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By Sgt. Marisa Lindsay

**New Alaska Army National Guard commander is cultivating transparency, teamwork and trust**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON** —Col. Joseph Streff assumed command as the assistant adjutant general-Army and Director of Joint Staff of the Alaska National Guard earlier this year, on March 22, after having served in multiple leadership and staff positions in the Guard.

With more than 28 years of Alaska Army National Guard service under his belt, Streff's fierce drive has taken his career sky-high — beginning as an enlisted air traffic controller, a chief warrant officer UH-60 helicopter pilot and then an aviation officer before being personally selected by Brig. Gen. (Alaska) Laurie Hummel, the adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, for this position.

"The transition has been quick ... it's been a sprint," Streff exclaimed. "I've been fortunate to have some very capable commanders and staff officers working alongside me to set the conditions for the success of this organization."

Streff gained his commission after previous experience as an enlisted and chief warrant officer Soldier, then was commissioned as a second lieutenant in 1990.

"Back in the 1980s, I chose to pursue my dream and that dream was to fly," Streff began. "I realized that the military provided a tremendous opportunity to do so, and during my exploration of the components of different services, I realized that the National Guard was the best option for me because I could stay in Alaska, fly part time and participate in homeland security missions."

With his current role commanding the AKARNG taking flight, Streff is quick to mention the three guidelines that shape his decisions and leadership style: transparency, teamwork and trust.

"First off, we need transparency. We want decisions clearly understood within the organization to indicate collaboration and to also showcase that decisions aren't made in a vacuum," Streff explained. "This leads me to teamwork ... I really endeavor to create an organization that comes together with ideas, forms those ideas and brings those ideas to the commander all the while documenting the process so that we know where we've been, where we are, how the decision was made and where we want to go in the future."

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Lastly, Streff maintains that if transparency and teamwork are executed correctly, by himself and fellow leadership, that the end result will be trust of the Soldiers and the organization at large.

“Our chaplain, Chaplain McGovern, defines trust as ‘actions over time,’” Streff said.

Daily challenges and opportunities to positively affect the organization he’s served for almost three decades are what he appreciates most about commanding Alaska Army National Guard Soldiers.

“The most important asset that we have in the Alaska National Guard is the Soldier,” Streff stated.

“Everybody who shows up in this building and who’s employed by this organization needs to understand that the Soldier is the purpose behind why we are here ... If you take care of the Soldier, the Soldier takes care of the mission.”

Although this new role has kept Streff busy, allowing for only one fishing trip this year because of time constraints, he still has been able to make time for what’s most important: his wife, Lynn, and their children, grandchildren, dogs and making time to tend to his garden, which boasts a greenhouse and beautifully-designed planter boxes, all built and maintained with his own two hands.

“I really enjoy hiking with my family and fishing, but what I also really love to do is garden,” revealed Streff. “There’s something very therapeutic about planting something, nurturing it, watching it grow, and then harvesting.”

As Streff continues to cultivate and guide the organization, he feels that Alaska’s Army Guard is headed in the right direction.

“I rely on my barometers of the command climate and they include my state command sergeant major, chaplains, and the Soldiers I get to speak with; I can say that procedurally, things are changing and I can say that morale seems to be changing for the positive,” Streff said. “I’ve been fortunate that we have had the right people in the right places. I’ve been very happy with my first seven-months on the job and what’s ahead for this organization and the Soldiers in it.”

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Col. Joseph Streff embraces his wife, Lynn, after assuming command as the assistant adjutant general-Army and Director of Joint Staff of the Alaska National Guard during change of command held at the National Guard armory on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, March 22. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Marisa Lindsay)



