug. Alaska Army National Guard Staff Sergeant Edward Jones, B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, is welcomed home by his wife, Suzie, and son, Casey. His unit was deployed on a yearlong security forces mission in Afghanistan.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Homeland Security & Emergency Management



The Cost of Disaster Response. Heavy equipment and operators line the streets of Cordova during the 2012 Prince William Sound storm. The excessive snowfall from the storm prompted the city of Cordova to request assistance from the state. Additional emergency equipment, personnel, and supplies can create a financial hardship for small and large communities. Through the Disaster Assistance process, communities can be reimbursed for eligible emergency response costs. Photo: Kim Wiehl, DHS&EM



THE UNSUNG HEROES OF DISASTER ASSISTANCE

By Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... The title of emergency manager invokes visions of first responders plucking people from a perilous situation, officials establishing temporary shelters, and emergency



crews working hard to protect homes and other critical infrastructure. While these impressions are correct, it does not tell the entire emergency management story.

It is also incumbent upon emergency management to help disaster-impacted areas rebound from the effects of a disaster. In the wake of many events, the broken homes, damaged roads, compromised buildings and disrupted utilities can prevent residents from returning. In some cases, this means that a once-vibrant community is diminished.

The Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management's Disaster Assistance section is designed to help disaster-impacted residents and communities restore themselves to a pre-disaster condition.

"Disaster Assistance does not wait for the disaster event to conclude before we get involved," said David Andrews, DHS&EM chief of Disaster Assistance. "We have staff augmenting the State Emergency Operation Center during the response phase of a disaster. This early involvement allows staff to gain situational awareness, identify key personnel within disaster-impacted communities and assess the size of the incident."

Governor Activates Disaster Assistance. Alaska Governor Sean Parnell tours storm-damaged areas in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough in September. He later issued a disaster declaration, which activated the state's public and individual Disaster Assistance programs. Photo: Courtesy of the Office of Governor Sean Parnell

As part of the state's incident management team, Disaster Assistance staff may be called upon to work 12-hour shifts in the State Emergency Operations Center during the days and weeks of the response phase. After the event has passed and immediate life-safety emergency needs have been addressed, the SEOC is deactivated. Disaster Assistance is then able to make a rapid transition to the recovery effort that takes place throughout the ensuing months and years.

Disasters can hit hard on a community's infrastructure as well as individual and family homes within the community. Disaster Assistance has public assistance programs to fund repairs to critical infrastructure and emergency response costs, and individual assistance programs to help families repair their primary residence or replace other essential items. For families that cannot return to their homes, individual assistance is able to provide temporary housing assistance. In order for these programs to be activated, the governor must issue a disaster declaration that specifies activation of the programs.

In order to help disaster-impacted Alaskans, Disaster Assistance moves swiftly but smartly. Individuals and local governments want to begin rebuilding as fast as possible. During the September 2012 severe storms, emergency shelters were established in many communities. After the storms had passed, 37 individuals and families found that their homes were either destroyed or unlivable. Disaster Assistance worked with each emergency housing applicant to ensure that they had adequate shelter until repairs could be made, or permanent housing could be found.

"The window to offer help to a disaster victim is measured in a matter of hours, while at the same time homes can take weeks and months to repair," Andrews said. "Our dedicated Disaster Assistance staff often puts in very long hours to ensure that those who need help receive it."

Disaster Assistance makes every effort to meet with those impacted and provide information on what programs are available, what documentation is required and what costs are eligible.

During the September 2012 severe storms, DHS&EM staff participated in seven community meetings and established eight disaster assistance centers within the hardest hit communities. Establishing DACs within communities allows Disaster Assistance staff to establish a face-to-face relationship with those they are trying to help. It also gives applicants the opportunity to fully explore what assistance is available and what will be eligible under the state's disaster recovery programs. With this information,

disaster assistance applicants can move forward with their own recovery efforts.

"Alaska is one of the few states in the nation able to provide this level of disaster assistance to our citizens," said John Madden, DHS&EM director. "As a state, we have decided that Alaskans impacted by a disaster will not have to stand alone, that when a disaster cuts a swath of destruction in a community, the state has programs, and more importantly, the will to act and help residents recover."

Damages to critical infrastructure in a community can hamper individuals' and families' ability to rebound from a disaster. Through the state's public assistance program, DHS&EM is able to help communities repair damaged infrastructure and recover emergency response costs. Rebuilding roads, bridges, schools, railroads, hospitals, utilities and other critical structures may be eligible for recovery funding. In addition, funds expended by a community to respond to a disaster event and/or performed emergency protective measures can be claimed as an eligible cost.

Throughout the recovery process, Disaster Assistance is in constant contact with individuals and communities. Some of the work can be accomplished through email, fax and phones. However, Disaster Assistance specialists do find themselves in rural and urban communities for long periods of time.

During the 2011 Crooked Creek ice jam flooding, recovery specialists were embedded in the community throughout the summer. Living and working from a temporary building, Disaster Assistance staff were able to guide the community through the housing recovery mission. Thanks in large part to Disaster Assistance staff efforts, nine Crooked Creek families were able to move into new housing just 104 days after severe ice jam flooding had destroyed their old homes.

"To work in Disaster Assistance, a person needs to be willing to work long hours for long periods of time, be willing to go the extra mile to help people and communities and have knowledge of specialized disaster recovery programs," Andrews said. "We can teach people the specialized skill set that is needed, but we cannot teach compassion or commitment. Disaster Assistance staff are in the communities and meet the disaster survivors. They see the damages, hear their voices and see their faces. It takes more than a bureaucratic approach to the programs to be successful. It is incumbent upon us to find solutions for people during the time that they need it most." ■



Community Meetings. The Matanuska-Susitna Borough, Department of Environmental Conservation and Division of Homeland Security & Emergency Management participate in a September community meeting in Talkeetna. The meetings were an excellent opportunity to provide information about recovery options and to meet individuals who had been impacted by the disaster. Photo: Jeremy Zidek, DHS&EM



OPERATION SANTA CLAUS

Spreads Holiday Cheer



By Kalei Rupp, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... The holidays were celebrated with lively music, good cheer and fun festivities during the 56th annual Operation Santa Claus 2012 season in rural Alaska.

Operation Santa Claus is part of the Alaska National Guard's yearly community relations and support program that provides toys, clothing, books, school supplies, fresh fruit and sundaes to youngsters in communities across the state. In 2012, the program traveled to four communities: Northway, Venetie, Atmautluak and Mekoryuk.

"I've been to amazing places because of the Operation Santa Claus program and my role with the Salvation Army, places that I never would have dreamed I would have been able to go," said Jenni Ragland, Operation Santa Claus volunteer from the Salvation Army. "To see the smiles on kids' faces and to share the joy of Christmas and know, that at least for a day, we're doing something that's different than their normal and just helping share joy with them."

Santa, Mrs. Claus and a team of elves had a variety of sleighs bringing them around Alaska – an Alaska Air National Guard C-130 and C-17, an Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter and an Alaska Army National Guard C-23 Sherpa.



Waiting for Santa. Children from the village of Atmautluak, which lies on the west bank of the Pitmehtakik River in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, 20 miles northwest of Bethel in Western Alaska, eagerly await the arrival of Santa, Mrs. Claus and a team of elves during Operation Santa Claus in December. Operation Santa Claus is part of the Alaska National Guard's yearly community relations and support program that provides toys, clothing, books, school supplies, fresh fruit and sundaes to youngsters in communities across the state. Photo: Sergeant Balinda O'Neal, DMVA Public Affairs



Books Galore. Dina Banez, Operation Santa Claus volunteer, helps a Northway Elementary School student pick out a book from Operation Santa Claus in December. Photo: First Lieutenant Bernie Kale, DMVA Public Affairs

"To see the kids opening presents and having a good time – it melts your heart," said Master Sergeant Earl Singleton,

Operation Santa Claus volunteer from the Alaska Air National Guard. ■

Winter Wonderland. Alaska National Guardsmen and Operation Santa Claus volunteers walk through 50-below-zero temperature in Northway in December to reach the Alaska Air National Guard C-130 to take them back home to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, after handing out presents and Christmas cheer. Northway is 50 miles southeast of Tok on a 9-mile spur road off the Alaska Highway. The village is 42 miles from the Canadian border in the Tellin National Wildlife Refuge.

Photo: First Lieutenant Bernie Kale, DMVA Public Affairs



Going Through A Christmas Wish List.

A baby from the village of Mekoryuk visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus during an Operation Santa Claus stop on Nunivak Island in December. One of four villages Operation Santa Claus traveled to during the holiday season, Mekoryuk is on the north shore of Nunivak Island in the Bering Sea. Nunivak lies 30 miles off the coast and is 149 air miles west of Bethel and 553 miles west of Anchorage.

Photo: Specialist Tosca Yeager, Alaska Army National Guard

How It All Began

The Alaska Air National Guard originally started Operation Santa Claus in 1956 as a result of a request from St. Mary's Mission for toys for their children. Spring floods had denied a fishing season that year, and the drought that followed eliminated the big game. Every bit of money the mission had was used to pay for food to be shipped in, so it appeared there was no money to buy gifts for the children for Christmas that year.

So, Guardsmen would accept new or used toys, in those days, from members of the Anchorage community. In turn, they'd rehab used toys, then hand them over to Santa Claus for delivery aboard an Air Guard C-123J Provider.

Throughout the years, as time and social conditions in rural Alaska changed, other villages, schools and groups have invited Operation Santa Claus to their communities. Tens of thousands of Alaska's children and adults have been on the receiving end of St. Nick's good cheer. ■

Alaska Sleigh. Santa and Mrs. Claus prepare to board an Alaska Army National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter after bringing some holiday cheer to the village of Atmautluak during Operation Santa Claus. With the help of the Alaska National Guard, Santa used a variety of sleighs to reach communities throughout the state.

Photo: Sergeant Ballinda O'Neal, DMVA Public Affairs



Holiday Meal. Operation Santa Claus volunteers dish out a meal donated by Pentagon North in the village of Venetie, situated on the north side of the Chandalar River, 45 miles northwest of Fort Yukon and about 150 air miles north of Fairbanks. As part of the Alaska National Guard's yearly community relations and support program, Operation Santa Claus spreads the holiday cheer in several rural communities throughout the state each year. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



FallenWarriors. Alaska National Guard Honor Guard members render a salute during the Fallen Warriors presentation at the Veterans Day ceremony held at the Alaska National Guard Armory Nov. 11. One by one, each member of the Honor Guard presented an item to create the Fallen Warriors Memorial, which included a rubber M-16, a Kevlar helmet, a pair of boots and identification tags.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



Veterans

Honoring Veterans and Their Service

By Verdie Bowen, Veterans Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... This year the Veterans Day National Committee selected the Alaska Department of Military & Veterans Affairs program at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson as one of 58 regional sites across the nation for honoring veterans on Nov. 11. It is apparent that we provide a great honor to our veterans, and the national committee recognized that.

The journey to making a veteran starts out with the Oath of Enlistment.

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to regulations and the Uniform Code of Military Justice. So help me God."

These 76 words are a rite of passage.

What makes our nation so great is that this binds our service members not to a king or state, but to the Constitution, a document

encompassing the vision of liberty and the rule of free men under law. Some might see this as a radical concept, but it is one that has kept America free and strong and a beacon of hope for people around the world for 236 years.

It is also this promise that sets in motion the journey to serve our country with honor and, once fulfilled, results in the privileged title: veteran. Their bravery, their resourcefulness and their patriotism marks them as America's finest citizens: Americans who stepped out of the crowd and voluntarily took the Oath. They served under those words; some bled and others died for them. The decision to serve changed their lives forever.

Remember that a veteran is a fellow citizen, an ordinary person who at one significant point in his or her life made out a blank check payable to the United States of America for any amount up to and including his or her life. Our veterans do not serve for glory or power or wealth but for freedom. The simple recognition of service well performed – a sincere thank you – means more to most veterans than any other reward. ■

Returning Alaska National Guardsmen Reflect on Veterans Day



By Staff Sergeant Karima Turner,
134th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP ATTERBURY, Ind. ...

For recent Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers returning from Afghanistan, Veterans Day 2012 took on new meaning.

Soldiers of B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, returned to the United States three days before Veterans Day, following a yearlong deployment to Afghanistan where they conducted security forces missions throughout dangerous areas of the country to ensure the safety of provincial reconstruction teams who are helping to rebuild the war-torn country.

Specialist Zachary Sparks, of Eagle River, who deployed to Afghanistan with his brother, said that deploying and seeing first hand the challenges that Soldiers have faced in the past, made returning to the United States in time for Veterans Day even more special.

"Coming home from this deployment and being a combat veteran of the U.S. military gives me a whole new outlook on what Veterans Day means," Sparks said. "Now I understand what Soldiers, who came before me, went through and the real meaning of the holiday, which is to honor all Soldiers who have made sacrifices for the freedoms we have today."

Returning Soldier Specialist Coleman Wenke, of North Pole, comes from a long

line of military men and women and said that while Veterans Day has always been a part of his life, it holds more meaning now because he has walked in the shoes of his ancestors.



Combat Veteran. Corporal Daniel Thornton, a security force member of Provincial Reconstruction Team Farah, provides security during a civil affairs mission in Dizak Village, Farah province, Afghanistan, in September. The PRT conducted the patrol to assess living conditions and to talk to local villagers about their concerns. PRT Farah's security force was made up of Alaska Army National Guardsmen from B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, who were responsible for ensuring the safety of everyone assigned to the PRT. The Alaskan Guardsmen returned home in November after a yearlong deployment. Photo: Lieutenant Benjamin Addison, U.S. Navy

"My great grandparents, my grandparents and parents were or are still in the military," Wenke said. "Veterans Day was always a big part of my family, but I think it's more significant now because I now have a better understanding of the sacrifices that they had to make for our freedoms. The significance of sacrifice on Veterans Day is huge; it means people have died for our freedoms, and that's something we should never forget."

Corporal Daniel Thornton, of Wasilla, who has served in multiple wars and gone on many deployments, feels that regardless of whether a Soldier has been deployed multiple times or not, the fact that they knowingly volunteer to serve and protect the United States and its freedoms is something to honor.

"I think Veterans Day is significant to all of us, especially those of us that have served in the past," Thornton said. "Every Soldier who wears the uniform understands that deploying is something that we may have to do. We are willing to give up our lives to fight for the American way of life and know that it's a possibility every time we extend or enlist, but we are willing to take that chance because we love our country." ■



Afghanistan Deployment. Alaska Army National Guard Specialist Coleman Wenke, Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team, B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment, prepares to fire a 60 mm mortar during a training exercise on Camp Atterbury, Ind., in January 2012 prior to deploying to Afghanistan. Coleman and his unit recently returned home after a one-year deployment. Photo: Staff Sergeant Timothy Chacon, U.S. Air Force



Salute of Honor. Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, and Verdie Bowen, administrator of the state Office of Veterans Affairs, salute a wreath in honor of fallen service members during the Canadian Forces Remembrance Day ceremony held at Fort Richardson National Cemetery Nov. 11.

Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

Search-and-Rescue Training in Sitka Mixes Civilian and Military Agencies

By Staff Sergeant Karima Turner,
134th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Nearly 40 Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers traveled from Anchorage to Sitka in October to participate in an interagency search-and-rescue training event.

Designed to facilitate interoperability between civilian and military assets, the training focused on educating participants on various assets, tactics, techniques and procedures utilized during SAR missions.

"We went down there to answer the question, 'If civilian assets needed Guard assistance during a back country search, what would they want us to know?'" said Captain Rusty Meyer, company commander, C Company (Long Range Surveillance), 1-297th Reconnaissance & Surveillance. "We worked with U.S. Coast Guard, Sitka Mountain Rescue, Juneau Mountain Rescue, Alaska Mountain Rescue out of Anchorage and the Sitka Fire Department to see how we could best work together during a search-and-rescue mission."

Meyer said that a key participant of the SAR training, Wrangell Emergency Medical Services, was unable to attend because of weather conditions but still assisted the training by providing lessons they had learned to the Soldiers and other SAR teams.

"Even with the weather challenges, the Wrangell EMS team made sure we were able to learn from their recent real-world rescues," Meyer said. "In SAR training, it's



Search and Rescue. Bill Romberg, of Alaska Mountain Rescue, explains search-and-rescue procedures to Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers during an October interagency search-and-rescue training event in Sitka.

Photo: Captain Rusty Meyer, 1-297th Reconnaissance & Surveillance

crucial that you study previous missions, so you can learn from those events and improve your knowledge base."

The U.S. Coast Guard out of Sitka provided a capabilities and emergency egress brief on the MH-60 Jay Hawk helicopter, the Coast Guard's version of the Alaska Army National Guard's UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter.

Key leaders from each of the entities discussed incident management, how the different organizations run an SAR operation and how Alaska National Guard assets could fit into that kind of operation if additional assistance is needed.

"One of the things that we learned is National Guard and civilian SAR personnel operate on similar guidance and organizational structure," Meyer said. "Once we sat down and were able to understand the different language that we use for the same thing, everything else fell into place, and we were able to communicate effectively during training."

Following hours of intense classroom work, the Soldiers and civilians ventured outdoors for practical exercises.

Met with pouring rain and dropping temperatures, participants practiced basic avalanche recovery operations and proper beacon usage, as well as different search patterns used for different types of SAR missions.

"The SAR training in Sitka was very informative," said Private Johnathan Spaar, C Company (Long Range Surveillance), 1-297th Reconnaissance & Surveillance.

"We were introduced to some very effective techniques, so if we get called up to participate in SAR missions in the future, we will have the tools and knowledge to get the job done."

The ability to communicate during an emergency is also critical. Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers used the practical exercise to train on their high frequency radio communications, essential to any successful SAR mission.

"The communications team worked in conjunction with the Sitka Fire Department to set up various communications networks that would allow for emergency communications for city, state and federal entities," Meyer said. "Using satellite communications, FM and high frequency radio, they were able to conduct communications checks with U.S. Coast Guard MH-60 Jay Hawk helicopter crews. Our Soldiers were also able to set up the high frequency and conduct a 600-mile high frequency shot from Sitka to the Anchorage armory to validate use of high frequency systems in case of an emergency situation."

From incident commanders to medical emergency responders and communications specialists, each Soldier came away from the training with a better understanding of what instate capabilities are available for SAR.

"Training in Sitka was very inspiring," Spaar said. "Most of us have been waiting a long time for the slightest opportunity to 'give back' and help our community, and now we know how." ■



Air Capabilities. Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers check out an MH-60 Jay Hawk helicopter after a U.S. Coast Guard brief on emergency egress and capabilities.

Photo: Captain Rusty Meyer, 1-297th Reconnaissance & Surveillance



Alaska State Defense Force

WATER PURIFICATION FOR DISASTERS

By Brigadier General Roger Holl,
Alaska State Defense Force

ALCANTRA ARMORY, Wasilla, Alaska ... Polluted water is often an issue after a flood or other natural disaster. Potable drinking water is an urgent priority for communities when their water resource is contaminated. In order to aid in this problem, the Alaska State Defense Force has trained to provide environmentally safe, fresh water for communities.

The 3rd Battalion in Fairbanks and the 5th Battalion in Delta Junction led the way for the ASDF by training for the past few years on commercially available water purification machines. These machines are lightweight, highly portable and can deliver 3,000 gallons of safe drinking water every 24 hours. With these lightweight machines, the ASDF has the capability to go into a small community after a disaster and immediately begin providing fresh water.

In Southcentral Alaska, the Alaska Army National Guard's Water Treatment section of the 207th Brigade Support



Water Purification. Members of the Alaska State Defense Force's 5th Battalion train on a CampWater Industries portable water purification machine in Delta Junction in September. From left, Sergeant Major William Wright; Lieutenant Colonel Ron Magee, 5th Battalion commander; and Captain Paul Davis. Photo: Captain Melissa Holl, Alaska State Defense Force

Company trained ASDF personnel at the Alcantra Armory in Wasilla. This allowed the 2nd and 4th Battalions of the Alaska State Defense Force to train with the Guard on Alaska National Guard water treatment equipment. The result has been another opportunity for the ASDF to cooperate

with the Alaska National Guard and to be able to offer support and augmentation for water treatment responses.

The Alaska State Defense Force continues to build capabilities and missions designed to assist in emergency response and recovery. ■



Joint Training. Alaska Army National Guard members from the Water Treatment section, 207th Brigade Support Company, train Alaska State Defense Force members in August on Alaska National Guard water treatment equipment at the Alcantra Armory in Wasilla. Back row, from left, Alaska State Defense Force members Major Richard Wride, First Lieutenant Timothy Stephan, Master Sergeant Jerry Stackhouse, Master Sergeant James York and Staff Sergeant Steven Flippen. Front row, from left, 207th Water Treatment section members Staff Sergeant Sean Robles, Sergeant Joy Petway, Sergeant Jackson Khamphaah, Private First Class Daniel Fleckenstien, Private First Class Igor Galit and Private Thomas Willard.

Photo: Courtesy of Alaska State Defense Force

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Distinguished Flying Crosses with Valor Awarded



By Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Three Alaska Air National Guardsmen with the 212th Rescue Squadron were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor in November during a ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Senior Master Sergeant Christopher “Doug” Widener, Master Sergeant Brandon Stuemke and Staff Sergeant Aaron Parcha received the medals for

having distinguished themselves in combat by “heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight.”

“During the span of five days, these warriors, these para-rescuemen, flew 25 missions retrieving a total of 49 U.S. and coalition personnel, with 11 of those personnel deceased,” said Major Joe Conroy, 212th Rescue Squadron commander, Alaska Air National Guard. “Nineteen of the personnel they retrieved were rescued by conducting a hoist insertion and extraction, often under heavy fire from the enemy.”

Conducting actions in the face of extreme danger, these para-rescuemen supported missions during Operation Bulldog Bite in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, in November 2010, an operation that involved some of the largest rescues and evacuations since Operation Anaconda in 2002.

“These brave and courageous warriors exited an HH-60 helicopter while in flight, by a cable hoist system under extreme and intense circumstances to recover fellow combatants wounded during ground combat operations with the enemy,” Conroy said. “Their direct actions led to lives saved, and those Soldiers have now returned to duty and back to their loved ones.”

While the ceremony recognized the actions of these three heroic para-rescuemen, Conroy also asked people in attendance to honor the Soldiers who perished during Operation Bulldog Bite. Sentiments echoed by Distinguished Flying Cross recipient Stuemke.

“It’s so much more than just a medal,” Stuemke said. “Yes, it’s the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor, but it goes way beyond that. It goes to what it represents. It goes to the men out there in the Watapur Valley who sacrificed their lives. It goes to the men out there in the Watapur Valley who we pulled off the hill during that week. It’s so much more than just a medal. Numerous individuals that week paid the ultimate sacrifice. Those are the guys. Those are wounds that I will carry with me internally for the rest of my life. Those are faces that I will never forget.” ■



Distinguished Pararescuemen. Master Sergeant Brandon Stuemke, center, Senior Master Sergeant Christopher “Doug” Widener, right, and Staff Sergeant Aaron Parcha wait to shake hands with the hundreds of attendees to the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor Medal presentation at the Talkeetna Theater on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in November. The three pararescuemen from the 212th Rescue Squadron conducted more than 20 missions in five days, including treating a fellow pararescueman from a gunshot wound while under enemy fire in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, in November 2010. Photo: First Lieutenant Bernie Kale, DMVA Public Affairs

Appreciation of Service. U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski thanks Staff Sergeant Aaron Parcha for his service and bravery for actions performed during his deployment in 2010. Parcha exposed himself to enemy fire to ensure that casualties were treated and safely returned to base during Operation Bulldog Bite in Kunar Province, Afghanistan, in November 2010. Photo: First Lieutenant Bernie Kale, DMVA Public Affairs



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Combat Heroism. From left, Technical Sergeant Shane J. Hargis, Staff Sergeant Theodore M. Sierocinski and Captain Koaalii C. Bailey stand during a ceremony on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in October after each received the Bronze Star Medal with Valor device for their heroic actions in Afghanistan. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

Alaska Air Guardsmen Awarded Bronze Stars with Valor

By Staff Sergeant N. Alicia Goldberger,
176th Wing Public Affairs

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska ... Three Alaska Air National Guardsmen with the 176th Wing's 212th Rescue Squadron were each awarded a Bronze Star medal with Valor device at a decoration ceremony in October on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Surrounded by the support and appreciation of friends and family, the men received their medals for an act of heroism or meritorious achievement in a combat zone during a 2010 or 2011 deployment.

A Bronze Star Medal is the fourth-highest combat award presented in the United States since the start of World War II. They are awarded only to those who perform acts of valor within areas of hazardous duty, as laid out in U.S. law.

Captain Koaalii C. Bailey, Technical Sergeant Shane J. Hargis and Staff Sergeant Theodore M. Sierocinski had their stories of valor read aloud to the crowd, and in turn were pinned with the medal.

"When you hear the citations read today for these warriors, there are many details between the lines that these



High Honor. Three Bronze Stars are displayed during a ceremony before they were awarded to three Alaska Air National Guardsmen on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in October for their heroic actions while deployed to Afghanistan. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs

gentlemen conducted in the face of extreme adversity," said Major Joseph Conroy, commander of the 212th Rescue Squadron, during the ceremony.

These Airmen illustrated the bravery that the people of their squadron and the Alaska

Air National Guard stand for every day.

"I'm amazed on a day-to-day basis at what my personnel accomplish – whether it's during deployments or here in Alaska conducting rescue missions," Conroy said. ■



Around the Department



Decontamination Techniques. Sergeant First Class Jason Rode and Technical Sergeant Nina Kolyvanova, both with the 103rd Civil Support Team—Weapons of Mass Destruction, demonstrate dry decontamination techniques used during cold weather responses to Airmen of the 176th Emergency Management, 773rd Emergency Management and 673rd Bio Environmental shops during a joint training day in November that allowed members from different career fields the opportunity to share their best practices with each other. Photo: Lieutenant Colonel Stephen Wilson, 103rd Civil Support Team



On Guard. Specialist Dakota Volkman, military police officer, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, Alaska Army National Guard, stands guard at the Missile Defense Complex at Fort Greely during a recent hasty checkpoint in December. More than 150 Alaska Army National Guardsmen secure and defend the 800-acre missile site; the Soldiers hail from almost every state in the country. Photo: Staff Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion



Early Morning Exercise. Cadet Jazmine Gene, of Gakona, is lead through the staple exercise, the push-up, during Shock Indoctrination morning in October. Shock Indoctrination is the first morning of the five-and-a-half-month residential phase of the Alaska Military Youth Academy program. The cadets are “gently” woken up at 6 a.m. by team leaders and staff for early morning exercises; they quickly realize the tough nature of being a candidate of the Alaska Military Youth Academy. Photo: Roman Schara, Alaska Military Youth Academy



Giving To The Guard. Larry Sutterer, center, of TriWest, presents a \$5,000 check in December to Lieutenant Colonel Kay Spear-Budd, State Family Program director, and Major General Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, for “Friends of the Guard and Reserve.” TriWest’s contribution is part of its holiday “Giving to the Guard” campaign, which provides support to National Guard units within its 21-state west region. Photo: Major Guy Hayes, DMVA Public Affairs



In Thanks For Your Service. From left, Command Sergeant Major John Drew, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, and Command Sergeant Major Larry Turner, Space and Missile Defense Command/Army Forces Strategic Command, serve a Thanksgiving meal to on-duty military police officer Sergeant Trevor Cousino, A Company, 49th Missile Defense Battalion, Alaska Army National Guard. Turner, Drew and other members of the command served Thanksgiving dinner to more than 50 Soldiers and family members on Thanksgiving day. Photo: Staff Sergeant Jack W. Carlson III, 49th Missile Defense Battalion



Hero2Hired: Helping Veterans Find Jobs

By ESGR Staff

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... The Alaska Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve welcomed a new staff member in September who serves as the employment transition coordinator for the state.

James Hastings is the third full-time staff member for the Alaska Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve and works as a contractor for Hero2Hired. His primary duty is to assist warriors of the National Guard and Reserve, as well as veterans statewide, with employment resources from where to look for employment postings to résumé assistance to filling vacancies within a business when possible.

After only a few weeks as the Hero2Hired program manager, Hastings has built a partnership with the general manager of Siemens, Inc., Leverette Hoover, and has received the employer's perspective on what qualities the company looks for in a prospective employee. Hoover also offered to provide briefing materials and the employer's perspective called "Boots to Briefcase."

"The great state of Alaska is an amazing place for service members to live, work and raise military families," Hastings said. "Education and employment opportunities are equaled only by the vast beauty of this land."

"When it comes to supporting the men and women in uniform, our state leadership is committed to providing access and opportunity for our warriors and their loved ones to succeed in the pursuit of their life goals and continue sustaining and growing the bright future of the Last Frontier."

Hastings has developed and maintains a wealth of connections throughout the veteran community since he retired from the Army in 2006. Since then, he cofounded locally Alaska's Healing Hearts and has been working with and supporting the Wounded Warrior



Employment Assistance. James Hastings, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve employment transition coordinator, speaks with an Alaska National Guardsman during a Hero2Hired briefing at the Soldier & Family Assistance Center on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in December. As a contractor for Hero2Hired, Hastings's primary duty is to assist National Guard and Reserve members, as well as veterans with employment resources. Photo: Sergeant Balinda O'Neal, DMVA Public Affairs

Project and Alaska State Elks Association Wounded Veterans Project. He has served as the chairman of the Matanuska-Susitna Valley Veterans Council for six years and presently serves on the governor's Alaska Veterans Advisory Council.

"I am genuinely humbled to be afforded the chance to assist our National Guard, Reserve, and veterans with employment, and further, that we can build relationships with our local business leaders to encourage and assist them in hiring our greatest Alaskan resource: warriors," Hastings said. ■



Radar System Tour. Members and employers with Alaska Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve in September toured Clear Air Force Station in Anderson, Alaska, where the Alaska Air National Guard's 213th Space Warning Squadron is based. From left, Lieutenant Colonel Brian Fulkerson, 168th Wing, Alaska Air National Guard; Bruce Bustamante, Holland America/Princess; Tim Farley, Humpy's Alehouse; Stephanie Hendricks, ESGR Military Outreach; Seth Wilson, Sullivan's Steakhouse; Jamie Abordonado, ESGR Program Support; Colonel Hunt Kerrigan, Joint Staff, Alaska National Guard; Ben LaRue, Siemens Industry Inc.; and Victor Harmon, Siemens Industry, Inc. Photo: Courtesy of ESGR



Family Program

Help for Your Home, Family and Health

By Family Program Staff

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... Whether it is financial, emotional, household or health benefits support you need, your Alaska National Guard Family Program strives to empower you with the tools to maintain or become self-sufficient.

From balancing your bank accounts to shoveling snow during record snowfalls, you may be stepping into a few new territories. As your responsibilities change, your emotions may change as well. All of these changes are normal and expected; other families of service members are experiencing the same or similar adjustments. Support is only a phone call away.

Financial Support

Becoming a part of your service member's military life or experiencing a

deployment may bring financial gain, as well as potential financial stress. The Department of Defense and National Guard Bureau offer many programs to assist families and service members in their efforts to create a safe and secure financial environment.

One of your biggest assets is Glenn Bobo, our very own personal financial consultant located in the Alaska National Guard armory on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in room D-101. Schedule an appointment today for a personal one-on-one consultation covering everything from basic budgeting to asset allocation for retirement. He's also available for group consultations or quick five-minute presentations at commanders' calls. You can reach him at (907) 428-7524. You can also visit <http://www.jointservicesupport.org> for additional financial services.

Emotional Support

When you or your loved one is a service member, moments of emotional change seem inevitable. It is our goal, as your Family Program, to support and help you and your family through those moments. Several resources immediately available to you include our psychological health program with Lyn Tashea, military family life consultants Rocio Baquerizo and Shirley Durtschi, as well as a psychological health program at each wing. The Air and Army Guard chaplains are also a ready resource and work in conjunction with our programs. These are all confidential resources available to you and your family at no cost. For additional resources visit <http://www.jointservicesupport.org/FP/Emotional.aspx> or call your Family Assistance Center at (907) 428-6663.

Health Benefits

Family members of National Guard and Reserve members are eligible for different Tricare benefits depending on their status. Find out when your family's eligibility kicks in at <http://www.jointservicesupport.org/FP/HealthBenefits.aspx>. We also have a transition assistance advisor, Mirta Adams. She is available to assist you in navigating through the numerous benefits and entitlements in the Department of Defense and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs system. She can also help you obtain entitlements through the military health system and access community resources.

To access these benefits and more, contact your Family Assistance Center. Help is available to you during normal duty hours at 1 (888) 917-3608 or (907) 428-6663 and after hours for emergencies that can't wait until normal duty hours. We have six locations throughout Alaska – Bethel, Juneau, Fairbanks, Fort Greely, Matanuska-Susitna Valley and Anchorage. The Family Assistance Center's mission is resource and referral to military and/or civilian programs in your local community, and its number one priority is you!

You can like us on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/AKNGFamily> and be the first to see events and opportunities available to you through your Family Program. ■

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The graphic features a close-up of a sand surface with several military medals and ribbons scattered on it. The text is overlaid on the image in various fonts and colors, including white, black, and red.



Helping Returning Guard Members. Mirta Adams, transition assistance coordinator for the Alaska National Guard, goes over programs and resources available to recently returned Soldiers from B Company, 1st Battalion (Airborne), 143rd Infantry Regiment. The Soldiers returned from Afghanistan in November and were going through the demobilization process at Camp Atterbury, Ind. Next to Adams, James Hastings, employment transition coordinator with Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, helps with employment resources and the Hero2Hired program.

Reintegration Programs Help Returning Guardsmen

Story and photo by Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

CAMP ATTERBURY, Ind. ...

Returning from an overseas deployment is an exciting time for most service members, but it's also a time that ushers in significant change and uncertainty for some. To help Guardsmen reintegrate into civilian life in the United States, the Alaska National Guard Family Program office is helping to educate Guard members on the resources available now that they are back from deployment.

While the majority of service members return from combat missions without any visible injuries or ailments, often the psychological impact from post-traumatic stress disorder and problems associated with traumatic brain injuries may not surface until after the official demobilization process.

Mirta Adams, transition assistance coordinator for the Alaska National Guard, said that one of the most important things service members need to remember in order to get help is to be honest about issues they are having. Sleeplessness, nightmares, aggression and excessive drinking are just a few symptoms of PTSD and TBI, and there are things that spouses, parents, family and friends can do to help.

"One of the things we find is that Soldiers will hide their problems for several

different reasons," Adams said. "Some of the reasons they do this are fear of having a stigma attached to them, being discharged from service or not being able to re-enlist, so many of them hide their ailments, which makes it very hard on their families and puts unnecessary strains on them."

To combat these issues, the Alaska National Guard has put in place different programs and resources for Guard members and their families.

The first one is the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, which consolidates recently deployed units at 30-, 60- and 90-day intervals. The reason for this is that typically, these are the time periods in which many problems begin to surface, although for some it may take years for problems to arise.

"National Guard and Reserve Soldiers are obligated to the Yellow Ribbon Program at 30, 60 and 90 days after returning from deployment," Adams said. "During the consolidations, they are allowed to bring up to two family members with them, and they learn different ways to deal with some of the issues like post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury that may have come up following deployment."

A stressor unique to Guard and Reservists is job placement following a deployment, while active-duty Soldiers and active Guard Reserve Soldiers come back to waiting jobs, often traditional Guard and Reserve members lose their income once they return home. In order to address that, a program called Hero2Hired has been implemented to assist service members in finding work.

Because of the remoteness of many of the villages in Alaska, Adams said another unique concern is isolation.

"What a lot of people don't understand, as one of the challenges is the remoteness of many of the villages the Guard members will be returning to. We are taking that into account with the kind of reintegration programs we are initiating," Adams said.

"We have initiated a program we are calling the 'Warrior Support Circle,' a program that will allow Soldiers from that area to choose five people as their circle of concern who they will allow to come up to them and say, 'Hey, I see you are having a hard time. Let's see how we can help you,'" explained Adams. "We hope that by encouraging openness and a judgment-free environment, Soldiers will be more likely to ask for and accept help if they need it." ■



Education

Green Line Training

By Alaska Military Youth Academy Staff

CAMP CARROLL, Alaska ...

The mission of the Alaska Military Youth Academy ChalleNGe program is to help intervene in 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. While in attendance at the academy, students receive instruction in a variety



Fun Challenge. Soaring through the air, Cadet Julia Amaktoolik, of Anchorage, revels in the descent of the zip line at the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson jump tower. The cadets accepted the challenge to leap from the three-story tower and slide 100 yards to the landing zone.

Photo: Roman Schara, AMYA

of classes in a quasi-military environment. These range from barracks life to drill and ceremonies to academics in this fully accredited school.

But it's not all drill, cleaning, road marches, inspections and academics. Cadets are introduced to a variety of military and survival style events called Green Line training. The purpose of Green Line training is to improve morale and confidence through camaraderie and healthy competition; it exposes cadets to military skills and wilderness recreation or survival events. While the specific lessons vary between seasons and with availability of ranges and instructors, some consistent examples include water survival, rappel tower and jump tower, shelter building, land navigation and orienteering, wilderness survival techniques and obstacle bridging. Green Line training is held most weekends during the post-acclimation period of the 22-week residential phase.

While the Green Line schedule is developed by the AMYA cadre section, close coordination with outside agencies and detailed planning is essential for these operations. The cadre section schedules training and backup in the event of weather or other event disruption. Like the military, formal risk assessments are developed to identify foreseeable risks and to ensure safe operations in, around and during the exercise. Cadre personnel often provide instruction, but on many occasions, highly trained National Guard or U.S. Army instructors provide the professional training



Rope Bridge Confidence. Cadet Santos Bustamante, of Anchorage, smiles as he works hand over hand to cross a 30-foot rope bridge to test his Swiss seat harness tying. The rope bridge training was a precursor to rappel wall training where the cadets must rely on their Swiss seat harness tying skills to descend a three-story wall. Photo: Roman Schara, AMYA

required and contribute immensely to the academy mission.

The experience of the academy since its inception in 1994 is that these Green Line training events provide significant practical exposure to important skills. A side benefit is that the cadets greatly enjoy these excursions. A significant portion of students opt for the military after graduation, and these training events give them a leg up when they enter military training. All of the cadets are Alaska residents, and Green Line training provides each of them improved capabilities in wilderness adaptation, a real plus in Alaska. ■



Winter Survival. The ability to build a snow cave in the extreme conditions of an Alaska winter is a lifesaving exercise. Cadets of class 2012-02, 2nd Platoon, constructed their shelter large enough for six people and had a great time doing it. Photo: Roman Schara, AMYA



Drown-Proof Training. Cadets of 2nd Platoon, class 2012-02 watch as a fellow cadet takes a leap of faith from the high dive platform. In this exercise, cadets are blindfolded as they go off the platform to simulate having to evacuate a ship at night. The drown-proof training also entails learning to use the uniform as a life preserver, and cadets are trained in open water floating techniques. Photo: Roman Schara, AMYA



The mission of the National Guard Alaska Military Youth Academy ChallengeNge Program is to intervene in and reclaim the lives of at-risk youth. We produce program Graduates with the values, skills, education and self-discipline necessary to succeed as adults. Over 80% of the Program's graduates go on to become successful citizens by joining the work force, the military or by continuing their education.

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(907) 375-5554

AMYA Fairbanks Office:
(907) 374-7960
FAX: (907) 374-7969

Toll Free: 1-877-242-7960
www.ngycp.org/site/state/ak/




Alaska Military Youth Academy

The Alaska Military Youth Academy's ChallengeNge Program is designed to provide life coping skills and meet the educational needs of 16 to 18 year old Alaskans. The Youth ChallengeNge Program is a 22 week residential school with a 12 month post-residential aftercare follow-up phase.




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Finding The Way. Private Shad Prindle, 297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard, and cadet with the University of Alaska Anchorage ROTC Simultaneous Membership Program, takes part in a land navigation exercise on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in September. The purpose of the event was to evaluate the cadets' ability to navigate with a compass and a map over variable terrain.

Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

Simultaneous Membership Program



By Sergeant Balinda O'Neal, DMVA Public Affairs

CAMP DENALI, Alaska ... If you're an enlisted Soldier in the Alaska Army National Guard and are interested in becoming an officer, the Army has a program for you called the Simultaneous Membership Program.

The SMP allows you to attend Army Reserve Officer Training Corps at either the University of Alaska Anchorage or Fairbanks while earning pay and benefits as a drilling Soldier in the Alaska Army National Guard.

"SMP is a program for Guardsmen and Reservists to be in ROTC and be drilling Guardsmen or Reservists at the same time," said Lieutenant Danny Canlas, UAA ROTC recruiter, Alaska Army National Guard. "There are a lot of great benefits for being SMP between the Guard and ROTC."

Soldiers receive E-5 pay for their drill activities and an additional stipend of \$350-\$500 depending on their college year.

"SMP Soldiers are also eligible to receive tuition assistance coupled with their increase in drill pay and ROTC stipend," Canlas said. "This allows Soldiers to focus on school and not finances."

In addition to the monthly commitment to the National Guard, a cadet undertakes a commitment as a cadet, which hones their basic Soldier skills and expands their understanding of the Army.



Teamwork. Alaska Army National Guard member and UAA ROTC cadet Wendy Tatham is belayed off the high-ropes course on Camp Carroll, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in September. Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment



Who We Are...

Do you have any remedies to cure a winter cold or flu?

**Chief Master Sergeant
Kristine Joyce**
Joint Force Headquarters (Air)



"Rest and take Emergen-C."

**Captain
Jason Brewer**
Regional Training Institute



"Lots of sleep and rest. Maintain vitamin C and exercise before you get sick."

Gia Simmons
Family Program



"I try to be proactive instead of reactive by eating healthy and working out. I truly think if you lead a healthy lifestyle, you won't get sick."

**Master Sergeant
Shawn Gannon**
176th Operations Group



"I take Airborne – one a day, and I don't get sick."

**Specialist
Shayla Kelley**
1-207th Aviation



"Take vitamins, drink tea and try to stay active during the sickness. No bed for me."

"It sounded great, and I figured if nothing else this is a commitment that I can meet, and it will pay for my schooling," said Private First Class Rebekah Williams, ROTC SMP cadet, Alaska Army National Guard. "It's worth it to me because this is one more area in my life that I can be a part of that Army dynamic."

While all cadets have their own motivations for joining, most cadets do enjoy the training that comes from ROTC.

Army ROTC is divided into two primary types of training: a three-credit course that each cadet takes that coincides with a student's academic year and a one-credit leadership laboratory course.

"Each year, the range of topics expands in both tactical and leadership depth, with senior cadets learning the military decision making process, the operations process, evaluation reports and more. There is a history of the United States Army course that all cadets must complete. All cadets graduate with a minor in national defense and strategic studies," Canlas said. "Lead lab is designed to execute training, which ranges anywhere from basic soldiering skills, such as first aid and land navigation, to tactical training in the field."

Soldiers in SMP are also contractually obligated to the ROTC program, but do receive a commission as a second lieutenant upon completion of the program requirements and graduation.

"The process of being able to pull through and accomplish, to get one more step toward my goal has been so rewarding," Williams said. "I love ROTC, the Guard, and being in the Army more than I ever thought I would." ■

Jump! Major Timothy Brower, University of Alaska Anchorage Reserve Officer Training Corps assistant professor of military science and Alaska Army National Guardsman, participates in the high-ropes course on Camp Carroll, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson with his ROTC cadets in September. Operated by the Alaska National Guard Counter Drug Program, the high-ropes course is used to build leadership, teamwork and confidence. Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment





Total Force Integration Ground Breaking. From left, Shane Montoya, U.S. Coast Guard; Representative Dan Saddler, State House of Representatives; Commissioner Susan Bell, Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development; Major General Thomas H. Katkus, Department of Military & Veterans Affairs; Nancy Dahlstrom, Office of Governor Sean Parnell; and Al Luck, Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, ceremoniously break ground in October on the new Alaska National Guard Armory G Wing on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The new wing is scheduled to be completed in December 2013. Photo: Staff Sergeant Karima Turner, 134th Public Affairs Detachment

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Combat Service Identification Badge



A new Combat Service Identification Badge, Alaska Army National Guard Element Joint Forces Headquarters has been approved, announced Brigadier General Mike Bridges, commander of the Alaska Army National Guard. Effective immediately, Soldiers who have deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom or Operation New Dawn assigned to Alaska's 207th Infantry Group (Scout) are eligible to wear the Alaska Army National Guard badge in the combat service identification position on their Army Service Uniform. An initial order will be completed by the Joint Forces Headquarters for Soldiers identified on unit rosters with DD214s. The badges are available at <http://www.iragreen.com/view/2606/>. For more information, contact Major Mark Binggeli, Alaska Army National Guard mobilization readiness officer, or your unit S1 personnel.



Awards • Decorations • Promotions

Distinguished Flying Cross (with Valor)



SMSgt Christopher Widener 212th RQS
MSgt Brandon Stuemke 212th RQS
SSgt Aaron Parcha 212th RQS

Bronze Star (with Valor)



Capt Koaalii Bailey 212th RQS
TSgt Shane Hargis 212th RQS
SSgt Theodore Sierocinski 212th RQS

Meritorious Service Medal



CSM Gordon Choate JFHQ-AK (Army)
COL Ray Kelley Med Det
LTC Stephen Wilson 103rd CST
LTC Joseph Lawendowski R&R
MSG Felicia Link R&R
SFC Paul Donaldson 49th MDB (GMD)
SFC Elaine Jackson R&R
SFC Robert Nunnally 1-207th AVN
SFC John Phlegar 49th MDB
SSG Victor Ward 207th MFTR
Maj Kelly J. Mellard 168th LRS
SMSgt Tracy L. Magill 168th ARW
SMSgt Faith M. Harker 168th LRS
Lt Col Stephanie C. Rowland 168th LRS
SMSgt Antonio Lucchesi II 168th AMXS
MSgt Robert A. Thomas 168th MXG
Lt Col Kevin J. Kenaston 168th OG
Lt Col Nolan R. Elliott 168th ARS
SMSgt Steven J. Fogue 168th ARS
TSgt Justin Olsen 176th OSS
CMSgt Michael Schmidt 211th RSQ
MSgt Lloyd Llana 176th OG
SMSgt Gene Sawdon 176th LRS
LtCol Charles Fitzgerald 249th AS
LtCol Daryl Peterson 176th WG
Maj Darrell Evans JFHQ-AK (Air)
MSgt John Schloeder 176th AMXS
MSgt James Lucero 176th AMXS
LtCol Blake Gettys 176th OG

Army Commendation Medal



SGT Balinda O'Neal 134th PAD
SGT Michelle Brown 134th PAD
SGT Edward Eagerton 134th PAD
SSG Karima Turner 134th PAD
SFC Jessica Main R&R

SSG John Chriswell JFHQ-AK (Army)
SSG Al Wiggins JFHQ-AK (Army)

Air Force Commendation Medal



SSgt Clifton E. Fox 168th CF
MSgt Erica L. McCoy 168th ARW
MSgt John R. Duhaime 168th ARS
MSgt Michael J. Travis 168th LRS
TSgt Daniel Grant 168th LRS
TSgt Anthony W. Lesle 168th LRS
SSgt Lacie P. Marsden 168th OSF
TSgt Jennifer Meier 176th AMXS

Army Achievement Medal



SGT Balinda O'Neal 134th PAD
SGT Michelle Brown 134th PAD
SSG Karima Turner 134th PAD
SSG John Chriswell JFHQ-AK (Army)
SSG Brandee Gresham JFHQ-AK (Army)

Air Force Achievement Medal



SrA Hannah M. Moore 168th LRS
SSgt Carl C. Collins 168th LRS
SrA Shaun M. Hageman 168th LRS
SSgt Vincent S. McKiernan 168th LRS
SrA Donald L. Cronic 168th MXS
SrA Ashley N. Underwood 168th LRS
TSgt Christina Cordes 249th AS
SrA Derek Ostrom 249th AS
SSgt Brittany Nelson 249th AS
Capt Scott Altenburg 249th AS
Capt Jeremy Vancil 249th AS

LtCol Mark Mommsen 176th OSS
Maj Krista Staff 176th WG
CMSgt Joseph Dibenedetto 176th ACS
SSgt Erica Glass 176th ACS
TSgt Heman Quinonesfigueroa 176th ACS
SSgt Kevin Sumner 176th ACS
MSgt Shannon Gragg 176th ACS
SSgt Peter Linn 176th ACS
TSgt Eric Lovely 176th ACS
TSgt Richard Rauckhorst 176th ACS
Maj Kelly Murphy 176th ACS

Army Reserve Components Overseas Training Ribbon



SGT Michelle Brown 134th PAD
SGT Edward Eagerton 134th PAD
SSG Karima Turner 134th PAD
CPT Amy Slinker 134th PAD

Alaska Legion of Merit



Col Robert Doehl 176th WG

Alaska Commendation Medal



CPT Jason Brewer 38th TC
SGT Lolita Lapriel 38th TC
SGT Ernesto Venturafigueroa 49th MDB
SPC Gerardo Lopez 49th MDB

Alaska State Partnership Program Ribbon



SGT Shilo Apland U.S. Army

SOLDIERS OF THE YEAR

Junior Enlisted Best Warrior

Specialist Gerardo Lopez, A Company, 49th Missile Defense Battalion

Noncommissioned Officer Best Warrior

Sergeant Ernesto Ventura, A Company, 49th Missile Defense Battalion

Senior Noncommissioned Officer of the Year

Sergeant First Class Julie Small, Joint Forces Headquarters

First Sergeant of the Year

First Sergeant Maureen Meehan, A Company, 49th Missile Defense Battalion

AWARDS • DECORATIONS • PROMOTIONS (continued)

LTC James Arneson Med Det
SSG Tina Barber Med Det
SPC Tiffany Bastian 297th BFSB
MAJ Mark Binggeli 1-297th CAV
CPT John Bittle 1-297th CAV
PFC William Bocast 1-297th R&S
LTC John Brady Med Det
CSM Clinton Brown II 297th BFSB
SGT Michelle Brown 134th PAD
SSG Aren Callahan 1-297th CAV
SPC Martin Carlen 1-297th CAV
SSG Joshua Clark Med Det
SFC Milton Cornelius 1-297th CAV
1SG William Crowley 1-297th R&S
PFC Dustin Davis 1-297th CAV
PFC Chester Dyson 1-297th CAV
SGT Edward Eagerton 134th PAD
CPT Ryan Feil 297th BFSB
PFC Jordan Feltz 1-297th R&S
CW2 Nicholas Forbes 1-207th AVN
LTC Joel Gilbert 1-297th CAV
1LT Robert Gordon 1-297th CAV
SGT Jordan Gray Med Det
PV2 Korey Grimes 1-297th R&S
SSG Benjamin Hankins 1-297th R&S

1LT Troy Hicks 1-297th R&S
SGM Richard Hildreth JFHQ-AK (Army)
SSG David Hockin 1-297th CAV
SSG Angela Horn 297th BFSB
CPT Walter Hotchhill 1-297th CAV
LTC Wayne Hunt JFHQ-AK (Army)
CPT Matthew Johnson 297th BFSB
CPT David Kang 1-297th CAV
SPC Joseph Kelly 1-297th CAV
MAJ Aaron Kelsey 297th BFSB
SFC Travis Kulp 1-297th R&S
SGT Jeffrey Lewis 1-297th R&S
PFC Jesse Manglona 1-297th R&S
2LT Matthew McBride 297th SIG
CPT Paul McDermott 297th BFSB
CPT Arthur Meyer 1-297th R&S
PFC Chantelle Miller Med Det
SSG Jon Miller 1-297th R&S
SGT Damien Minechaca 207th MFTR
2LT Ryan Murrell 1-297th R&S
1LT Jeremy Nielson 207th CSC
SSG James Nyquist 1-297th R&S
SSG Colin Opegard 1-297th R&S
SPC Rigoberto Orozco 1-297th R&S
SFC Todd Patnode JFHQ-AK (Army)

CPT John Powell 297th BFSB
SFC Kevin Pridmore 1-297th R&S
MAJ Jeffrey Roberts 1-297th CAV
SGT Joseph Robinson 297th BFSB
SSG Edgar Romine 1-297th R&S
SPC Jacob Rukovichnikoff 1-297th R&S
CPL Matthew Sanders 1-297th R&S
SSG Ferdinando Sangco Med Det
PFC Gabriel Saravia 1-297th R&S
CPT Tori Schmidt 297th BFSB
2LT Robert Schneden 1-297th R&S
CPT Aaron Schroeder 297th MP
SPC Jonathan Sholl 1-297th R&S
SFC Megan Simono 297th BFSB
CPT Amy Slinker 134th PAD
SFC Lane Smith 1-297th R&S
SFC Shannon Tallant R&R
SFC Joseph Thibault 297th BFSB
COL Michael Thompson 297th BFSB
SGT Viengpathane Thongdy 297th BFSB
SSG Karima Turner 134th PAD
MAJ Robert Warren JFHQ-AK (Army)
LTC Rebecca Young Med Det
1SG Stephan Young 1-297th CAV

EXTENSIONS

*Thank you for your service!
These Alaska Army National Guard members
recently extended their contracts.*

SGT Martin L. Shockey
SPC Raye L. Cufley
SSG Sean A. Robles
SSG Lauren S. Hamilton
SSG Diane M. Singh
SSG Ivan G. Cuevasruiz
SPC Zachary M. Adams
SSG Orlando P. Bautista
SPC Leonard T. Petersen
SPC Shayla B. Kelley
SGT Jason Rafael
SSG Rodney L.P. Spaulding
SFC Jacqueline V. Tyson
SFC Ryan J. Weimer
SGT Daryl R. Palembas
SFC Mark G. Delgado
SFC Larry D. Shores
SGT William D. Houser
SGT Andrew J. Geil

SGT Viengpathane K. Thongdy
PFC Erick M. Bacod
SSG Shawn M. Landon
SGT Michael A. Raby
SGT John E. Duncan
SPC William C. Brennen
SSG Daniel L. Nelson Jr
SGT Kurt C. Miller
SFC Arthur S. Honea
SGT Karen L. Webb
SGT Melissa M. Stevens
SGT Carl N. Gilmore Jr
SSG Roy C. Levi
SGT Wyndell Nash
PV2 John A. Spaar
SPC Charlene A. Kothe
SGT Geoffrey D. Hansen
SPC Tosha S. Polsky
SSG Edgar L.M. Romine

SSG Wesley C. Paslay
SSG John L. Cupp
MSG Clyde Seawood
SSG Brian R. Christman
SSG Blair A. Seward
SGT Charles W. Howard
SSG Robert R. Harris III
SGT Brandon Barnes
SPC Robert B. McKean
SPC Joshua D. Seibert
SPC Christopher C. Frank
SSG Albert K. Schoonover
SGT Guadalupe G. Limon
SPC Amber L. Hillman
SGT Bradley A. McKenzie
SPC Kyle J. Stangl
SGT Vincent N. Salzburn



PROMOTIONS

Colonel

John Frederick Woyte JFHQ-AK (Army)
Eric Donovan Maxon JFHQ-AK (Army)
Katrina Gardener Pillow JFHQ-AK (Army)
James Robert Arneson MED DET

Captain

Allen Scott Hulse 103rd CST
Jason Jerome Brewer 207th MFTR
Georg Brendel 297th BFSB
Andreas Arne Bohman 1-297th CAV

First Lieutenant

Melkart Fadi Hawi 49th GMD
Michael Edward Thrall 297th MP
Dean Richard Burgess 1-207th AVN

Chief Warrant Officer Two

Cody Wayne McKinney 1-207th AVN
Kevin Gene Clark 1-207th AVN
James Stewart Smith 1-207th AVN
Thomas Nile Semmens 1-207th AVN

Warrant Officer One

Stefanie Lynn Hall 1-207th AVN
Matthew Michael Melvin 1-207th AVN

Command Sergeant Major

Shawn Donovan McLeod 1-297th CAV

Sergeant Major

Michael Ralph Grunst 297th BFSB

Chief Master Sergeant

Curtis D. Brenton 176th SFS
Joseph J. Dibenedetto 176th ACS

First Sergeant

John Irwin Robinson 49th GMD

Senior Master Sergeant

Ashley M. Hill 168th FSF
Jeremy T. Amstrup 168th SFS
Shawn M. Morrissey 168th ARW
John R. Cyr 176th WG
Joseph F. Dziuban 176th ACS
Alan S. Lankford 212th RQS

Sergeant First Class

Diane Mireya Singh 207th MFTR
Paul Hadley Petersen 297th R&S
Larry Darnell Shores 38th TC
Russelle Throckmorton 297th R&S
Daniel Alexander Bell 207th MFTR
Erwin Mariano Durano 207th BSC
Charles Jerome Boldt JFHQ-AK (Army)

Duncan Wayne Heaney 1-143 IN ABN
Nicholas Joe Dutton 103rd CST

Master Sergeant (Air)

Raymond S. Allen 168th AMXS
Christoph A. Albritton 213th SWS
Wendy L. Duran 168th MDG
Denise R. Wagenman 168th FSF
Charles D. Hamby III 168th MDG
Scott A. Murrah 168th MXS
Christian D. Willey 168th OSF
Helen E. Arvites 176th SFS
Kenneth W. Hardwick 176th LRS
Matthew R. Laramie 176th AMXS
Vernon L. Lindemuth 176th MXS
Julia J. Mills 176th MXS
David M. Schroeder 176th SFS
Melvin G. Tamondong 176th MXS

Staff Sergeant (Army)

Carlos Gonzalez Ramirez 49th GMD
Neal Shannon Fulks R&R
Jonathan Jacob Hotchkiss R&R
Daniel Ruben Brown 1-297 CAV
Daryl Ray Palembas 297th R&S
Charles Alan Stiver JFHQ-AK (Army)
James Denali Bruce 297th R&S

Technical Sergeant

Shawn C. Bush 168th AMXS

Lonnie A. Young 168th LRS
Chadwick O. Petrie 213th SWS
Shane L. Potwin 213th SWS
Chad A. Hill 213th SWS
Robert P. Ives 213th SWS
Daniel A. Park 176th FSF

Sergeant

Joey Allen Alexander 297th BFSB
Jackson Sanakikor Khamphanh 207th CS
Cromwell Augustus Dyette 207th CS
Michael Brandon Nail 297th BFSB
Joshua James Dennis 1-297th CAV
Andrew Joseph Geil 1-297th CAV
Vanessa RiveraArce 49th GMD
Emmanuela Mercadoocacio 49th GMD
Daniel Lee Holbrook 49th GMD
Jonathan Gage Sholl 1-297th R&S
Joseph Alexie Sallaffie 207th BSC
Melissa Marion Paula Drake 297th BFSB
Paul David Miller 49th GMD
Balinda O'Neal 134th PAD

Staff Sergeant (Air)

Victoria L. Rudy 168th MOF
Kevin R. Ruedy 168th SFS
Jack A. Bennett 213th SWS
Michael P. Hofmann 176th AMXS
Ferdie B. Villaflores 176th OSS
Robert E. Williams 176th ACS

RETIREMENTS

SMSgt George N. Snyder 213th SWS
SMSgt Tracy L. Magill 168th ARW
SMSgt Antonio Lucchesi II 168th AMXS
MSgt Ricky L. Case 168th MDG
Capt Jonathan M. Hammond 213th SWS
CMSgt Shannon L. Stalder 168th LRS
SMSgt Amy K. Stalder 168th LRS
TSgt Ronald A. Frerichs 168th AMXS
SSgt David A. Nethken Jr. 168th SFS
MSG Jeremy Bryant JFHQ-AK (Army)
SFC Samuel Ethridge JFHQ-AK (Army)
1SG Richard Deblizan 49th MDB
SFC Milton Cornelius 1-297th CAV
SMSgt Steven J. Fogue 168th OSF
MSgt Anthony M. Key 168th MXS
MSgt Michael Carruthers 103rd CST
MSgt Timothy Cottingham JFHQ-AK (Army)
Col Robert A. K. Doehl 176th WG

SMSgt Mark Eggleton 176th ACS
SMSgt Steven Fernandez 210th RQS
TSgt Christy Harmon 176th AMXS
MSgt Brian Johnson 176th OSS
TSgt Douglas Kidwell 176th ACS
TSgt Jeffrey Schaezlein 176th WG
SMSgt James Williams 176thMXS
TSgt Jon Bezdecny 176th OPS
Maj Darrell Evans 176th JFHQ
Col Carlisle Lincoln 176th JFHQ
Lt Col Robert H. Price III 144th AS
SMSgt Gene Sawdon 176th LRS
CMSgt David C. Shuman 212th RQS
MSgt Charles Whittaker 176th CF



Start of the Trail

Welcome our newest members & employees

168th Air Refueling Wing

Brandon Bertelson
Craig Cummings
Brent Adams
Benjamin Davis
Carter Cole
Eric Dunston
Michael Meyers
Zachary Lovell
Keith Shelton

176th Wing

Jeffrey Smith
Brian Yeargan
Lauren Ax
Bryan Matthew
Joshua Holifield
Lawrence Erickson
Cynthia Spaulding
Michael Cashman
Nikola Tomic
Kelli Naramore
Elizabeth Ross
David Hancock
Sam Saechao
Melissa Whipkey
Casey Dockstader
Julie Gratton
Daniel Lineberry
Willis Strouse
Tyler Duncan
Aaron Smith
Nicholas Hoffer
Michael Mejia
Michael Kelty
John Massi
David Her
Tasha Straughn

1-207th Aviation

Oudry Belle
Aaron Henderson
Joseph Higgins
Ryann Patnode
Kevin Miller
Lance Gaylord
Siolui Ofiu
Brandon Cain
Marshall Brothers
Nickolas Buccini
Jennifer Tes
James Wetstein

1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance

Gage Bradford
Wesley Ford
Dylan Hite
Andony Olbrice
James Reid II
Jason Splain
Jay Bustamante
Thanith Chounlamany
Richard Derry Jr.
Nico Francisco
Austin Hunter
Marshall Webb
Michael Williams
Jonathan Gallagher
David Elliott Jr.
Kody Milliron
Delay Osterhout
Isaias Puebla
Weston Siddall
Elmer Thompson Jr.
Trenton Buyse

207th Combat Support Company

Keith Castleton Jr.
Edwin Marcanogarcia
Dakota Novak
Veronika Puleiti
Vaa Salevi
Crotes Ramos
Darin Ravsten Jr.
Steven Vazquezcheatham
Hanah Hoff

761st Military Police Battalion

Pam Makwa
Kevin Biscoe

297th Military Police Company

Gregory Sams
Charles Faulkner Jr.
James Gilchrest
Sorady Pheth

Clarence Smith
Jordyn Carter
Eric Gaiser
Andrew Heustess
Sean Imhof
Kwan Bloomfield
Lequan Bennett
James Phillips
Asipeli Tuikolongahau

297th Signal Company

Quintan Hecimovich

Medical Detachment

Josh Hunter

WARRIORS Training Schedule

Here are the inactive training dates for most Alaska Army *and* Air National Guard units. All dates are subject to change.

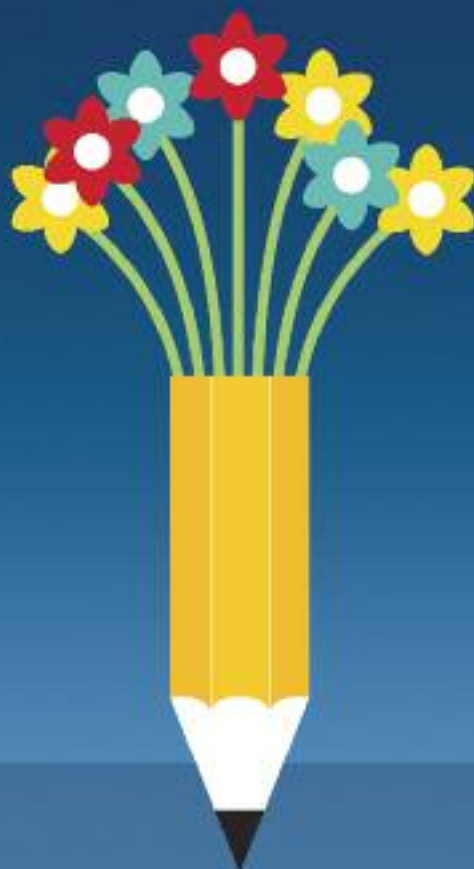
Alaska National Guard	February	March	April
Joint Forces Headquarters – Alaska (Air)	9-10	2-3	5-8
Joint Forces Headquarters – Alaska (Army)	9-10	9-10	20-21
Alaska Army National Guard			
297th Battlefield Surveillance Brigade	9-10	7-10	20-21
38th Troop Command	9-10	8-10	20-10
Alaska Air National Guard			
168th Air Refueling Wing	9-10	2-3	6-7
176th Wing	9-10	2-3	5-8
Alaska State Defense Force			
Headquarters	16-17	16-17	13-14



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