



**PRESS RELEASE  
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**Alaska National Guard**

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**Alaska Air Guardsmen return from Pacific Command deployment**

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska** - More than 100 Airmen and four aircraft assigned to the 168th Air Refueling Wing returned to the frozen tundra on Feb. 2 after a one-month deployment to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, in support of the Pacific Command Theater mission.

The unit was assigned to the 506th Expeditionary Air Refueling Squadron to provide aerial refueling to aircraft flying over the Western Pacific as part of the continuing U.S. air power mission in the region.

"This was an excellent deployment for the 168th as it specifically exercised the unit for its mission," said Lt. Col. "Buck" Smith, 168th Air Refueling Squadron commander. "The entire operation was executed flawlessly and validated our ability to deploy and operate as an air mobility unit."

The support package included four Boeing KC-135 Stratotanker air refueling aircraft, six aircrews, support staff, medical, supply and communications specialists, as well as aircraft maintainers who kept the Truman-era aircraft performing the mission with a 100 percent reliability rate.

"In recent years, we have annually deployed in support of this particular mission on Andersen Air Force Base; however, this is the first year where we've had a lead role versus support role," explained Smith. "We were able to support several high profile missions in-country while seamlessly maintaining our commitment and duty in Alaska."

Alaska Air Guardsmen led the way with this Air Expeditionary Force cycle deployment, receiving support from a handful of Guard members from Maine, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

"This deployment was accomplished with 100 percent volunteerism," concluded Smith. "I'm very proud of what our Guardsmen were able to achieve in Guam."

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**PHOTOS**

1. **DVIDS link** includes story and selected full-resolution photos. (Primarily for media, DVIDS is accessible from .mil computers.)

<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/187910/alaska-air-guardsmen-return-pacific-command-deployment#.VrOa3U0UWUk>



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Alaska Air Guardsmen with the 168th Maintenance Support Group show off coins that were awarded to them by General Frank J. Grass, chief of the National Guard Bureau, during his visit to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, in January 2016. More than 100 Airmen and four aircraft assigned to the 168<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing were deployed to Guam to provide assistance to the Theater Support Package in the Western Pacific as part of U.S. air power aid to the region. (Photo courtesy of Col. Marvin T. Ee)