



**PRESS RELEASE
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Alaska Air National Guard rescue choppers train in Nevada desert for first time

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — Approximately 50 Alaska Air Guardsmen from the 176th Operations Group and 176th Maintenance Group returned Feb. 16 from RED FLAG 16-1 hosted on Nellis Air Force Base, Nevada.

This was the first time the 176th OG's 210th Rescue Squadron and two of their HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopters participated in this combat training exercise, held Jan. 25 to Feb. 12 this year.

RED FLAG-Nellis is a Tactical Air Command initiative, packing both classroom and field education into three weeks. Participants from multiple services and components across the nation and globe converge on the Nevada Test and Training Range for the exercise. There, they are provided with realistic training in a combined air, ground, space and electronic threat environment while allowing a free exchange of ideas between forces.

"Combat Search and Rescue isn't a pick-up game," said 1st Lt. Christopher McKnight, the lead mission planner for the Alaska Airmen. "[RED FLAG] gives us the opportunity to train and plan to the Combat Search and Rescue mission."

Though the 210th RQS has previously participated in RED FLAG-Alaska, RED FLAG-Nellis offered fresh turf, similar to the unknown layout of a deployed location.

"We're familiar with the terrain here," McKnight said of Alaska. "[Exercising in Nevada] forces us into new terrain, new situations, and a whole new operating environment that we have to learn all at once. Additionally, we have to do it with an opposing force trying to deny our mission accomplishment."

Closely tied to the success of the mission are the support personnel, who helped the special operations aviation teams meet each objective.

"Maintenance and the Operations Support Squadron did an amazing job supporting the 210th," said Maj. Jay Randall, the detachment commander. "We never missed a sortie."

Training is necessary to retain proficiency for all elements of the team, explained McKnight.

"It's all perishable skills," he said. "It needs to be practiced to be good at it."

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PHOTOS

1. **Attached pdf** includes story and photos.

2. **DVIDS link** includes story and full-sized photos. (DVIDS is generally accessible from .mil computers) (<https://www.dvidshub.net/news/189231/alaska-air-national-guard-rescue-choppers-train-nevada-desert-first-time>)



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Airman 1st Class David Hayes, a special mission aviator with the 210th Airlift Squadron, performs preflight checks on a .50-caliber machine gun on Nellis AFB, Nev., during Red Flag 16-1 on Feb. 11, 2016. The 210th AS was part of approximately 50 air guardsmen from the 176th Operations Group and 176th Maintenance Group participating in the combat training exercise. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jake Carter/ Released.)



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MSgt Bishop Bailey, a weapons section chief with the 176th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, tightens a cargo strap on Nellis AFB, Nev., during Red Flag 16-1 on Feb. 11, 2016. Bailey was part of approximately 50 air guardsmen from the 176th Operations Group and 176th Maintenance Group participating in the combat training exercise. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jake Carter/ Released.)



160211-F-UN699-011

1Lt Seth Peterson (l), a pilot with the 210th Airlift Squadron, and SMSgt Thomas Dietrich (r), a special mission aviator with the 176th Operations Group, prepare for take-off in an HH-60 Pavehawk on Nellis AFB, Nev., during Red Flag 16-1 on Feb. 11, 2016. The two were a part of approximately 50 air guardsmen from the 176th Operations Group and 176th Maintenance Group participating in the combat training exercise. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Jake Carter/ Released.)