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PRESS RELEASE

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By: Sgt. Edward Eagerton

Alaska Guardsmen join active duty counterparts in hockey game

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Ten Alaska National Guardsmen competed in the 2015 U.S. Army vs. U.S. Air Force Hockey Game at the Sullivan Arena in Anchorage, Jan. 9.

The Air Force team won the game seven to five, beating the Army twice now in the second year of the intra-service competition held in Anchorage.

"Of course, we are proud to have won the game," said Chief Master Sgt. Steven Calvin, command chief of the Alaska Air National Guard, who coached the U.S. Air Force team, "but I'm also proud of how the game was played and how the players on both sides represented their respective services. It was hard fought but fair, and good sportsmanship was displayed throughout the game."

The teams were comprised of active-duty Army and Air Force, Army and Air National Guard, Marine Reserves and Royal Canadian Air Force service members.

Both teams brought talented skaters to compete, according to Command Sgt. Maj. Marc Peterson, 38th Troop Brigade, Alaska Army National Guard. Peterson was one of three Army Guardsmen on the U.S. Army hockey team.

"Some have skated at semi-pro levels, and some others skated on college hockey teams," he said. "At that level, it's pretty competitive."

In addition to National Guard participation on both teams, two pararescueman from the Air Guard's 212th Rescue Squadron rappelled from the rafters of the Sullivan Arena to present the ceremonial puck at the start of the game to Alaska Command commander, Lt. Gen. Russell J. Handy, and the University of Alaska, Anchorage hockey coach, Matt Thomas.

Last year's game was held at the Wells Fargo Sports Complex and drew a crowd of approximately 460 people, according to Mary Rall, the U.S. Army Alaska community relations chief. This year's community participation at the Sullivan Arena quadrupled with more than 2,000 people attending.

"Although this is the second annual Army vs. Air Force hockey game in Anchorage, the Army vs. Air Force hockey games have been a community tradition in Fairbanks for the last 19 years, with the Air Force in a ten-to-nine lead for wins over the Army," said Rall. "We're confident the Army can even it out to 10-10 in the 20th annual game next year, though."

Aside from the entertainment value, the hockey game was a good way to reach out to the community and strengthen relationships.

"We appreciate the outstanding community support we in the military receive," said Calvin. "The game also served as a friendly intra-service event that promotes esprit de corps and also strengthens the joint nature of the installation."

"We also appreciate that active duty is keeping it open to the Guard," said Peterson. "We've got a good relationship with them here on JBER."

Calvin credits U.S. Army Alaska's commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Shields, as the major influence in starting the Anchorage game.

"The driving influence in making these games a reality was Maj. Gen. Shields," said Calvin. "He will be rotating next summer, so it will be up to us left behind to carry the tradition forward."

"I'm looking forward to this event being offered for standing-room-only audiences and as one the community looks forward to attending annually in the years to come," Ralls said.

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For photos of the event, please visit:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/sets/72157647933361834/>