



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 14, 2016

By Staff Sgt. Dayton Will

Alaska National Guard

Release: 16-020

Guardsmen participate in cold weather exchange with Mongolian Armed Forces

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — A five-man team from the Alaska Army National Guard's 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron has returned from Mongolia after a cold weather subject-matter-expert exchange with the Mongolian Armed Forces last month.

The purpose of the exercise was to support the Alaska National Guard's state partnership with Mongolia, giving MAF soldiers the opportunity to learn about cold weather and mountain tactics, techniques and procedures from AKARNG Soldiers. The four-day exchange was conducted at the Five Hills Training Area near Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, Feb. 22-26.

"I think there is a lot of value in this type of training where both AKARNG and MAF Soldiers have the opportunity to learn from each other, and it supports two of the adjutant general's Lines of Effort — continue to support the defense professionalization of the MAF and development of Mongolia's peace-keeping operations capability," said Maj. Samuel Scott, 1-197th R&S executive officer.

Training events included equipment briefs, cold weather injury classes, field demonstrations of the effects of cold weather on equipment and operations, avalanche safety and skiing. The culminating exercise was a climb of a local peak, in which MAF and AKARNG Soldiers had the opportunity to use techniques learned during the subject matter expert exchange.

Along with Scott, the AKARNG team consisted of Staff Sgt. Cody Tirpak, Staff Sgt. Dayton Will, Sgt. Elijah Gutierrez and Sgt. Jacob Rukovishnikoff, all experts in different facets of cold weather travel and mountaineering.

The exchange, coordinated by Cpt. Amanda Plachek, AKARNG state partnership program coordinator, was designed to broaden the knowledge base of not just the Mongolian Armed Forces but of the participating Alaska Guardsmen as well.

"I was intrigued by their perspective on cold weather injuries," Rukovishnikoff said. "I'm not sure whether it's cultural or if they have a physiological structure that protects them from frostbite, but they laughed a little bit at our cold weather injury class and the multiple layers of gloves that we have."

The MAF fielded 10 noncommissioned officers from the 084 Special Task Battalion and 150th Peacekeeping Battalion. Several of the Alaska Guardsmen have been involved with training with the MAF on previous exercises and were pleasantly surprised to learn that several of the MAF participants were NCOs with whom they had worked in the past.

-more-

“I was very impressed with the growth of the MAF NCO Corps since the first time I trained here in 2012,” Rukovishnikoff said. “They are true professionals and are paving the way for the future of the Mongolian Armed Forces.”

This event is the first cold weather subject-matter-expert trip to Mongolia, but Scott hopes there will be many more in the future.

“I would love to get some of the MAF soldiers to travel to Alaska and train with us in our environment.”

The AKARNG State Partnership Program is managed with the purpose of supporting the security cooperation objectives of US Pacific Command.

###

PHOTOS

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

2. **Flickr album** for full resolution and additional photographs:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/alaskanationalguard/albums/72157663408688793/with/25590458851/>

3. **DVIDS link** includes story and photos. (DVIDS is generally accessible from all computers)

<http://dvidshub.net/r/5wa4vs>

IMG_1425



Alaska Guardsman Staff Sgt. Cody Tirpak, 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, demonstrates proper glissading during a cold weather subject-matter-expert exchange with the Mongolian Armed Forces Feb. 22-26 at the Five Hills Training Area near Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Training events included equipment briefs, cold weather injury classes, field demonstrations of the effects of cold weather on equipment and operations, and avalanche safety and skiing. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Dayton Will)

IMG_0899



Alaska Army National Guardsmen from 1-297th Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron gather with Mongolian Armed Forces from the 084 Special Task Battalion and 150th Peacekeeping Battalion during a cold weather subject-matter-expert exchange Feb. 22-26 at the Five Hills Training Area near Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Training events included equipment briefs, cold weather injury classes, field demonstrations of the effects of cold weather on equipment and operations, and avalanche safety and skiing. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Staff Sgt. Dayton Will)