



PRESS RELEASE

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By Sgt. Marisa Lindsay

Alaska National Guard

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Missing Alaska Army National Guardsman recovered

JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska — The remains of Specialist Nephi Soper, an Alaska Army National Guard Soldier assigned to C Company, 1st Reconnaissance and Surveillance Squadron, 297th Cavalry Regiment, as a drill status (part-time) Guardsman, were recovered approximately 9 miles due south of the National Guard armory by search teams this afternoon.

Soper was last seen on Feb. 18, when he was dropped off by a taxi at the Prospect Heights Trailhead in Anchorage. He was equipped with a large backpack and was prepared to hike through the Campbell Creek and Ship Creek Valleys.

Soper was found on Tanaina Lake, east of Tikishla Peak, in the headwaters of Snowhawk Valley. This was not his intended route. He was identified by a combination of physical recognition and clothing, as well as his military identification tags.

Search efforts most recently took place yesterday and this morning, when Soper was found at 11:30 a.m. today. The lead for the search effort was the Alaska Incident Management Team for Search and Rescue (AIMT-SAR) on behalf of the Alaska State Troopers, who worked in tandem with 10 agencies, to include the Alaska Army National Guard. Among the search crews were Guardsmen of the 1-297th Cavalry, with aviation support provided by 1st Battalion, 207th Aviation Regiment.

The Adjutant General for the Alaska National Guard, Brig. Gen. Laurie Hummel, stated: "We are thankful that, after three months of uncertainty, our Soldier has been located. We greatly appreciate the countless volunteers, Air Guardsmen and Army Guardsmen for providing their expertise in the search effort for Specialist Soper. Nephi Soper will always be an Alaska National Guardsman. His family is our family, and they will remain in our thoughts and prayers."

Next of kin have been notified. The body was recovered and flown to Anchorage, where it was released to the State of Alaska Medical Examiner.

Media interested in a statement from the National Guard can meet at the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson gate at 1745 (5:45 P.M.) today where someone will be available to speak on behalf of the Alaska National Guard.

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