

DEFENDER OF OUR NATION'S NORTHERNMOST BORDERS

ALASKA



THE ALASKA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD was born out of the Alaska Territorial Guard and the Eskimo Scouts. With a long lineage and deep history, today's Alaska Guard Soldiers serve to support the citizens of Alaska and stand ready to defend the interests of the United States. Willing to brave the most extreme environments, the Soldiers of the Alaska Army National Guard are the first line of defense for the last frontier.

Alaska Guard Supports Navy Exercise in the Arctic Ocean

BY SSG BALINDA O'NEAL DRESEL
ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD

More than 50 Alaska National Guard personnel supported the U.S. Navy's five-week Ice Exercise (ICEX), which was located several hundred miles north of the Alaskan coastline in March and April. The biennial exercise was linked to the Alaska National Guard's Arctic Eagle 2018, a statewide exercise involving national, state and local agencies that provides opportunities for participants to conduct sustained operations in arctic conditions.

ICEX 2018, which officially began March 7, allows the Navy to assess its operational readiness in the Arctic, increase experience in the region, advance understanding of the Arctic environment, and continue to develop relationships with other services, allies and partner organizations.

Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, began

preparation for the exercise by outfitting three UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to carry 6½ hours of fuel in internal and external fuel tanks. The helicopters underwent training flights to test the new weight of the aircraft.

The extra fuel allowed the unit to be able to rendezvous at the Navy's Ice Camp SKATE and return to its staging location in one trip. Ice Camp SKATE is a temporary ice camp that was established on a sheet of ice in the Arctic Ocean, known as an ice floe.

"Sometimes we do things differently, so it is really great for us to get together to plan and really coordinate our operations," said 1LT Cade Cross, a pilot with 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment, about multi-agency coordination. "[This exercise] gives us experience as well as a unique opportunity."

The opportunity took the Alaska Guard aviators more than 1,000 miles north of their home location at Bryant Army Airfield and into extreme cold temperatures. Because of the conditions, extra helicopter parts were brought along in anticipation of maintenance issues.

"The cold can cause things to break on the aircraft," 1LT Cross said. "[But] no matter where we are asked to go, we should be able to get there and execute our mission unless there are other factors out of our control."

The Alaska Air National Guard's 176th Wing supported preparation for the exercise

with an air drop mission. The 176th Wing partnered with U.S. Marine Corps riggers from 1st Air Delivery Platoon, Landing Support Company, Combat Logistics Regiment 17, 1st Marine Logistics Group, to put Navy equipment in pallets and conduct air drop operations. The drop occurred via a 249th Airlift Squadron C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft onto the frozen Beaufort Sea to begin the setup of Ice Camp SKATE on March 2.

Air Guard members of the 176th Wing's 211th Rescue Squadron (RQS) flew an HC-130J Combat King II aircraft and air-dropped equipment, including an Arctic Sustainment Package, and 10 pararescue personnel from the 212th RQS into Ice Camp SKATE on March 5.

The Arctic Sustainment Package can provide shelter, heat, transportation, fuel and food for 28 individuals for up to 6½ days in extreme arctic conditions.

"This marks a significant point in history since this was the first time dropping the Arctic Sustainment Package out of the HC-130J Combat King II," said Lt Col Eric Budd, commander of the 211th Rescue Squadron and pilot in command of the mission.

Within 48 hours of dropping equipment and personnel at the ice camp, the plan was for National Guard members to transport

Aerial view of Ice Camp SKATE during camp construction at ICEX 2018.

Photo courtesy U.S. Navy





ABOVE: An Alaska National Guard HC-130J Combat King II drops an arctic sustainment package near Ice Camp SKATE, March 5, 2018, in support of ICEX 2018.

National Guard photo by A1C Kelly Willett

BELOW: Alaska National Guard Soldiers with Alpha Company, 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment prep their UH-60 Blackhawk before flying out of Bryant Army Airfield on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

Alaska Army National Guard photo by SGT Seth LaCount

them back via Army National Guard's 1-207th AVN UH-60 Black Hawk and Air National Guard's 210th RQS HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters. Army National Guard Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment were assigned to assist with sling load operations, ensuring the transportation of all items to Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson via HC-130J from Deadhorse, Alaska.

Poor weather necessitated a change of plans, however. The Black Hawks were delayed for two days due to unsafe conditions. And due to continued poor conditions, the mission wasn't completed within the scheduled time frame.

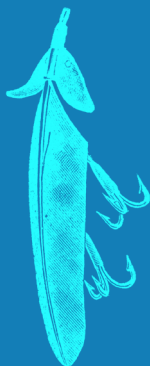
"Weather is a factor wherever you fly," 1LT Cross said. "But the challenges we deal with operating in the Arctic during a late winter mission can be a limiting factor that is not overcome until the weather cooperates."

At Deadhorse, the Pave Hawks were not initially able to sling-load all of the equipment, as they were at maximum weight and capacity for cargo. To mitigate the problem, a plan was generated to transport

the additional equipment and personnel off the ice camp.

"We regularly have to adapt and overcome," Lt Col Budd said. "For us to be the Arctic experts and employ our aircraft in this type of environment speaks highly of the Army and Air National Guard as a whole. It's our backyard, and hopefully when people look to the subject matter experts, they are looking towards the Alaska National Guard." ●





DID YOU KNOW...

Alaska offers a **COMPLIMENTARY ANNUAL HUNTING AND FISHING LICENSE** for State residents actively serving in the Army National Guard?

Alaska appreciates the sacrifices made by military service members and their families. As a small token of thanks, fishing and hunting licenses are offered at no charge to honor those who have given of themselves in service.

Visit **ADFG.Alaska.gov** for the Department of Fish and Game's residency requirements and for more information on obtaining a license.





Alaska Guard Soldiers Excel in Biathlon Training and Competition

BY 2LT MARISA LINDSAY
ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD

The Alaska National Guard Biathlon team poses for a group photo after winning the gold medal at the 2018 Western Regional Biathlon Championships at Camp Ethan Allen Training Site, Vt.

Photo courtesy SFC Adam Schwartz

The biathlon, a winter sporting event, has its roots in Norway, where the activity of long-distance cross-country skiing and rifle shooting has long been used for arctic-based military training.

It's only fitting that infantry Soldiers in the Alaska Army National Guard, citizens of the United States' only Arctic state, train and serve on the Alaska National Guard's biathlon team. Of the 11 biathletes on the Alaska team, four are infantry Soldiers from A Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry.

"The biathlon has a lot in common with what's important in small-unit tactics, and that's to shoot, move and communicate," said 2LT Matthew Maxey, a platoon leader for A Company and a member of the biathlon team. "We live and work in an environment that has winterlike conditions for a large portion of the year, so being comfortable in this setting is important."

As infantry Soldiers who live and train in Alaska, the ability to operate and thrive in an arctic environment is crucial and invaluable. CPT James Tollefson, the company's

commander, said the biathlon develops the core skills of movement and marksmanship in a way no other sport can – and does so in a winter environment that provides special significance and benefit to his infantry unit.

"Bounding through any terrain wearing 50 pounds of body armor while carrying a weapon requires both speed of movement and precision in the application of firepower," CPT Tollefson said. "A good infantry Soldier moves quickly, both over extended periods of time and short bursts as needed, and arrives at the objective able to shoot accurately and perform whatever other duties are required of him or her."

Biathlon preparation does exactly that, as athletes are exposed to metabolic conditioning, must be able to shoot under duress and be highly mobile in snow.

The specialized training also prepared the infantry Soldiers for Arctic Eagle 2018. The exercise, which ran from Feb. 20 to March 8, provided opportunities for national, state and local agencies to conduct sustained operations in arctic conditions. Specifically,

the exercise built on the infantry effort of maneuvering and operating in extremely cold conditions.

"Our biathlon training is exactly what I would hope Soldiers are doing to train as an infantry platoon – such as improving fitness, practicing marksmanship and working as a team," 2LT Maxey said. "Heading into Arctic Eagle, this prepared us as Arctic warriors to confidently complete our exercise evaluations."

In addition to unit preparedness, the training effort has resulted in biathlon success. The Alaska team returned home with a gold medal after competing against 25 other states in the Western Regional Championships Jan. 25-27 in Jericho, Vermont.

"I don't think it's a coincidence that some of my best Soldiers are those leading the charge in my company by participating in these events," CPT Tollefson said. "They are my best and brightest for exactly the same reason that they see value in competing in the biathlon. They fundamentally understand what it takes to be a great infantry Soldier, and they are committed to their profession." ●

Alaska Army National Guard Hosts "Guard for a Day" Event

BY STAFF WRITER CHASE WHITLOCK

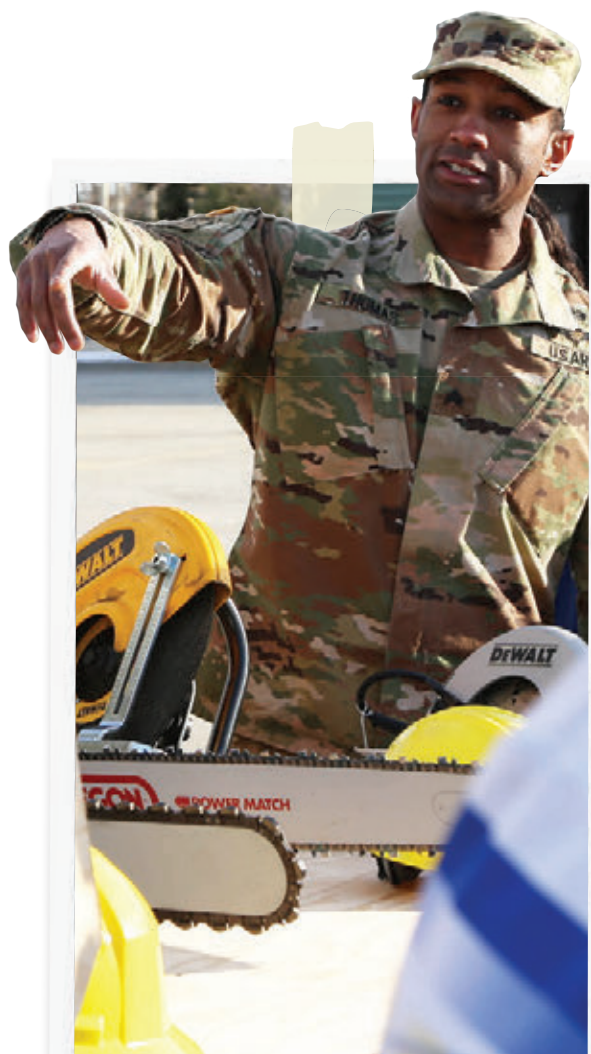
The Alaska Army National Guard hosted the first "Guard for a Day" event April 5 at the Alaska National Guard Armory on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. It was an opportunity to showcase the benefits of the Army National Guard to high school students, members of ROTC and the community at large. Visitors were able to engage with Soldiers and explore the equipment used to respond to domestic disasters and worldwide contingency operations.

During the event, guests visited multiple stations to learn more about the various aspects of the Alaska Army National Guard. Several of the stations employed an interactive approach, using fun activities to get visitors involved. The infantry division set up an obstacle course that guests could navigate wearing night vision goggles, allowing them to experience what it looks and feels like to use night vision capabilities. Other active demonstrations included combat lifesaving, checkpoint operations and civil disturbance response techniques. Static display features included a UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter, armored vehicles and weapons. ●



All photos: Students and local citizens visit Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson for Alaska Army National Guard's "Guard for a Day" event.

All photos courtesy Alaska Army National Guard





Alaska Guard Engineers Conduct Emergency Response Exercise

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SGT SETH LACOUNT
ALASKA ARMY NATIONAL GUARD

The Alaska National Guard has fortified its longstanding relationship with the local population by always striving for readiness in the event of a disaster.

Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) is an initiative that specifically targets the needs of the State of Alaska in circumstances where emergency relief and community outreach are requested. The initiative gives National Guard leaders guidance on how to maintain readiness to meet the response needs.

As a facet of mission readiness focused on route clearance, more than 40 Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers of the 207th Engineer Utility Detachment (EUD) and 208th Construction Management Team (CMT) executed ice bridging and chainsaw operations Feb. 10 on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. The group was comprised of more than 13 occupational specialties.

The exercise was part of a drill weekend that provided Soldiers with hands-on training. They used engineering equipment in cold weather conditions while utilizing and becoming more familiar with their personal

protective equipment and cold weather gear.

"Everybody was operating very safely," said SFC Jack Carlson, a construction supervisor and the detachment sergeant for the 207th EUD. "We were augmented by the state safety office for our protective personal equipment. That was the main goal, to demonstrate our ability to mobilize that piece of equipment and to do so safely."

The operation began with Soldiers unloading gear – including road signs, warming tents, and, most important, the Hydraulic, Electric, Pneumatic, Petroleum Operated Equipment (HEPPOE) kits – near the Bailey Bridge.

The HEPPOE kit comes in a set of 13 boxes and can work as a power generation unit capable of everything from demolition to rescue capabilities. The kit comes with multiple tool attachments and crates containing industrial-sized water pumps, battery-packed Jaws of Life and hydraulic chainsaws.

Soldiers went right to work cutting down trees in the area adjacent to the bridge and practiced techniques, including felling, hanging, bucking and limbing.

TOP: Alaska National Guard Soldiers with the 207th Engineer Utility Detachment and 208th Construction Management Team run hoses through an icy river to collect water for an ice bridging exercise at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

"We have a lot of fun out here," said SPC Colton Conant, a Wasilla, Alaska, resident and horizontal construction engineer with the 207th EUD who has served in the unit for two years. "It gets us hands-on training so we know how to use each piece of equipment effectively and safely."

Nearby, Soldiers pumped water from the river and began ice bridging.

"You can think of the exercise as three different missions," SFC Carlson said. "First, the convoy to the operational site. Second, the water pumping exercise, which demonstrates our ability to ice bridge. And then our chainsaw operations, in response to something like an earthquake, where you have downed trees."

Ice bridging is a method that creates an ice depth safe enough for heavy military vehicles to drive on. Typically, ice bridging is conducted on a frozen lake or body of water. Water is pumped from the lake, then sprayed over the existing ice with hoses and left to thicken. For training purposes, the Soldiers used the river running under the bridge as their crossing objective.

During the exercise, 12 Soldiers also went through Small Unit Support Vehicle training. The SUSV is a highly mobile, all-terrain vehicle essential for transporting HEPPOE kits across the often-treacherous Alaskan landscape. Soldiers conducted convoy operations, taking a local route around the job site, and trained on the maneuverability of the vehicle.

"The real key for the SUSV is improved mobility for our HEPPOE system," SFC Carlson said. "The SUSV allows us to put the kit on the back of a flatbed and take it anywhere – over rock, snow or water."

The Soldiers utilized the drill training period to cross-train in both engineering and disaster response capabilities. This allowed them to improve their expertise outside of their normal specialties and strengthen the unit's overall readiness.

The unit training supports the Alaska Army National Guard's initiative to not only be ready to respond to a disaster and strengthen DSCA capabilities, but also to apply cold weather training and become arctic subject matter experts. ●



TOP: Alaska Army National Guard Engineers conduct Chainsaw Operations during an emergency preparedness training on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson.

BOTTOM: Alaska National Guard Soldiers with the 207th Engineer Utility Detachment and 208th Construction Management Team spray water over the ground to thicken and lengthen the ice mass as part of an ice bridging operation.





A cadet from the Alaska Military Youth Academy's Wolfpack demonstrates a safe rappel down a tower during a training exercise held May 2017.

Photo courtesy Alaska Military Youth Academy

ALASKA MILITARY YOUTH ACADEMY

The Alaska Military Youth Academy's ChalleNGe Program is helping Alaska's at-risk youth.

The program leads, trains, and mentors 16- to 18-year-old Alaskans who have left high school without receiving a degree. The Youth ChalleNGe – a 17-month high school program – works to assist youth in graduating with the values, skills, education and self-discipline necessary to succeed as adults.

If you know of an Alaskan youth who wants to make a change and could benefit from the Youth ChalleNGe program at Joint Base Elmendorf - Richardson call **907.375.5553** or visit **dmva.alaska.gov/AMYA**.

TO INQUIRE ABOUT BECOMING A VOLUNTEER MENTOR CONTACT:

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Recruiting, Placement and Mentoring Supervisor
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Deb Wilcox, Issue Support conference delegate, points out topics for discussion during the Joint Family Action Plan Conference March 27, 2018, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

JBER Military Family Readiness Center Hosts 2018 JFAP Conference

PHOTOS AND STORY BY
A1C CRYSTAL A. JENKINS,
ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD

The Military Family Readiness Center (MFRC) hosted the annual Joint Family Action Plan (JFAP) Conference at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) March 27, 2018.

The meeting is the coming together of the JBER community and is used to address quality of life issues that have been previously submitted to work/life specialists at either of the MFRC centers or by dropping them into the issue boxes located at the centers.

Individuals attending the conference acted as representatives from different JBER demographics including National Guard, active-duty, retirees, civilians and spouses. At the start of the conference everyone was

trained on the JFAP process and then split into focus groups to review the issues.

Eighteen issues were submitted this year. Upon review of all submissions, four were selected for in-depth addressing. The group checked each matter, making sure it had not been previously submitted in the past three years. After this process was complete, the group researched possible solutions and formatted the concerns for presentation to higher command at the day's out-brief.

"One of the beautiful things coming out of this conference is that the community [will] know the issues submitted were looked at, worked on and addressed this year," said Frederica Norman, a 673rd Force Support Squadron community readiness consultant. "As the delegates met in their focus groups today, they were challenged to select the most significant items affecting the community. Because of the limited amount

of time we have at the conference now, it is necessary to stay on task and utilize every minute to its fullest potential."

Although complex topics were brought to the table, the issues selected were worked on at a fairly reasonable pace. Subject matter experts were available to the teams for

answers to questions and information on programs already in place, Norman said.

"We had a really great debate today, in fact it was such a great discussion we almost didn't make our deadline," said TSgt Timothy Ferber, a 673rd Mission Support Group active-duty delegate. "One of our group's selected issues was teen violence being on the rise. This

topic affects the whole family in addition to [Soldiers'] mission readiness. We proposed improvements to current educational outreach as well as developing a standardized DoD program. The goal for this program would be teen violence prevention –



Delegates, subject matter experts and officers from higher command meet during the out-brief portion of the Joint Family Action Plan Conference March 27, 2018, at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska.

“It allows us to act as a voice for our community by presenting issues to the installation as a whole.”

— Laura White,
conference delegate

addressing and educating those ages 18 and under about healthy relationships and all types of violence.”

Other matters selected for discussion included the need for an established or regulated transportation service at JBER, a pedestrian crosswalk at the on-base intersection of Vandenberg Avenue and Arctic Warrior Drive, and regional Tricare challenges faced by military parents with joint custody of children.

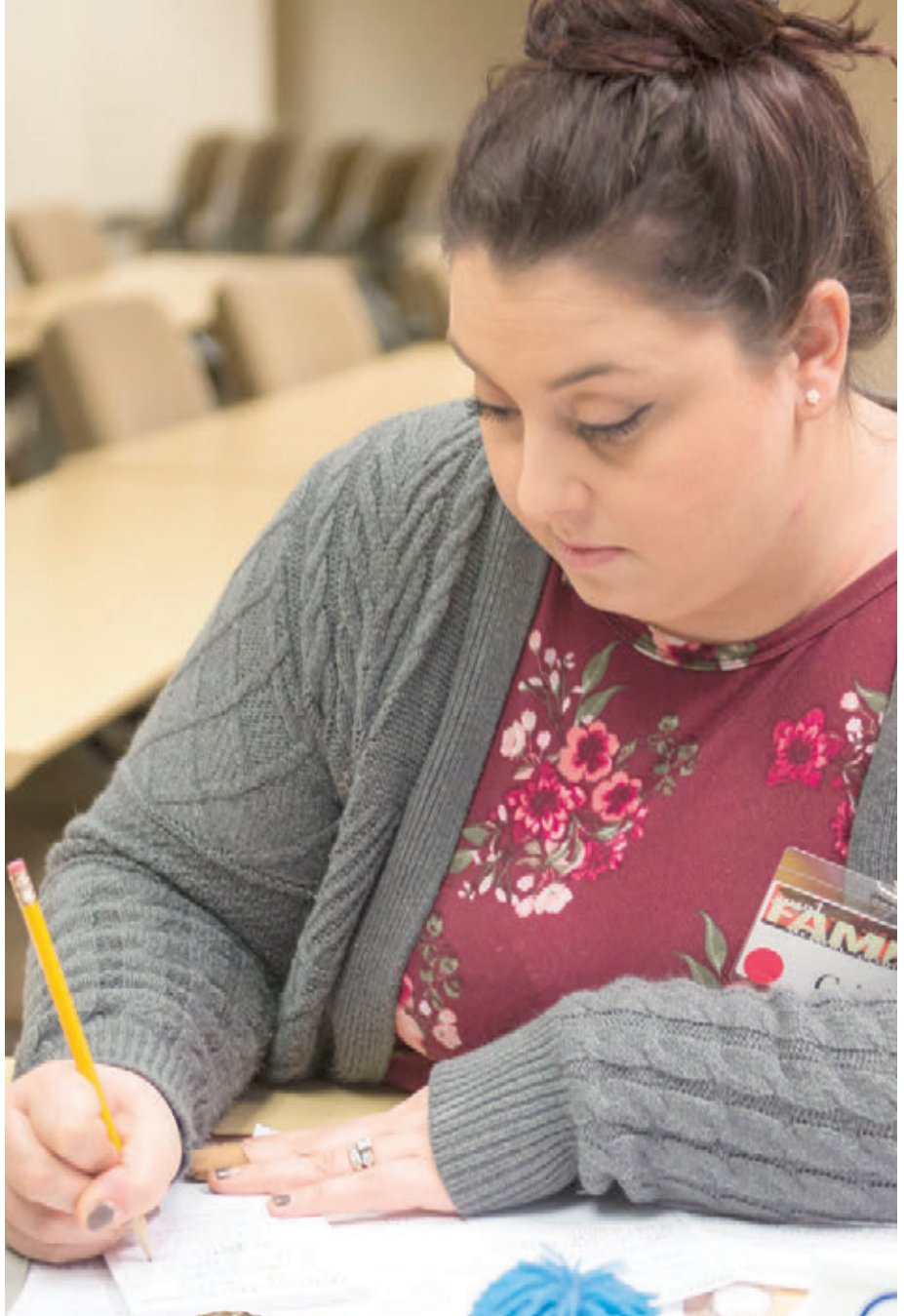
“Having the opportunity to participate as a delegate in the JFAP conference is a rewarding experience,” said Laura White, conference delegate and retiree spouse. “It allows us to act as a voice for our community by presenting issues to the installation as a whole.”

U.S. Army Alaska Commander MG Mark J. O’Neil, U.S. Army Alaska CSM Ryan Dillingham, SGM Jerry H. Byrd, sergeant major of the 673rd Air Base Wing, and Col Daniel Knight, 673rd Mission Support Group commander, attended and responded to all of the issues raised.

“We appreciate and need this type of feedback,” Col Knight said. “The first step in problem solving anything is first identifying the problem ... In regards to the transportation issue, we have been looking at a variety of options which could include engaging the Anchorage bus system on potentially putting a route through the base which could accommodate specific needs, and if it’s utilized, it would stay.”

According to Norman, many delegates expressed a desire to learn more about the community, programs available, and the value of participating in a conference such as this one.

Alaska service members who were not able to attend this year’s conference may still raise issues throughout the year by submitting concerns through the MFRC Facebook page @JBERFamilyCenters, or by using the JFAP issue boxes at either of the MFRC locations. ●



TOP: Cali McDermott, a conference delegate, participates in the brainstorming portion of the Joint Family Action Plan Conference.

BOTTOM LEFT: Pamela Tucker, Family Support Center director, addresses conference attendees.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A group of conference delegates work to identify the chosen issues for presentation during the conference.

Supporting Mothers who Serve

Whether you are a mother actively serving as a Soldier or a wife serving through support of a Soldier spouse, the Alaska National Guard is ensuring your access to the Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC).

WIC provides nutrition counseling and program referrals for pregnant women, new mothers and legal guardians of children under five years of age.

The WIC program services include vouchers for nutritional foods, lactation consulting and loaner breast pumps and healthcare and community service referrals

- **This program is income dependent and most enlisted qualify.**
- **WIC offices are located at Fort Richardson, Elmendorf Air Force Base, Eielson Air Force Base and Fort Wainwright.**
- **WIC checks are accepted at the military commissaries at each of these bases.**



**For more information about on-post WIC services
call 907-343-4430.**



Alaska Guard Soldiers Execute Arctic Training and Community Engagement in Western Alaska

BY SGT SETH LACOUNT
ALASKA NATIONAL GUARD

More than 80 Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers assigned to Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment, conducted cold

weather training operations in rural western Alaska, Jan. 18-20, 2018. Bravo Company is headquartered in Wasilla, Alaska, and the training represented a significant consolidation with the company's detachment in Bethel, Alaska.

Soldiers arrived at the Bethel Armory, greeted by blistering winds and below zero temperatures. They began cold weather training by setting up three arctic ten-man tents, which they would sleep in later that evening. Soldiers practiced digging stakes into hard, frozen ground and utilized cold weather gear to stay warm throughout the training.

"I don't know of any environment to better train small unit tactics and accountability than in an arctic environment, as it really forces team and squad leaders to pay attention to their Soldiers to make sure they're doing the right thing," said LTC Jeffrey Roberts, battalion commander of the

297th Infantry.

LTC Roberts emphasized that the training also ensures small unit leaders focus on their tasks, Soldier safety and tactical safety; skills which are very translatable to any other environment whether it's hot or cold weather.

After successfully staging the arctic tents, Soldiers trained on snow machines and tactical skis as means of transportation across the frozen tundra.

About a dozen Soldiers loaded their gear into two small unit support vehicles and converged on the Kuskokwim River for the four-hour drive to the Tuluksak checkpoint. During the winter months in western Alaska, the rivers are used as a road system with thick ice easily supporting the 3-ton tracked military vehicle.

At the Bethel checkpoint, Soldiers picked smooth ice into a more jagged terrain to make it easier to walk on for the mushers. They also



Alaska National Guard Soldier SSG James Bruce, of Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment, melts snow in a 10-man squad tent to use as cooking and drinking water during Arctic Eagle 2018.

Alaska Army National Guard photo by
SPC Michael Risinger

layered straw over the ice and brought hot water to revitalize the dogs and give them a place to rest.

"It's always great to have some able bodies willing to help us out," said Jen Peek, a Bethel resident and checkpoint volunteer. "We're so happy to have these guys here."

Late Friday night with the checkpoints manned and the teams readied, 18 dog-sled teams crossed the Kuskokwim 300 starting line in groups of two, at two-minute intervals.

"We are a very visible presence to the community, so the community gets to see Soldiers training in and around the town, and that raises public awareness of what the Guard does," said LTC Roberts. "These positive interactions and growing relationships with the local community also serve as an indirect support to our recruiting efforts in rural Alaska." ●



A Soldier assigned to Bravo Company, 1st Battalion, 297th Infantry Regiment, drives a stake into frozen ground to set up his arctic tent outside the Bethel armory, Jan. 18, 2018, as part of a collective cold weather training drill.

Alaska Army National Guard photo by
SGT Seth LaCount



With nearly 50 years' experience working with military personnel, Central Texas College (CTC) understands the unique needs of Soldiers. CTC works with more than 25 U.S. military installations offering educational opportunities for service members and their Families.

Whether earning points toward promotion or transferring credits toward a bachelor's degree, the CTC site representatives at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson and at Fort Wainwright will work with Soldiers and their Family members to build custom tailored degree plans.

CTC guarantees maximum credit for military education and training, and depending on rank and MOS, Soldiers may be eligible for up to 49 credit hours toward a degree.

For more information or to register for classes, contact a CTC site representative at:
Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson — (907) 428-1317 or Director.Rich_Elmendorf@ctcd.edu
Fort Wainwright — (907) 356-3863-3864 or AreaDirector.Alaska@ctcd.edu